DN 16 — DN 16 The Great Total Unbinding Discourse | Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Great Total Unbinding Discourse

Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta (DN 16)

Introduction

Nibbāna originally was the Pali word for the extinguishing of a fire. The Buddha employed it as one of the names of the goal he taught, in light of the way in which the processes of fire were viewed at his time: A burning fire was seen as clinging to its fuel in a state of hot agitation. When going out, it let go of its fuel and reached a state of freedom, cooling, and peace. These were thus the primary associations of this term when applied to the Buddhist goal. Given this understanding of fire, the term nibbāna apparently was derived

etymologically from the negative prefix, nir, plus the root vāṇa, or binding: unbinding. The associated adjective is nibbuta: unbound. The associated verb, nibbuti: to unbind.

Parinibbāna—total unbinding—carries two meanings in the Canon. On the one hand, it denotes the unbinding that happens at the moment of full awakening, either for a Buddha or for one of his arahant disciples. On the other, it denotes the unbinding that happens when such a person dies and is no longer reborn. In the title of this sutta, the term has this second meaning, centered on the Buddha's death. The word mahā, "great," in the sutta's title modifies both "parinibbāna" and "sutta." In other words, it states both that the sutta is long—it's the longest in the Pali Canon—and that the Buddha's death is the most important parinibbāna in the Buddhist tradition.

The sutta narrates the events of the year leading up to the Buddha's parinibbāna and the weeks immediately following it. In a few instances, most notably the events right before the Buddha's passing, the narrative gives a fairly realistic blow-by-blow account of random incidents, but the main body of the sutta shows signs of having been consciously selected and shaped. We know from other passages in the Canon that not all the major events of this period were included here. Ven. Sāriputta, for instance, appears in Part I of the sutta, but SN 47:13 tells us that he died before the Buddha did, and that the Buddha was at Sāvatthī when he received the news, yet neither event is included in this narrative. At the same time, the style of the narrative follows many of the conventions of literary prose and poetry in ancient India, aimed at producing an astounding rasa, or emotional savor.

Two main concerns seem to have determined the shape of the narrative, concerns that are common to any memorial: the desire (1) to show that the person memorialized was worthy of love and respect, and (2) to indicate the importance of continuing to live by the good traditions that the person established.

Both concerns are encapsulated in the event chosen to open the sutta: King Ajātasattu's emotional outburst over his plans to invade the Vajjians, and his request that his chief minister, Vassakāra, ask for the Buddha's advice on the matter. There's a wry irony in depicting a king so spiritually blind as to seek the Buddha's advice on plans for war, but the incident makes several serious points at once. To begin with, it points to the fact that the Buddha was respected by even the most highly placed members of society. The Buddha's indirect response to the king's request ultimately averts a war, showing that he used his influence to admirable effect. However, a knowledge of later events—Vassakāra and Ajātasattu were eventually able to defeat the Vajjians bloodlessly by undermining their good traditions—underlines the fact that good traditions cannot maintain themselves, for there are forces in the world seeking to undo them. The Buddha himself draws the parallel between the good traditions in which he trained the Vajjians—which they failed to maintain—and the good traditions in which he trained the Saṅgha. The point is that even though the Buddha set the Saṅgha on a good footing, the continued life of the Saṅgha requires the continued vigilance of its surviving members.

Thus even though the opening incident reports as an established fact the sutta's first concern—the fact that the Buddha is eminently worthy of respect—it leaves the second

concern—the survival of his teachings—as an open question, alerting and inspiring any serious listeners that this was a responsibility they had to take on as their own.

These two concerns shape all the remaining sections of the narrative.

To indicate the fact that the Buddha was worthy of respect, the compilers continue the twofold tactic set out in the opening incident: directly, by showing the Buddha's admirable character through his words and actions; and indirectly, by showing how people worthy of respect paid him homage.

In depicting the Buddha directly, the narrative gives primary emphasis to his ability as a teacher—one with a comprehensive command of the Dhamma, a prodigious memory, and an untiring willingness to teach what he knows. It also highlights the Buddha's prowess as a meditator, both in his command of concentration (as reported in his discussion with Pukkusa Mallaputta and his final display of concentration attainments before his passing away) and in his command of the psychic powers based on concentration: He sees devas, visits their heavens without their knowing who he is, teleports over a river, forecasts future events, recalls past lifetimes, reads minds. He also shows a total command over his own death: overcoming his next-to-last illness, voluntarily deciding when and where to die, and, of course, dying in such a way as to never again be reborn.

In terms of more personal qualities, the narrative depicts the Buddha's great fortitude in the face of his last two illnesses—in particular, walking all day to his final resting place after a severe attack of dysentery. At the same time, on the day of his death he shows great kindness and gratitude in taking time to comfort both Ven. Ānanda, his attendant, and Cunda, the layperson who provided his last meal; in having the Mallans notified so that they can pay homage to him; in teaching one last student, Subhadda; and in offering to answer any remaining questions right before passing away.

As for the ways in which the Buddha is shown respect, first and foremost are the miraculous events sprinkled throughout the narrative, showing that even the forces of nature respected him: a muddy river grows clear so that he can drink the water; his pyre lights spontaneously after his great disciple, Ven. Mahā Kassapa, has arrived and paid him homage.

Kings, ministers, and princes also vie with one another to pay the Buddha homage, and even the devas are eager to show him respect.

In showing how these figures paid homage to the Buddha, the sutta has taught many generations of Buddhists the etiquette of respect. Five points in particular stand out:

(a) Most common is the act of circumambulation on leaving the Buddha's presence. This became the common way of showing respect to the Buddha's remains and to the stupas, or memorials, that enshrined them.

(b) When, in Part V, the devas want to gaze at the "Eye," they are carrying on an ancient Indian tradition, going back to Vedic times, of regarding a holy being as an all-around eye (one of the epithets of the Buddha in early Pali poetry) and the act of gazing into such an eye as an auspicious one. In later centuries, it became a common meditation practice to stare at a Buddha image or into the image's eyes.

(c) When the Mallans call out their names while paying final homage to the Buddha, they are also carrying on an ancient Indian tradition, proclaiming that they are not ashamed to be known for bowing down to the Buddha. This later led to the tradition of inscribing one's name on items donated to stupas, even if the items were to be placed where the inscription could not be seen. The act of putting one's name on a donation continues within the Buddhist world to this day.

(d) When, after the Buddha's death and again after his cremation, the Mallans venerate his body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, in making cloth canopies and arranging floral wreaths, they are establishing the precedent for the stupa festivals that have been popular throughout Buddhist Asia ever since.

(e) And of course, when the Buddha himself is depicted as describing how his funeral should be held and how his stupas should be visited and contemplated, the sutta establishes a foundation for the cult of stupas and pagodas as a whole.

As the Buddha states here, the purpose of such contemplation is not simply to show respect but also to give rise to feelings of saṁvega—urgency and dismay—over the impermanence and inconstancy of life. In the Buddhist analysis of emotions, saṁvega is one of the primary motivations for practice—especially when coupled with pasāda, confidence that the practice leads to freedom from that inconstancy. By inducing feelings of both saṁvega and pasāda, the sutta attempts to inspire its listeners to adopt its second major concern—the need to maintain good Buddhist traditions—both for their own individual sakes and for the sake of the common good.

Toward this end, the sutta narrates many of the Buddha's own instructions for how to maintain the life of the Dhamma and Saṅgha for a long time. As the sutta opens, he provides several lists of instructions for how the Saṅgha is to stay harmonious. Instead of appointing an individual as his successor, he identifies the Dhamma and Vinaya he has taught and expounded as his successor, at the same time establishing standards for how the Dhamma and Vinaya are to be known: citing the Wings to awakening as his most central teachings, and insisting that any teachings claimed to be his should be judged, not on the authority of the person making the report, but on the consistency of those teachings with teachings already known to be standard.

For individuals, the Buddha stresses the need to take the Dhamma as their refuge by internalizing the Dhamma in such a way—through the four establishings of mindfulness—that they can take refuge in themselves. He also supplies a "Dhamma-mirror" so that they can judge the extent to which they have succeeded in providing themselves with this refuge.

The pursuit of the common and the individual good overlap in that when individual monks practice rightly, the world will not be empty of arahants.

One of the instructive ironies of the sutta is the way in which its two main concerns come into conflict toward the end: Kings and brahmans become so intent on gaining possession of the Buddha's relics that they forget his teachings and almost come to war. We know from Buddhist history that devotional Buddhism has threatened the practice in other ways as well. Time and again, monks in charge of devotional centers have made life difficult for monks in the forest; forest monasteries have, with the passage of generations, devolved into devotional centers. To resolve this conflict, the sutta recommends a compromise position, shown most clearly in the Buddha's response to the worship given by the devas on his last night: On the one hand, he honors their desire to gaze on him by telling his attendant monk to get out of the way; on the other, he tells Ānanda that the most genuine form of worship is to practice the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma. In this way, he makes room for external expressions of devotion, at the same time subordinating them to the practice of the Dhamma for the purpose of full liberation.

Ven. Mahā Kassapa, who appears at the end of the sutta, provides the ideal monastic figure to embody its dual ideals. Known both for his fierce devotion to the Buddha and for his strict practice, he shows that these two ideals need not be in conflict. The concluding part of the narrative also hints at the role he later played in shouldering the Buddha's concern for the survival of the Dhamma and Vinaya that were to be the Saṅgha's teacher in the Buddha's place. Cv.XI tells us that the remarks made by the elderly monk after the Buddha's passing and recorded here—that the Saṅgha is well rid of the Buddha and his harassment over what should and shouldn't be done—were Mahā Kassapa's inspiration for calling the First Council to standardize the Dhamma and Vinaya. As he realized from those remarks, the threats to the survival of the Buddha's good traditions came not only from outside the Saṅgha but also—and more seriously—from within. In this way he shows the lengths to which members of the Saṅgha should be prepared to go in furthering the sutta's two main ideals.

As for the ideal lay embodiment of both ideals, that is provided by Doṇa the brahman, who divides the Buddha's relics in a fair and peaceful manner among their many claimants. In this way, he shows Buddhist lay people that they, too, can play a role in carrying on the good traditions established by the Buddha. Just as the sutta begins with the Buddha averting a war, Doṇa the brahman succeeds in averting a war at the end.

[I]

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain. And on that occasion, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, wanted to attack the Vajjians. He said: "I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!"

Then he addressed Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha: "Come, brahman. Go to the Blessed One and, on arrival, show reverence with your head to his feet

in my name and ask whether he is free from illness & affliction, is carefree, strong, & living in comfort, (saying,) 'Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, lord, shows reverence with his head to the Blessed One's feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort.' And then say: 'Lord, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, wants to attack the Vajjians. He says: "I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!"' However the Blessed One answers, having grasped it well, report to me. For Tathāgatas do not speak untruthfully."1

Responding, "As you say, sire," to Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the King of Magadha, Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, had auspicious vehicles yoked, got into an auspicious vehicle, left Rājagaha with the auspicious vehicles and drove toward Vulture Peak Mountain. Going in his vehicle as far as there was ground for a vehicle, getting down from his vehicle, he approached the Blessed One on foot. On arrival, he exchanged courteous greetings with the Blessed One. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One, "Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, Master Gotama,2 shows reverence with his head to Master Gotama's feet and asks whether you are free from illness & affliction, are carefree, strong, & living in comfort. Master Gotama, Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, wants to attack the Vajjians. He says: 'I will cut down these Vajjians—so mighty, so powerful! I will destroy these Vajjians! I will bring these Vajjians to ruin—these Vajjians!'"

Now on that occasion Ven. Ānanda was standing behind the Blessed One, fanning him. So the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal?"

"I have heard, lord, that the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal."

"As long as the Vajjians meet often and meet a great deal, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

"Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct their Vajjian business in harmony?"

"I have heard that, lord....

"As long as the Vajjians meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct their Vajjian business in harmony, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

"Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians neither decree what has been undecreed nor repeal what has been decreed, but conduct themselves, having undertaken the ancient Vajjian laws as they have been decreed?"

"I have heard that, lord....

“As long as the Vajjians neither decree what has been undecreed nor repeal what has been decreed, but conduct themselves, having undertaken the ancient Vajjian laws as they have been decreed, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian elders of the Vajjis, regarding them as worth listening to?”

“I have heard that, lord….

“As long as the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian elders of the Vajjis, regarding them as worth listening to, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians do not roughly drag off women & girls of good families and take them captive?”

“I have heard that, lord….

“As long as the Vajjians do not roughly drag off women & girls of good families and take them captive, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian shrines, both inside (the city) and out, and that they do not let the righteous offerings done in the past and given in the past to those shrines fall into decline?”

“I have heard that, lord….

“As long as the Vajjians honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the Vajjian shrines, both inside (the city) and out, and do not let the righteous offerings done in the past and given in the past to those shrines fall into decline, Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“Have you heard, Ānanda, that righteous protection, watch, and guarding for arahants is well-provided by the Vajjians (with the thought,) ‘If there are any arahants who have yet to come to our domain, may they come; and may the arahants who have come to our domain live in comfort’?

“I have heard that, lord….

“As long as righteous protection, watch, and guarding for arahants is well-provided by the Vajjians (with the thought,) ‘If there are any arahants who have yet to come to our domain, may they come; and may the arahants who have come to our domain live in comfort,’ Ānanda, their growth can be expected, not their decline.”

Then the Blessed One addressed Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, “Once, brahman, I was staying near Vesālī at the Sārandada shrine. There I taught the

Vajjians these seven conditions that lead to no decline. As long as these seven conditions endure among the Vajjians, and as long as the Vajjians remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the Vajjians' growth can be expected, not their decline."

When this was said, Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, said to the Blessed One, "Master Gotama, even if the Vajjians are endowed with only one of these conditions that lead to no decline, the Vajjians' growth can be expected, not their decline—to say nothing of all seven. Nothing can be done to the Vajjians by King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta, the king of Magadha, through force of arms—except by befriending them and sowing dissension (among them).3

"Well, then, Master Gotama, we must go now. Many are our duties, many our responsibilities."

"Then do, brahman, what you think it is now time to do."

Then Vassakāra the brahman, the chief minister of Magadha, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from his seat and left.

Not long after his departure, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda: "Go, Ānanda. Have all the monks living in dependence on Rājagaha gather at the assembly hall."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—having had all the monks living in dependence on Rājagaha gather at the assembly hall—approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, "The Saṅgha of monks has gathered, lord. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do."

Then the Blessed One, getting up from his seat, went to the assembly hall and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out. Having sat down, he addressed the monks:

"Monks, I will teach you the seven conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

"Monks, as long as the monks meet often, meet a great deal, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

"As long as the monks meet in harmony, adjourn from their meetings in harmony, and conduct Saṅgha business in harmony, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

"As long as the monks neither decree what has been undecreed nor repeal what has been decreed, but conduct themselves, having undertaken the training rules as they have been

decreed, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks honor, respect, venerate, and do homage to the elder monks—those with seniority who have long been ordained, the fathers of the Saṅgha, leaders of the Saṅgha—regarding them as worth listening to, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks do not come under the sway of any arisen craving that leads to further-becoming, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks see their own benefit in wilderness dwellings, their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“And as long as the monks each keep firmly in mind: ‘If there are any well-behaved companions in the holy life who have yet to come, may they come; and may the well-behaved companions in the holy life who have come live in comfort,’ their growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”4

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“Monks, as long as the monks are not infatuated with (construction) work, do not delight in construction work, and are not committed to infatuation with construction work, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with gossip…

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with sleeping…

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with entanglement…

“As long as the monks are not infatuated with evil ambition and have not come under the sway of evil ambitions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“As long as the monks do not have evil friends, evil companions, and evil comrades, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.

“And as long as the monks do not stop half-way with lower distinctions & achievements, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.5

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, as long as the monks have conviction… shame… compunction… learning… aroused persistence… established mindfulness… discernment, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.6

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

“Monks, as long as the monks develop mindfulness as a factor for awakening… analysis of qualities as a factor for awakening… persistence as a factor for awakening… rapture as a factor for awakening… calm as a factor for awakening… concentration as a factor for awakening… equanimity as a factor for awakening, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.7

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.”

“Monks, I will teach you seven further conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said: “Monks, as long as the monks develop the perception of inconstancy… the perception of not-self… the perception of unattractiveness… the perception of drawbacks… the perception of abandoning… the perception of dispassion… the perception of cessation, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their decline.8

“As long as these seven conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these seven conditions, the monks’ growth can be expected, not their

decline."

"Monks, I will teach you six further9 conditions that lead to no decline. Listen & pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said:

"As long as the monks are set on bodily acts of good will with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs, the monks' growth can be expected, not their decline.

"As long as the monks are set on verbal acts of good will with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs...

"As long as the monks are set on mental acts of good will with regard to their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs...

"As long as the monks, whatever righteous gains they may obtain in a righteous way—even if only the alms in their bowls—do not consume them alone, but consume them after sharing them in common with their virtuous companions in the holy life...

"As long as the monks—with reference to the virtues that are untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration—dwell with their virtue in tune with that of their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs...

"And as long as the monks—with reference to the view that is noble, leading outward, that leads those who act in accordance with it to the right ending of suffering & stress—dwell with their view in tune with those of their companions in the holy life, to their faces & behind their backs, the monks' growth can be expected, not their decline.

"As long as these six conditions endure among the monks, and as long as the monks remain steadfast in these six conditions, the monks' growth can be expected, not their decline."10

While staying there near Rājagaha on Vulture Peak Mountain, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: "Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance."

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Rājagaha as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, "Come, Ānanda, we will head for Ambalaṭṭhikā."11

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Ambalaṭṭhikā. There he stayed near Ambalaṭṭhikā at the Royal Cottage. While staying there near Ambalaṭṭhikā at the Royal Cottage, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Ambalaṭṭhikā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Nāḷandā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Nāḷandā. There he stayed near Nāḷandā at the Pāvādika mango grove.

Then Ven. Sāriputta went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Sāriputta said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One!”

“Grand is this bull-statement you have spoken, Sāriputta; categorical this lion’s roar you have roared: ‘Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One!’ So then, Sāriputta, have you encompassed with your awareness the awareness of all the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones that have been in the past and known: ‘Such was their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (meditative) dwelling, such their release’?”

“No, lord.”

“Then have you encompassed with your awareness the awareness of all the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones that will be in the future and known: ‘Such will be their virtue, such their Dhamma, such their discernment, such their (meditative) dwelling, such their release’?”

“No, lord.”

“Then have you encompassed with your awareness my awareness—the awareness of the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one in the present—and known: ‘Such is his virtue, such his Dhamma, such his discernment, such his (meditative) dwelling, such his release’?”

“No, lord.”

“Then, Sāriputta, if you don’t have knowledge of the awareness of the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones of the past, future, & present, how is it that just now you spoke this grand bull-statement and roared this categorical lion’s roar: ‘Lord, I have confidence in the Blessed One that there neither has been nor will be nor is currently found a contemplative or brahman whose direct knowledge of self-awakening is greater than that of the Blessed One’?”

“Lord, I don’t have knowledge of the awareness of the worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones of the past, future, & present, but I have known the consistency of the Dhamma. It’s as if there were a royal frontier city with strong ramparts, strong walls & arches, and a single gate. In it would be a wise, competent, & intelligent gatekeeper to keep out those he didn’t know and to let in those he did. Walking along the path encircling the city, he wouldn’t see a crack or an opening in the walls big enough for even a cat to slip through. The thought would occur to him: ‘Whatever large creatures enter or leave the city all enter or leave it through this gate.’12

“In the same way, I have known the consistency of the Dhamma: ‘All those who were worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones in the past awoke to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well-established their minds in the four establishings of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. All those who will be worthy ones, the rightly self-awakened ones in the future will awaken to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well-established their minds in the four establishings of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening. The Blessed One who is now the worthy one, the rightly self-awakened one has awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening after having abandoned the five hindrances—those defilements of awareness that weaken discernment—having well-established his mind in the four establishings of mindfulness and having developed, as they have come to be, the seven factors for awakening.”

While staying there near Nāḷandā at the Pāvādika mango grove, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Nāḷandā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Pāṭali Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Pāṭali Village.13 The lay followers of Pāṭali Village heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has reached Pāṭali Village.” So they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to (the use of) the rest-house hall.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence. Sensing his acquiescence, the lay followers of Pāṭali Village got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, went to the rest-house hall. On arrival, they spread it all over with felt rugs, arranged seats, set out a water vessel, and raised an oil lamp. Then they went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, stood to one side. As they were standing there, they said to him, “Lord, the rest-house hall has been covered all over with felt rugs, seats have been arranged, a water vessel has been set out, and an oil lamp raised. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do.”

So the Blessed One, in the evening,14 after adjusting his lower robe and taking his bowl & outer robe, went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the rest-house hall. On arrival he washed his feet, entered the hall, and sat with his back to the central post, facing east. The Saṅgha of monks washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the western wall, facing east, ranged around the Blessed One.

The lay followers of Pāṭali Village washed their feet, entered the hall, and sat with their backs to the eastern wall, facing west, ranged around the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One addressed the lay followers of Pāṭali Village, “Householders, there are these five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue. Which five?

“There is the case where an unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, by reason of heedlessness undergoes the loss/confiscation of great wealth. This is the first drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the bad reputation of the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, whatever assembly the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so without confidence & abashed. This is the third drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue, dies confused. This is the fourth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“And further, the unvirtuous person, defective in virtue—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a plane of deprivation, a bad destination, a lower realm, hell. This is the fifth drawback coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“These, householders, are the five drawbacks coming from an unvirtuous person’s defect in virtue.

“Householders, there are these five rewards coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue. Which five?

“There is the case where a virtuous person, consummate in virtue, by reason of heedfulness acquires a great mass of wealth. This is the first reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the fine reputation of the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, gets spread about. This is the second reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, whatever assembly the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, approaches—whether of noble warriors, brahmans, householders, or contemplatives—he/she does so with confidence & unabashed. This is the third reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue, dies unconfused. This is the fourth reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“And further, the virtuous person, consummate in virtue—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappears in a good destination, a heavenly world. This is the fifth reward coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.

“These, householders, are the five rewards coming from a virtuous person’s consummation in virtue.”

Then the Blessed One—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged the lay followers of Pāṭali Village for a large part of the night with Dhamma talk—dismissed them, saying, “The night is far gone, householders. Do what you think it is now time to do.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the lay followers of Pāṭali Village got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left. Then the Blessed One, not long after they had left, entered an empty building.

Now on that occasion, Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, were building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians. And on that occasion many devas by the thousands were occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence were inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupied sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence were inclined to build their homes.

The Blessed One, with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—saw those devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village.

Then, getting up in the last watch of the night, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, who is building a city at Pāṭali Village?”

“Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, lord, are building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.”

“Ānanda, it’s as if they had consulted the Devas of the Thirty-three: That’s how Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, are building a city at Pāṭali Village to preempt the Vajjians.

“Just now, Ānanda—with the divine eye—purified and surpassing the human—I saw many devas by the thousands occupying sites in Pāṭali Village. In the area where devas of great influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of great influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of middling influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of middling influence are inclined to build their homes. In the area where devas of low influence occupy sites, there the minds of the king’s royal ministers of low influence are inclined to build their homes.

“Ānanda, as far as the sphere of the Ariyans extends, as far as merchants’ roads extend, this will be the supreme city: Pāṭaliputta,15 where the seedpods of the Pāṭali plant break open. There will be three dangers for Pāṭaliputta: from fire, from water, or from the breaking of alliances.”

Then Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, they stood to one side. As they were standing there, they said to him, “May Master Gotama acquiesce to our meal today, together with the Saṅgha of monks.” The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, went to their rest-house. On arrival, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in their rest-house, they announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, Master Gotama. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to the rest-house of Sunidha & Vassakāra, the chief ministers of Magadha. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Sunidha & Vassakāra, with their own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Sunidha & Vassakāra, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One gave his approval with these verses:

In whatever place

a wise person makes his dwelling,

—there providing food

for the virtuous,

the restrained,

leaders of the holy life—

he should dedicate that offering

to the devas there.

They, receiving honor, will honor him;

being respected, will show him respect.

As a result, they will feel sympathy for him,

like that of a mother for her child, her son.

A person with whom the devas sympathize

always meets with auspicious things.

Then the Blessed One, having given his approval to Sunidha & Vassakāra with these verses, got up from his seat and left. And on that occasion, Sunidha & Vassakāra followed right after the Blessed One, (thinking,) “By whichever gate Gotama the contemplative departs today, that will be called the Gotama Gate. And by whichever ford he crosses over the Ganges River, that will be called the Gotama Ford.”

So the gate by which the Blessed One departed was called the Gotama Gate. Then he went to the Ganges River. Now on that occasion the Ganges River was full up to the banks, so that a crow could drink from it. Some people were searching for boats; some were searching for floats; some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other. So the Blessed One—just as a strong man might extend his flexed arm or flex his extended arm—disappeared from the near bank of the Ganges River and reappeared on the far bank together with the Saṅgha of monks. He saw that some people were searching for boats; some were searching for floats; some were binding rafts in hopes of going from this shore to the other.

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Those

who cross the foaming flood,

having made a bridge, avoiding the swamps

—while people are binding rafts—

intelligent people

have already crossed.

[II]

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Koṭi Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Koṭi Village. There he stayed near Koṭi Village.

And there he addressed the monks: “It’s through not awakening to or penetrating four noble truths, monks, that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. Which four?

“It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of stress that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the origination of stress… It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the cessation of stress… It’s through not awakening to or penetrating the noble truth of the path of practice leading to cessation of stress that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I.

“(But now,) this noble truth of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the origination of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the cessation of stress has been awakened to & penetrated, the noble truth of the path of practice leading to cessation of stress has been awakened to & penetrated. Craving for becoming has been crushed; the guide to becoming [i.e., clinging] is ended. There now is no further-becoming.”

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, the Teacher, the One Well-Gone, said further:

From lack of vision

of the four noble truths,

we have wandered a long time

simply in these births & those.

These are now seen,

the guide to becoming is removed,

crushed is the root of suffering & stress.

There is now no further-becoming.

While staying there near Koṭi Village, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Koṭi Village as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Nādikā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Nādikā. There he stayed near Nādikā at the Brick Hall.

Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, the monk named Sāḷha has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state? The nun named Nandā has died in Nādikā. What is her destination, what her future state? The male lay-follower named Sudatta has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state? The female lay-follower named Sujātā has died in Nādikā. What is her destination, what her future state? The male lay-follower named Kakudha… Kāraḷimbha… Nikaṭa… Kaṭissaha… Tuṭṭha… Santuṭṭha… Bhaṭa… Subhaṭa has died in Nādikā. What is his destination, what his future state?”

“Ānanda, the monk Sāḷha, with the ending of effluents, dwelt in the effluent-free awareness-release and discernment-release, having directly known and realized them for himself right in the here-and-now. The nun Nandā, with the ending of the five lower fetters,16 has spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world. Sudatta the male lay-follower, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion, is a once-returner, who—on returning only once more to this world—will put an end to stress. Sujātā the female lay-follower, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, is a stream-winner, never again destined for states of destitution, certain, headed for self-awakening. Kakudha the male lay-follower… Kāraḷimbha… Nikaṭa… Kaṭissaha… Tuṭṭha… Santuṭṭha… Bhaṭa… Subhaṭa the male lay-follower, with the ending of the five lower fetters, have spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world.

“Ānanda, more than 50 lay-followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of the five lower fetters, have spontaneously arisen (in the Pure Abodes,) there to be totally unbound, destined never again to return from that world. 96 lay-followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, and with the attenuation of passion, aversion, & delusion, are once-returners, who—on returning only once more to this world—will put an end to stress. 510 lay-followers who have died in Nādikā, with the ending of [the first] three fetters, are stream-winners, never again destined for states of destitution, certain, headed

for self-awakening.

“It’s not amazing, Ānanda, that anyone who has become a human being would die. But if with every death you approach the Tathāgata and ask about this matter, that would be wearisome for him.

“Therefore, Ānanda, I will teach you the Dhamma-discourse called the Dhamma-mirror, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’

“And what is the Dhamma-mirror Dhamma-discourse, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening’?

“There is the case where the disciple of the noble ones is endowed with verified confidence in the Awakened One: ‘Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy & rightly self-awakened, consummate in clear-knowing & conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the cosmos, unexcelled trainer of people fit to be tamed, teacher of devas & human beings, awakened, blessed.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Dhamma: ‘The Dhamma is well taught by the Blessed One, to be seen here & now, timeless, inviting verification, pertinent, to be experienced by the observant for themselves.’

“He/she is endowed with verified confidence in the Saṅgha: ‘The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who have practiced well… who have practiced straight-forwardly… who have practiced methodically… who have practiced masterfully—in other words, the four types of noble disciples when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as individual types17—they are the Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples: deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’”

“He/she is endowed with virtues that are appealing to the noble ones: untorn, unbroken, unspotted, unsplattered, liberating, praised by the observant, ungrasped at, leading to concentration.

“This, Ānanda, is the Dhamma-mirror Dhamma-discourse, endowed with which a disciple of the noble ones, if he/she so desires, may predict for him or herself: ‘Hell is ended for me; animal wombs are ended; the state of the hungry ghosts is ended; planes of deprivation, the bad destinations, the lower realms are ended! I am a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening!’”18

While staying there near Nādikā in the Brick House, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Nādikā as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Vesālī.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Vesālī. There he stayed near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove.

And there he addressed the monks: “Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all. And how is a monk mindful? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings… mind… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk is mindful.

“And how is a monk alert? When going forward & returning, he makes himself alert; when looking toward & looking away… when bending & extending his limbs… when carrying his outer cloak, his upper robe, & his bowl… when eating, drinking, chewing, & savoring… when urinating & defecating… when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, & remaining silent, he makes himself alert. This is how a monk is alert.

“Stay mindful, monks, and alert. This is our instruction to you all.”

Then Ambapālī the courtesan19 heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has arrived at Vesālī and is staying near Vesālī in my mango [amba] grove!” Then, having auspicious vehicles yoked, she got into an auspicious vehicle, left Vesālī with the auspicious vehicles and drove toward her own garden [the grove]. Going in her vehicle as far as there was ground for a vehicle, getting down from her vehicle, she approached the Blessed One on foot. On arrival, having bowed down to him, she sat to one side. As she was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged her with a talk on Dhamma. Then Ambapālī the courtesan—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged with the Blessed One’s talk on Dhamma—said to him, “Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.” The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from her seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left.

Then the Licchavis of Vesālī heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has arrived at Vesālī and is staying near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove!” Then, having auspicious vehicles yoked, the

Licchavis got into the auspicious vehicles, and left Vesālī with the auspicious vehicles. Now, some of those Licchavis were dark blue, with dark blue complexions, dark blue clothing, & dark blue ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were yellow, with yellow complexions, yellow clothing, & yellow ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were red, with red complexions, red clothing, & red ornaments. Some of those Licchavis were white, with white complexions, white clothing, & white ornaments.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, driving axle to axle, wheel to wheel, yoke to yoke, brought those young Licchavis to a halt. So those Licchavis said to her, "Hey, Ambapālī, what are you doing—driving axle to axle, wheel to wheel, yoke to yoke—bringing the young Licchavis to a halt?"

"Because, young masters, I have invited the Blessed One, together with the Saṅgha of monks, for tomorrow's meal!"

"Give us that meal, Ambapālī, for 100,000!"

"Even if the masters gave me Vesālī with all its revenue, I still wouldn't give up such a great meal!"

Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers: "How we've been defeated by Little Ambapālī! How we've been cheated by Little Ambapālī!"20

Then the Licchavis set out for Ambapālī's grove. The Blessed One saw them coming from afar and, on seeing them, he said to the monks, "Those monks who have never before seen the Devas of the Thirty-three, look at the assembly of Licchavis! Gaze at the assembly of Licchavis! Regard the assembly of Licchavis as like the assembly of the Thirty-three!"

Then the Licchavis, going in their vehicles as far as there was ground for vehicles, got down from their vehicles and approached the Blessed One on foot. On arrival, having bowed down to him, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with a talk on Dhamma. Then the Licchavis—instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged with the Blessed One's talk on Dhamma—said to him, "Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to our meal tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks."

"Licchavis, I have already acquiesced to Ambapālī the courtesan's meal tomorrow."

Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers: "How we've been defeated by Little Ambapālī! How we've been cheated by Little Ambapālī!"

Then the Licchavis, delighting in and approving of the Blessed One's words, got up from their seats and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left.

Then Ambapālī the courtesan, at the end of the night—after having exquisite staple & non-staple food prepared in her own garden—announced the time to the Blessed One:

“It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Ambapālī the courtesan’s meal offering. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Ambapālī the courtesan, with her own hands, served & satisfied the Saṅgha of monks, with the Buddha at its head, with exquisite staple & non-staple food. Then, when the Blessed One had finished his meal and had rinsed his bowl & hands, Ambapālī the courtesan, taking a low seat, sat to one side. As she was sitting there, she said to the Blessed One, “Lord, I give this garden to the Saṅgha of monks with the Buddha at its head.”

The the Blessed One accepted the garden. Then—having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged Ambapālī the courtesan with a talk on Dhamma—got up from his seat and left.

While staying there near Vesālī in Ambapālī’s grove, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed in Ambapālī’s grove as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Veḷuva Village.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Veḷuva Village. There he stayed near Veḷuva Village.

And there he addressed the monks: “Come, monks, enter the Rains retreat around Vesālī with your friends, acquaintances, & eating companions. As for me, I will enter the Rains retreat right here near Veḷuva Village.

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monks entered the Rains retreat around Vesālī with their friends, acquaintances, & eating companions. The Blessed One entered the Rains retreat right there near Veḷuva Village.

Then in the Blessed One, when he had entered the Rains retreat, there arose a severe disease with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it—mindful, alert, & not struck down by it. The thought occurred to him, “It would not be proper for me to totally unbind without having addressed my attendants or taken leave of the Saṅgha of monks. Why don’t I, bending back this disease with persistence, keep determining the fabrications of life?” So the Blessed One, bending back the disease with persistence, kept determining the fabrications of life. And his disease calmed down.

Then the Blessed One—having recovered from being ill, not long recovered from the illness—went out of the dwelling and sat down on a seat laid out behind the dwelling. Then Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "What a happy sight to see the Blessed One's comfort! What a happy sight to see the Blessed One's being at ease! Because of the Blessed One's illness my own body felt as if it were drugged. I lost my bearings. Things were unclear to me. Yet I still took a measure of reassurance in the thought that the Blessed One would not totally unbind as long as he hadn't given at least some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks."

"What more does the Saṅgha of monks want from me, Ānanda? I have taught the Dhamma without making an inside or outside (version).21 The Tathāgata has no closed fist with regard to teachings.22 To whomever the thought occurs, 'I will govern the Saṅgha of monks,' or 'The Saṅgha of monks looks to me,' he should give some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks. But the thought doesn't occur to the Tathāgata that 'I will govern the Saṅgha of monks,' or 'The Saṅgha of monks looks to me.' So why should he give some pronouncement concerning the Saṅgha of monks?

"I am now aged, Ānanda: old, elderly, advanced in years, having come to the last stage of life, 80 years old. Just as an old cart is kept going with the help of bamboo strips, the Tathāgata's body is kept going with the help of bamboo strips, as it were. When the Tathāgata—not attending to any theme at all, and with the cessation of certain feelings—enters & remains in the theme-less concentration of awareness, that is when his body is more at ease.

"So, Ānanda, you should all live with yourselves as your island, yourselves as your refuge, with no other as your refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other as your refuge. And how does a monk live with himself as his island, himself as his refuge, with no other as his refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, with no other as his refuge? There is the case where a monk remains focused on the body in & of itself—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. He remains focused on feelings in & of themselves… mind in & of itself… mental qualities in & of themselves—ardent, alert, & mindful—subduing greed & distress with reference to the world. This is how a monk lives with himself as his island, himself as his refuge, with no other as his refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, with no other as his refuge. For those who, now or when I am gone, live with themselves as their island, themselves as their refuge, with no other as their refuge; with the Dhamma as their island, the Dhamma as their refuge, not with another as their refuge, will be my foremost monks: those who are desirous of training."

[III]

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went into Vesālī for alms. Then, having gone for alms in Vesālī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, he addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Get a sitting cloth,

Ānanda. We will go to the Pāvāla shrine for the day's abiding."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda followed along behind the Blessed One, carrying the sitting cloth. Then the Blessed One went to the Pāvāla shrine and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka shrine, the Sattamba shrine, the ManySon shrine, the Sāranda shrine, the Pāvāla shrine.23

"Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power24 are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.25 In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon."

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn't able to understand his meaning. He didn't beg of him, "Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas." It was as if his mind were possessed by Māra.

A second time… A third time, the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka shrine, the Sattamba shrine, the ManySon shrine, the Sāranda shrine, the Pāvāla shrine.

"Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon."

But Ven. Ānanda—even when the Blessed One had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—wasn't able to understand his meaning. He didn't request of him, "Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas." It was as if his mind were possessed by Māra.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, "Go, Ānanda. Do what you think it is now time to do."

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, went to sit under a tree not far from the Blessed One.

Then, not long after Ven. Ānanda had left, Māra the Evil One went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to confidence, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’26

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s monk disciples are experienced, trained, attained to confidence, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my nun disciples… my male lay-follower disciples… my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to maturity, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’

“But now, lord, the Blessed One’s female lay-follower disciples are experienced, trained, attained to maturity, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.

“May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as this holy life of

mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.' But now, lord, the Blessed One's holy life is powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.

"May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One's total unbinding, lord."

When this was said, the Blessed One said to Māra, the Evil One: "Relax, Evil One. It won't be long until the Tathāgata's total unbinding. In three months' time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind."

Thus at the Pāvāla shrine—mindful & alert—the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life.27 And as the Blessed One relinquished the fabrications of life, there was a great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air).

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Comparing the incomparable28

with coming-into-being,

the sage relinquished

the fabrication of becoming.

Inwardly joyful,

centered,

he split his own

coming-into-being

like a coat of mail.29

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda: "How amazing! How astounding! What a great earthquake! What a very great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air)! What is the reason, what is the cause, for the appearance of the great earthquake?"

So Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "How amazing, lord! How astounding! What a great earthquake! What a very great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of thunder split (the air)! What, lord, is the reason, what is the cause, for the appearance of the great earthquake?"

"Ānanda, there are these eight reasons, eight causes, for the appearance of a great earthquake. Which eight?

“This great earth, Ānanda, is established on water. The water is established on wind. The wind is standing on space. There comes a time when a great wind blows. The great wind blowing shakes the water. The water, shaken, shakes the earth. This is the first reason, the first cause, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“Then, Ānanda, there comes a time when a brahman of power, with mastery of the mind, or a deva of great power, great might, has developed a limited earth-perception and an immeasurable liquid-perception. He makes this earth shake & shiver, quiver & quake. This is the second reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the bodhisatta, falling from the Tusita group, mindful & alert, descends into his mother’s womb, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the third reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the bodhisatta, mindful & alert, emerges from his mother’s womb, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the fourth reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the fifth reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata sets rolling the unexcelled Dhamma-wheel, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the sixth reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, mindful & alert, relinquishes the fabrications of life, the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the seventh reason…

“Then, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata, by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining, totally unbinds,30 the earth shakes & shivers, quivers & quakes. This is the eighth reason, the eighth cause, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“These are the eight reasons, the eight causes, for the appearance of a great earthquake.

“Ānanda, there are these eight assemblies. Which eight? A noble warrior assembly, a brahman assembly, a householder assembly, a contemplative assembly, a Four Great Kings assembly, a (Devas of the) Thirty-three assembly, a Māra assembly, a Brahmā assembly.

“I can remember approaching many hundreds of noble warrior assemblies. There—before seating myself, before talking, before engaging in conversation—whatever sort of appearance they had, that was the sort of appearance I had; whatever sort of accent they had, that was the sort of accent I had. And I instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk. While I was speaking, they didn’t know me: ‘Who is this who speaks—a deva or a human being?’ Having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk, I disappeared. When I had disappeared, they didn’t know me: ‘Who is this who disappeared—a deva or a human being?’

“I can remember approaching many hundreds of brahman assemblies… many hundreds of householder assemblies… many hundreds of contemplative assemblies… many hundreds of Four Great King assemblies… many hundreds of (Devas of the) Thirty-three assemblies… many hundreds of Māra assemblies…

“I can remember approaching many hundreds of Brahmā assemblies. There—before seating myself, before talking, before engaging in conversation—whatever sort of appearance they had, that was the sort of appearance I had; whatever sort of accent they had, that was the sort of accent I had. And I instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk. While I was speaking, they didn’t know me: ‘Who is this person who speaks—a deva or a human being?’ Having instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged them with Dhamma talk, I disappeared. When I had disappeared, they didn’t know me: ‘Who is this who disappeared—a deva or a human being?’

“Ānanda, there are these eight dimensions of (mental) mastery. Which eight?

“Having a single perception of form internally, one sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the first dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single perception of form internally, one sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the second dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as limited, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the third dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as immeasurable, beautiful & ugly. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the fourth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Just as a flax-flower is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow, or just as Bārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is blue, blue in its color, blue in its features, blue in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as blue, blue in their color, blue in their features, blue in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the fifth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow. Just as a kaṇṇikāra flower is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow, or just as Bārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is yellow, yellow in its color, yellow in its features, yellow in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as yellow, yellow in their color, yellow in their features, yellow in their glow.

Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the sixth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Just as a bandhu-jīvaka flower is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow, or just as Bārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is red, red in its color, red in its features, red in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as red, red in their color, red in their features, red in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the seventh dimension of (mental) mastery.

“Having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Just as the morning star is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow, or just as Bārāṇasī muslin, smooth on both sides, is white, white in its color, white in its features, white in its glow; in the same way, having a single formless perception internally, one sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. Mastering them, one has the perception, ‘I know; I see.’ This is the eighth dimension of (mental) mastery.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight dimensions of (mental) mastery.31

“Ānanda, there are these eight emancipations. Which eight?

“Possessed of form, one sees forms. This is the first emancipation.

“Not percipient of form internally, one sees forms externally. This is the second emancipation.

“One is intent only on the beautiful. This is the third emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of perceptions of (physical) form, with the disappearance of perceptions of resistance, and not heeding perceptions of multiplicity, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite space,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of space. This is the fourth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of space, (perceiving,) ‘Infinite consciousness,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness. This is the fifth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness, (perceiving,) ‘There is nothing,’ one enters and remains in the dimension of nothingness. This is the sixth emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of nothingness, one enters and remains in the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. This is the seventh emancipation.

“With the complete transcending of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception, one enters and remains in the cessation of perception and feeling. This is the eighth emancipation.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight emancipations.32

“One time, Ānanda, I was staying in Uruvelā on the bank of the Nerañjarā River at the Goat-herd Banyan, newly awakened. Then Māra, the Evil One, approached me and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to me, ‘May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.’

“When this was said, I said to Māra, the Evil One, ‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to confidence, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.’

“‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my nun disciples… my male lay-follower disciples… my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced, trained, attained to maturity, learned, maintaining the Dhamma, practicing the Dhamma in line with the Dhamma, practicing masterfully, living in line with the Dhamma; declaring the Dhamma—after having learned it from their own teachers—teaching it, describing it, setting it forth, revealing it, explaining it, making it plain; well-refuting, in line with the Dhamma, any opposing teachings that have arisen; teaching the Dhamma with its marvels.

“‘Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.’

“And just now, Ānanda, (here) at the Pāvāla Shrine, Māra the Evil One approached me and, on arrival, stood to one side. As he was standing here, he said to me, ‘May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord. After all, these words were said by the Blessed One: “Evil One, I will not totally unbind as long as my monk disciples are not yet experienced, as long as my nun disciples… my male lay-follower disciples… my female lay-follower disciples are not yet experienced… as long as this holy life of mine is not powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.” But now, lord, the Blessed One’s holy life is powerful, prosperous, widely-spread, disseminated among many people, well-expounded as far as there are human beings & devas.

“‘May the Blessed One totally unbind now, lord. May the One Well-Gone totally unbind now, lord. Now is the time for the Blessed One’s total unbinding, lord.’

“When this was said, I said to Māra, the Evil One: ‘Relax, Evil One. It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.’

“Just now, Ānanda, here at the Pāvāla shrine—mindful & alert—I relinquished the fabrications of life.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.”

“Enough, now, Ānanda. Don’t beg the Tathāgata. Now is not the time for begging the Tathāgata.”

A second time… A third time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.”

“Ānanda, do you have conviction in the Tathāgata’s awakening?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Then why, Ānanda, do you harass the Tathāgata up to three times?”

“Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard this, face-to-face have I received this: ‘Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.’”

“Ānanda, do you have conviction in the Tathāgata’s awakening?”

“Yes, lord.”

“Then the wrong-doing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake, in that—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—you weren’t able to understand his meaning. You didn’t beg of the Tathāgata, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, &

happiness of human beings & devas.' If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrong-doing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

"On one occasion, Ānanda, I was staying near Rājagaha, on Vulture Peak Mountain. There I addressed you, 'Vulture Peak mountain is refreshing, Ānanda. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.' But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren't able to understand his meaning. You didn't beg of the Tathāgata, 'Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.' If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrong-doing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

"On one occasion, Ānanda, I was staying right there near Rājagaha at the Gotama Banyan tree… right there near Rājagaha at Robbers Cliff… right there near Rājagaha in Sattapaṇṇa Cave… right there near Rājagaha at the Black Rock on Isigili Mountain… right there near Rājagaha under the rock overhang at Serpents Water Hole in the Cool Forest… right there near Rājagaha at Tapodā Park… right there near Rājagaha at the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Feeding Ground… right there near Rājagaha at Jīvaka's Mango Grove… right there near Rājagaha at the Maddakucchi Deer Park. There, too, I addressed you, 'Rājagaha is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are Vulture Peak Mountain, the Gotama Banyan tree, Robbers Cliff, Sattapaṇṇa Cave, the Black Rock on Isigili Mountain, the rock overhang at Serpents Water Hole in the Cool Forest, Tapodā Park, the Bamboo Forest, the Squirrels' Feeding Ground, Jīvaka's Mango Grove, the Maddakucchi Deer Park. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.' But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren't able to understand his meaning. You didn't beg of the Tathāgata, 'Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.' If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrong-doing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

"On one occasion, Ānanda, I was staying right here in Vesālī at the Udena shrine… the Gotamaka shrine… the Sattamba shrine… the ManySon shrine… the Sāranda shrine…

“And just now, Ānanda, (here) at Pāvāla Shrine, I addressed you today: ‘Vesālī is refreshing, Ānanda. Refreshing, too, are the Udena shrine, the Gotamaka shrine, the Sattamba shrine, the ManySon shrine, the Sāranda shrine, the Pāvāla shrine. Anyone, Ānanda, in whom the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken, could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon. In the Tathāgata, Ānanda, the four bases of power are developed, pursued, given a means of transport, given a grounding, steadied, consolidated, and well-undertaken. He could—if he wanted—remain for an eon or the remainder of an eon.’ But you, Ānanda—even when the Tathāgata had given such a blatant sign, such a blatant hint—weren’t able to understand his meaning. You didn’t beg of the Tathāgata, ‘Lord, may the Blessed One remain for an eon. May the One Well-Gone remain for an eon—for the benefit of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of sympathy for the world, for the welfare, benefit, & happiness of human beings & devas.’ If you had begged the Tathāgata two times, the Tathāgata would have refused, but after the third time he would have acquiesced. The wrong-doing is yours, Ānanda. Yours the mistake.

“But then, Ānanda, haven’t I—cautioning—pointed out different-becoming, separate-becoming, otherwise-becoming of all that is dear & appealing? What else is there to expect? That of anything born, become, fabricated, subject to disintegration, you might say, ‘O, may it not disintegrate’? The possibility doesn’t exist. And that is what the Tathāgata has gotten rid of, vomited up, released, abandoned, forfeited. It was with the fabrications of life relinquished that this categorical statement was spoken: ‘It won’t be long until the Tathāgata’s total unbinding. In three months’ time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind.’ For the Tathāgata, for the sake of life, to rescind that: The possibility doesn’t exist.

“Come, now, Ānanda. We will head for the Gabled Hall in the Great Forest.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One together with Ven. Ānanda went to the Great Forest and to the Gabled Hall. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Go, Ānanda. Have all the monks living in dependence on Vesālī gather at the assembly hall.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—having had all the monks living in dependence on Vesālī gather at the assembly hall—approached the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he stood to one side. As he was standing there, he said to the Blessed One, “The Saṅgha of monks has gathered, lord. May the Blessed One do what he thinks it is now time to do.”

Then the Blessed One went to the assembly hall and, on arrival, sat down on the seat laid out. Having sat down, he addressed the monks: “Monks, the qualities I have taught, having known them directly: You should grasp them thoroughly, cultivate them, develop them, & pursue them so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas. And which are the qualities I have taught…

for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas? The four establishings of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path.33 These are the qualities I have taught, having known them directly, that you should grasp thoroughly, cultivate, develop, & pursue so that this holy life may long endure & remain steadfast for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of the multitude, out of sympathy for the world, for the benefit, welfare, & happiness of human beings & devas."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, 'I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness.34 It won't be long until the Tathāgata's total unbinding. In three months' time from now, the Tathāgata will totally unbind."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said that, the One Well-Gone said further:

Young & old

wise & foolish

rich & poor:

all end up dying.

As a potter's clay vessels

large & small

fired & unfired

all end up broken,

so too life

heads to death.

Then the Teacher said further:

Ripe my age, little the life

remaining to me.

Leaving you, I will go,

having made my refuge

for myself.

Be heedful, monks,

mindful, virtuous.

With your resolves well-concentrated,

look after your minds.

He who, in this

Dhamma & Vinaya,

remains heedful,

leaving the wandering-on

through birth,

will make an end

of stress.

[IV]

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went into Vesālī for alms. Having gone for alms in Vesālī, after the meal, returning from his alms round, gazing on Vesālī with an elephant's look, he addressed Ven. Ānanda: "Ānanda, this is the Tathāgata's last look at Vesālī. Come, Ānanda, we will head for Bhaṇḍa Village.

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Bhaṇḍa Village. There the Blessed One stayed near Bhaṇḍa Village.

And there he addressed the monks, "It's through not awakening to or penetrating four qualities, monks, that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. Which four?

"It's through not awakening to or penetrating noble virtue that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I. It's through not awakening to or penetrating noble concentration... It's through not awakening to or penetrating noble discernment... It's through not awakening to or penetrating noble release that we have transmigrated and wandered on for such a long time, you & I.

"(But now,) this noble virtue has been awakened to & penetrated, noble concentration has been awakened to & penetrated, noble discernment has been awakened to & penetrated, noble release has been awakened to & penetrated. Craving for becoming has been crushed, the guide to becoming [i.e., craving] is ended. There now is no further-becoming."

That is what the Blessed One said. Having said it, the Teacher, the One Well-Gone, said further:

Virtue, concentration, discernment,

and unexcelled release:

These qualities have been awakened to

by Gotama, the prestigious.

Directly knowing this, he shows it to the monks—

the awakened one,

the teacher who has made an ending of stress,

the one with eyes,

totally unbound.

While staying there at Bhaṇḍa Village, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: “Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance.”

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Bhaṇḍa Village as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Come, Ānanda, we will head for Hatthi Village, Amba Village, Jambu Village, to Bhoganagara.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Bhoganagara. There the Blessed One stayed near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda shrine.

There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, I will teach you four great standards. Listen and pay careful attention.”

“As you say, lord,” the monks responded to him.

The Blessed One said, “There is the case where a monk says this: ‘Face-to-face with the Blessed One have I heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher’s instruction.’ His statement is neither to be approved nor scorned. Without approval or scorn, take careful note of his words and make them stand against the suttas and tally them against the Vinaya. If, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they don’t stand with the suttas or tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is not the word of the Blessed One; this monk has misunderstood it’—and you should reject it. But if, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they stand with the suttas and tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: ‘This is the word of the Blessed One; this monk has understood it rightly.’

“Then there is the case where a monk says this: ‘In a monastery over there dwells a Saṅgha with well-known leading elders. Face-to-face with that Saṅgha I have heard this,

face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.' ...

"Then there is the case where a monk says this: 'In a monastery over there dwell many learned elder monks, well-versed in the tradition, who have memorized the Dhamma, the Vinaya, and the Mātikā.35 Face-to-face with those elders I have heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.' ...

"Then there is the case where a monk says this: 'In a monastery over there dwells a learned elder monk, well-versed in the tradition, who has memorized the Dhamma, the Vinaya, and the Mātikā. Face-to-face with that elder I have heard this, face-to-face have I received this: This is the Dhamma, this is the Vinaya, this is the Teacher's instruction.' His statement is neither to be approved nor scorned. Without approval or scorn, take careful note of his words and make them stand against the suttas and tally them against the Vinaya. If, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they don't stand with the suttas or tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: 'This is not the word of the Blessed One; this monk has misunderstood it'—and you should reject it. But if, on making them stand against the suttas and tallying them against the Vinaya, you find that they stand with the suttas and tally with the Vinaya, you may conclude: 'This is the word of the Blessed One; this monk has understood it rightly.'

"Monks, remember these four great standards."

While staying there near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda shrine, the Blessed One often gave this Dhamma talk to the monks: "Such is virtue, such is concentration, such is discernment. Concentration nurtured with virtue is of great fruit, great reward. Discernment nurtured with concentration is of great fruit, great reward. The mind nurtured with discernment is rightly released from the effluents, i.e., the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance."

Then the Blessed One, having stayed near Bhoganagara at the Ānanda shrine as long as he pleased, said to Ven. Ānanda, "Come, Ānanda, we will head for Pāvā."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One, together with a large Saṅgha of monks, went to Pāvā. There the Blessed One stayed near Pāvā in the mango grove of Cunda the silversmith.

Cunda the silversmith heard, "The Blessed One, they say, on reaching Pāvā, is staying near Pāvā in my mango grove."

So Cunda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged him with Dhamma talk. Then Cunda—instructed, urged, roused, & encouraged by the Blessed One's Dhamma talk—said to him, "Lord, may the Blessed One acquiesce to my meal

tomorrow, together with the Saṅgha of monks.”

The Blessed One acquiesced with silence.

Then Cunda, understanding the Blessed One’s acquiescence, got up from his seat and, bowing down to him and circumambulating him, left. Then, at the end of the night, after having exquisite staple & non-staple food—including a large amount of pig-delicacy36—prepared in his own home, he announced the time to the Blessed One: “It’s time, lord. The meal is ready.”

Then the Blessed One, early in the morning, adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went together with the Saṅgha of monks to Cunda’s home. On arrival, he sat down on the seat laid out. Seated, he said to Cunda, “Cunda, serve me with the pig-delicacy you have had prepared, and the Saṅgha of monks with the other staple & non-staple food you have had prepared.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda served the Blessed One with the pig-delicacy he had had prepared, and the Saṅgha of monks with the other staple & non-staple food he had had prepared. Then the Blessed One said to him, “Cunda, bury the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit. I don’t see anyone in the world together with its devas, Māras, &Brahmās, in this generation with its contemplatives &brahmans, its rulers &commonfolk, in whom, when it was ingested, it would go to a healthy change, aside from the Tathāgata.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Cunda buried the remaining pig-delicacy in a pit, went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One—after instructing, urging, rousing, & encouraging him with Dhamma talk—got up from his seat and left.

Then in the Blessed One, after he had eaten Cunda’s meal, there arose a severe disease accompanied with (the passing of) blood, with intense pains & deadly. But the Blessed One endured it—mindful, alert, & not struck down by it.

Then he addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, we will go to Kusinārā.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

I have heard that,

on eating Cunda the silversmith’s meal,

the enlightened one was touched by illness—

fierce, deadly.

After he had eaten the pig-delicacy,

a fierce sickness arose in the Teacher.

After being purged of it,

the Blessed One said,

“To the city of Kusinārā

I will go.”37

Then the Blessed One, going down from the road, went to a certain tree and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will sit down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One sat down on the seat laid out.

Seated, he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager river—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kakudha river is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water,38 with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A second time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

A second time, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “Lord, just now 500 carts have passed through. The meager water—cut by the wheels—flows turbid & disturbed. But the Kakudha River is not far away, with pristine water, pleasing water, cool water, pellucid water, with restful banks, refreshing. There the Blessed One will drink potable water and cool his limbs.”

A third time, the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, please fetch me some water. I am thirsty. I will drink.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda—taking a bowl—went to the river. And the meager river that, cut by the wheels, had been flowing turbid & disturbed, on his approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed. The thought occurred to him, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed!” Fetching water with the bowl, he went to the Blessed One and on arrival said, “How amazing! How astounding!—the great power & great might of the Tathāgata!—in that this meager river that, cut by the wheels, was flowing turbid & disturbed, on my approach flowed pristine, clear, & undisturbed! Drink the water, O Blessed One! Drink the water, O One Well-Gone!”

Then the Blessed One drank the water.39

Now on that occasion Pukkusa Mallaputta, a disciple of Āḷāra Kālāma was traveling on the road from Kusinārā to Pāvā. He saw the Blessed One sitting at the root of a tree and, on seeing him, approached him. On arrival, having bowed down to him, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, "It's amazing, lord. It's astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone forth abide. Once, Āḷāra Kālāma, while traveling, went down from the road and sat not far away at the root of a tree for the day's abiding. Then 500 carts passed by right near him. Then a certain man, coming along right behind those hundreds of carts, approached Āḷāra Kālāma and, on arrival, said to him, 'Venerable sir, did you see 500 carts going past?' 'No, friend, I didn't.' 'But did you hear the sound?' 'No, friend, I didn't.' 'But were you asleep?' 'No, friend, I wasn't asleep.' 'But were you conscious?' 'Yes, friend.' 'Then, venerable sir, being conscious & awake when 500 carts passed by right near you, you neither saw them nor heard a sound. And yet your outer robe is covered with (their) dust!' 'Yes, friend.' Then the thought occurred to that man, 'How amazing! How astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone forth abide—in that, being conscious & awake when 500 carts passed by right near, he would neither see them nor hear a sound!'40 Having proclaimed immense conviction in Āḷāra Kālāma, he then left."

"What do you think, Pukkusa? Which is more difficult to do, more difficult to master: one who, being conscious & awake when 500 carts passed by right near, would neither see them nor hear a sound; or one who, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), would neither see them nor hear a sound?"

"Lord, what would 500 carts amount to—or 600 carts, or 700 carts, or 800 carts, or 900 carts, or 1,000 carts… or 100,000 carts? That would be more difficult to do, more difficult to master: one who, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), would neither see them nor hear a sound."

"One time, Pukkusa, I was staying near Ātumā in a threshing barn. And on that occasion, when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air) not far from the threshing barn, two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with four oxen.

"Then a large crowd of people came out of Ātumā to where the two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with the four oxen. And on that occasion I, having come out of the threshing barn, was doing walking meditation in front of the door to the threshing barn. A certain man from the great crowd of people approached me and, on arrival, having bowed down to me, stood to one side. As he was standing there, I said to him, 'Why, friend, has this great crowd of people gathered?'

"'Just now, lord—when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air)—two farmers—brothers—were killed, along with four oxen. That's why this great crowd of people has gathered. But you, lord: Where were you?'

“‘I was right here, friend.’

“‘But did you see anything?’

“‘No, friend, I didn’t.”

“‘But did you hear the sound?’

“‘No, friend, I didn’t.’

“‘But were you asleep?’

“‘No, friend, I wasn’t asleep.’

“‘But were you conscious?’

“‘Yes, friend.’

“‘Then, lord, being conscious & awake when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), you neither saw anything nor heard a sound.’

“‘Yes, friend.’

“Then the thought occurred to that man, ‘How amazing! How astounding: the peaceful abiding by which those gone forth abide—in that, when the rain-deva was raining, the rain-deva was pouring, lightning-streaks were shooting out, and a thunderbolt split (the air), he would neither see them nor hear a sound!’ Having proclaimed immense conviction in me, he circumambulated me and then left.”

When this was said, Pukkusa Mallaputta said to the Blessed One, “The conviction I had in Āḷāra Kālāma I winnow before a high wind or wash away in the swift current of a river. Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to carry a lamp into the dark so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. May the Blessed One remember me as a lay follower who has gone to him for refuge, from this day forward, for life.”

Then Pukkusa Mallaputta addressed a certain man, “Come now, I say. Fetch me a pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to Pukkusa Mallaputta, the man fetched the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear. Then Pukkusa Mallaputta presented the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, to the Blessed One, (saying,) “May the Blessed One accept from me this pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, out of kindness.”

“Very well, then, Pukkusa. Clothe me with one, and Ānanda with the other.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Pukkusa Mallaputta clothed the Blessed One with one, and Ven. Ānanda with the other.

Then the Blessed One instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged Pukkusa Mallaputta with Dhamma talk. Then Pukkusa Mallaputta—instructed, urged, roused, and encouraged with the Blessed One’s Dhamma talk—got up from his seat and, bowing down to the Blessed One and circumambulating him, left.

Then not long after Pukkusa Mallaputta had left, Ven. Ānanda placed the pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, against the Blessed One’s body. Placed against the Blessed One’s body, their iridescence seemed as if destroyed.

Then Ven. Ānanda said, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding—how clear & bright the color of the Tathāgata’s skin! When this pair of gold-colored robes, ready to wear, is placed against the Blessed One’s body, their iridescence seems as if destroyed!”

“So it is, Ānanda. There are two times when the color of the Tathāgata’s skin is especially clear & bright. Which two? The night on which the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled self-awakening, and the night on which the Tathāgata totally unbinds by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining. These are the two times when the color of the Tathāgata’s skin is especially clear & bright. Today, in the last watch of the night, between the twin Sal trees in Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā, the Tathāgata’s total unbinding will occur.

“Come, Ānanda, we will head for Kakudha River.”

“As you say, lord,” Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Pukkusa offered a pair of gold-colored robes

clothed in which,

the Teacher of golden complexion

shone brightly.

Then the Blessed One, together with the large Saṅgha of monks, went to the Kakudha River and, after arriving at the Kakudha River, going down, bathing, drinking, & coming back out, went to a mango grove. On arrival, the Blessed One said to Ven. Cundaka, “Cundaka, please arrange my outer robe folded in four. I am tired. I will lie down.”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, Ven. Cundaka arranged the outer robe folded in four. The Blessed One, lying on his right side, took up the lion’s posture, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful, alert, and attending to the perception of getting up. Ven. Cundaka sat in front of him.

The awakened one,

—having gone to the little Kakudha river

with its pristine, pleasing water, clear—

the Teacher, seeming very tired,

the Tathāgata, unequalled in the world

went down, bathed, drank, & came out.

Honored, surrounded,

in the midst of the group of monks,

the Blessed One, Teacher,

proceeding here in the Dhamma,

the great seer,

went to the mango grove.

He addressed the monk named Cundaka,

“Spread it out, folded in four

for me to lie down.”

Ordered by the One of developed mind,

Cundaka quickly set it out, folded in four.

The Teacher lay down, seeming very tired,

and Cundaka sat down there before him.

Then the Blessed One addressed Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, if anyone tries to incite remorse in Cunda the silversmith, saying, ‘It’s no gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s ill-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, totally unbound,’ then Cunda’s remorse should be allayed (in this way): ‘It’s a gain for you, friend Cunda, it’s well-done by you, that the Tathāgata, having eaten your last alms, totally unbound. Face to face with the Blessed One have I heard it, face to face have I learned it, “These two alms are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Which two? The alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata awakens to the unexcelled right self-awakening. And the alms that, after having eaten it, the Tathāgata unbinds by means of the unbinding property with no fuel remaining. These are the two alms that are equal to each other in fruit, equal to each other in result, of much greater fruit & reward than any other alms. Venerable41 Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to long life. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to beauty. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to happiness. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to heaven. Venerable Cunda the silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to rank. Venerable Cunda the

silversmith has accumulated kamma that leads to sovereignty.'" In this way, Ānanda, Cunda the silversmith's remorse should be allayed."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

For a person giving,

merit increases.

For one self-restraining,

no animosity is amassed.

One who is skillful

leaves evil behind

and

—from the ending of

passion,

aversion,

delusion—

totally unbinds.

[V]

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda: "Come, Ānanda, we will head for the far shore of the Hiraññavati River, for Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest near Kusinārā."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then the Blessed One with a large Saṅgha of monks went to the far shore of the Hiraññavati River, to Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest near Kusinārā. On arrival, he said to Ven. Ānanda, "Ānanda, please prepare a bed for me between the twin Sal trees, with its head to the north. I am tired and will lie down."

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda prepared a bed between the twin Sal trees, with its head to the north. Then the Blessed One lay down on his right side in the lion's sleeping posture, with one foot on top of the other, mindful & alert.42

Now on that occasion the twin Sal trees were in full bloom, even though it was not the time for flowering. They showered, strewed, & sprinkled on the Tathāgata's body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathāgata's body in homage to him. Heavenly sandalwood powder fell from the sky, showering, strewing, & sprinkling the Tathāgata's body in homage to him. Heavenly music was playing in the sky, in homage to the Tathāgata. Heavenly songs were sung in the sky,

in homage to the Tathāgata.

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, “Ānanda, the twin Sal trees are in full bloom, even though it’s not the flowering season. They shower, strew, & sprinkle on the Tathāgata’s body in homage to him. Heavenly coral-tree blossoms are falling from the sky.... Heavenly sandalwood powder is falling from the sky.... Heavenly music is playing in the sky.... Heavenly songs are sung in the sky, in homage to the Tathāgata. But it is not to this extent that a Tathāgata is worshipped, honored, respected, venerated, or paid homage to. Rather, the monk, nun, male lay follower, or female lay follower who keeps practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, who keeps practicing masterfully, who lives in accordance with the Dhamma: That is the person who worships, honors, respects, venerates, & pays homage to the Tathāgata with the highest homage. So you should train yourselves: ‘We will keep practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, we will keep practicing masterfully, we will live in accordance with the Dhamma.’43 That’s how you should train yourselves.”

Now on that occasion Ven. Upavāṇa was standing in front of the Blessed One, fanning him. Then the Blessed One dismissed him, saying, “Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.” Then the thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, “For a long time, now, this Ven. Upavāṇa has been an attendant to the Blessed One, staying near him and traveling with him. But now, in his final hour, he dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.’ Now what is the reason, what is the cause, why the Blessed One dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me’?”

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “For a long time, now, this Ven. Upavāṇa has been an attendant to the Blessed One, staying near him and traveling with him. But now, in his final hour, he dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me.’ Now what is the reason, what is the cause, why the Blessed One dismisses him, saying, ‘Go away, monk. Don’t stand in front of me’?”

“Ānanda, most of the devatās from ten world-systems have gathered in order to see the Tathāgata. For twelve leagues all around Upavattana, the Mallans’ Sal Forest near Kusinārā, there is not the space even of the tip of a horse-tail hair that is not occupied by eminent devatās. The devatās, Ānanda, are complaining, ‘We have come a long distance to see the Tathāgata.44 Only once in a long, long time does a Tathāgata—worthy & rightly self-awakened—arise in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. And this eminent monk is standing in front of the Blessed One, blocking the way. We aren’t getting to see the Blessed One in his final hour.’”

“But, lord, what is the state of the devatās the Blessed One is paying attention to?”

“Ānanda, there are devatās who perceive space to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them,45 they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind! All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes [alternate reading: the Eye] will disappear from the world!’ Then there are

devatās who perceive earth to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, 'All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind! All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes will disappear from the world!' But those devatās who are free from passion acquiesce, mindful & alert: 'Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?'"

"In the past, lord, the monks in all directions, after ending the Rains retreat, came to see the Tathāgata. Thus we got to see & attend to the monks who inspire the heart. But now, after the Blessed One is gone, we won't get to see or attend to the monks who inspire the heart."

"Ānanda, there are these four places that merit being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merit his feelings of urgency & dismay [saṁvega]. Which four? 'Here the Tathāgata was born' is a place that merits being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merits his feelings of urgency & dismay. 'Here the Tathāgata awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening'.... 'Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma'.... 'Here the Tathāgata totally unbound in the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining' is a place that merits being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merits his feelings of urgency & dismay. These are the four places that merit being seen by a clansman with conviction, that merit his feelings of urgency & dismay. They will come out of conviction, Ānanda—monks, nuns, male lay followers, & female lay followers—to the spots where 'Here the Tathāgata was born,' 'Here the Tathāgata awakened to the unexcelled right self-awakening,' 'Here the Tathāgata set rolling the unexcelled wheel of Dhamma,' 'Here the Tathāgata totally unbound in the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining.' And anyone who dies while making a pilgrimage to these shrines with a bright, confident mind will—on the break-up of the body, after death—reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world."

"Lord, what course should we follow with regard to womenfolk?"

"Not-seeing, Ānanda."

"But when there is seeing, lord, what course should be followed?"

"Not-addressing, Ānanda."

"But when we are addressed, what course should be followed?"

"Mindfulness should be established, Ānanda."

"And, lord, what course should we follow with regard to the Tathāgata's body?"

"You are not to be concerned about the Tathāgata's funeral. Please, Ānanda, strive for the true goal, be committed to the true goal, dwell heedful, ardent, & resolute for the sake of the true goal. There are wise nobles, wise brahmans, & wise householders who are highly

confident in the Tathāgata. They will conduct the Tathāgata's funeral."

"But, lord, what course should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata's body?"

"The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body, Ānanda, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata's body."

"And what, lord, is the course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body?"

"Ānanda, they wrap the wheel-turning monarch's body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrap it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrap it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they place the body in an iron oil-vat, cover it with an iron lid, make a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and cremate the body. Then they build a burial mound for the wheel-turning monarch at a great four-way intersection. That is the course that they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body. The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body, Ānanda, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata's body. A burial mound for the Tathāgata is to be built at a great four-way intersection. And those who offer a garland, a scent, or a perfume powder there, or bow down there, or brighten their minds there: That will be for their long-term welfare & happiness.

"There are these four who are worthy of a burial mound. Which four? A Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is worthy of a burial mound. A Private Buddha… a disciple of a Tathāgata… a wheel-turning monarch is worthy of a burial mound.

"And for what reason is a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) 'This is the burial mound of a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened,' many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the break-up of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. It is for this reason that a Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is worthy of a burial mound.

"And for what reason is a Private Buddha worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) 'This is the burial mound of a Private Buddha,' many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the break-up of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.…

"And for what reason is a disciple of a Tathāgata worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) 'This is the burial mound of a disciple of a Tathāgata,' many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the break-up of the body, after death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world.…

"And for what reason is a wheel-turning monarch worthy of a burial mound? (At the thought,) 'This is the burial mound of a wheel-turning monarch,' many people will brighten their minds. Having brightened their minds there, then—on the break-up of the body, after

death—they will reappear in a good destination, a heavenly world. It is for this reason that a wheel-turning monarch is worthy of a burial mound.

“These are the four who are worthy of a burial mound.”

Then Ven. Ānanda, going into a (nearby) building, stood leaning against the door jamb, weeping: “Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!”

Then the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, where is Ānanda?”

“Lord, Ven. Ānanda, having gone into that building, stands leaning against the door jamb, weeping: ‘Here I am, still in training, with work left to do, and the total unbinding of my teacher is about to occur—the teacher who has had such sympathy for me!’”

Then the Blessed One told a certain monk, “Come, monk. In my name, call Ānanda, saying, ‘The Teacher calls you, my friend.’”

Responding, “As you say, lord,” to the Blessed One, the monk went to Ven. Ānanda and on arrival said, “The Teacher calls you, my friend.”

Responding, “As you say, my friend,” to the monk, Ven. Ānanda went to the Blessed One and, on arrival, having bowed down to him, sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the Blessed One said to him, “Enough, Ānanda. Don’t grieve. Don’t lament. Haven’t I already taught you the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating.

“For a long time, Ānanda, you have waited on the Tathāgata with bodily acts of good will—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit; with verbal acts of good will… with mental acts of good will—helpful, happy, whole-hearted, without limit. You are one who has made merit. Commit yourself to exertion, and soon you will be without effluents.”

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Monks, those Blessed Ones who, in the past, were worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, had foremost attendants, just as I have had Ānanda. Those Blessed Ones who, in the future, will be worthy ones, rightly self-awakened, will have foremost attendants, just as I have had Ānanda. Ānanda is wise. He knows, ‘This is the time to approach to see the Tathāgata. This is the time for monks, this the time for nuns, this the time for male lay-followers, this the time for female lay-followers, this the time for kings & their ministers, this the time for sectarians, this the time for the followers of sectarians.

“There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. If a group of monks approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. If a group

of nuns approaches to see Ānanda… If a group of male lay followers approaches to see Ānanda… If a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. There are these four amazing & astounding qualities in a wheel-turning monarch. If a group of noble warriors approaches to see him… If a group of brahmans approaches to see him… If a group of householders approaches to see him… If a group of contemplatives approaches to see him, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. In the same way, monks, there are these four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda. If a group of monks… a group of nuns… a group of male lay followers… a group of female lay followers approaches to see Ānanda, they are gratified at the sight of him. If he speaks Dhamma to them, they are gratified with what he says. Before they are sated, he falls silent. These are the four amazing & astounding qualities in Ānanda."

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, "Lord, may the Blessed One not totally unbind in this little town, this dusty town, this branch township. There are other great cities: Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatthī, Sāketa, Kosambī, Bārāṇasī. May the Blessed One totally unbind there. In those cities there are many wealthy noble warriors, brahmans, & householders who have high confidence in the Tathāgata. They will conduct the Tathāgata's funeral."

"Don't say that, Ānanda. Don't say that: 'this little town, this dusty town, this branch township.' In the past, Ānanda, a king named Mahā Sudassana was a wheel-turning monarch, a righteous king ruling righteously, who was a conqueror of the four directions, a stabilizer of his country, endowed with the seven treasures. This Kusinārā was his capital city, named Kusāvatī: twelve leagues long from east to west, seven leagues wide from north to south. Kusāvatī was powerful, rich, & well-populated, crowded with people & prosperous. Just as the capital city of the devas named Ālakamandā is powerful, rich, & well-populated, crowded with yakkhas & prosperous; in the same way, Kusāvatī was powerful, rich, & well-populated, crowded with people & prosperous. By day or by night, it was never lacking in ten sounds: the sound of elephants, the sound of horses, the sound of carts, the sound of drums, the sound of tabors, the sound of lutes, the sound of songs, the sound of cymbals, the sound of gongs, with cries of 'Eat! Drink! Snack!' as the tenth.

"Now, Ānanda, go into Kusinārā and announce to the Kusinārā Mallans, 'Tonight, Vāsiṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. Come out, Vāsiṭṭhas! Come out, Vāsiṭṭhas! Don't later regret that "The Tathāgata's total unbinding occurred within the borders of our very own town, but we didn't get to see him in his final hour!"'"

Responding, "As you say, lord," to the Blessed One, Ven. Ānanda adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went unaccompanied into Kusinārā. Now at that time the Kusinārā Mallans had met for some business in their reception hall. Ven. Ānanda went to the reception hall and on arrival announced to them, "Tonight, Vāsiṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of the Tathāgata will occur. Come out, Vāsiṭṭhas!

Come out, Vāsiṭṭhas! Don't later regret that 'The Tathāgata's total unbinding occurred within the borders of our very own town, but we didn't get to see him in his final hour!'" When they heard Ven. Ānanda, the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives were shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow. Some of them wept, tearing at their hair; they wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, "All too soon, the Blessed One will totally unbind! All too soon, the One Well-Gone will totally unbind! All too soon, the One with Eyes will disappear from the world!"

Then the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives—shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow—went to Ven. Ānanda at Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest near Kusinārā. The thought occurred to Ven. Ānanda, "If I let the Mallans pay reverence to the Blessed One one by one, the night will be over before they have finished paying reverence. What if I were to have them pay reverence to the Blessed One arranging them family by family, announcing, 'Lord, the Mallan named so-&-so, together with his children & wives, servants & retainers, bows down with his head at the Blessed One's feet.'"46 So Ven. Ānanda, arranging the Mallans family by family, had them pay reverence to the Blessed One, (saying,) "Lord, the Mallan named so-&-so, together with his children & wives, servants & retainers, bows down with his head at the Blessed One's feet."

In this way Ven. Ānanda got the Mallans to pay reverence to the Blessed One within the first watch of the night.

Now on that occasion a wanderer named Subhadda was staying near Kusinārā. He heard, "Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will take place." Then the thought occurred to him: "I have heard the old elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have confidence in Gotama the contemplative that he can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt."

So he went to Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest and, on arrival, said to Ven. Ānanda, "I have heard the old elder wanderers, teachers of teachers, saying that only once in a long, long time do Tathāgatas—worthy ones, rightly self-awakened—appear in the world. Tonight, in the last watch of the night, the total unbinding of Gotama the contemplative will occur. Now there is a doubt that has arisen in me, but I have confidence in Gotama the contemplative that he can teach me the Dhamma in such a way that I might abandon that doubt. It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him."

When this was said, Ven. Ānanda said to him, "Enough, friend Subhadda. Don't bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired."

For a second time… For a third time, Subhadda the wanderer said to Ven. Ānanda, "…It would be good, Ven. Ānanda, if you would let me see him."

For a third time, Ven. Ānanda said to him, “Enough, friend Subhadda. Don’t bother the Blessed One. The Blessed One is tired.”

Now, the Blessed One heard the exchange between Ven. Ānanda & Subhadda the wanderer, and so he said to Ven. Ānanda, “Enough, Ānanda. Don’t stand in his way. Let him see the Tathāgata. Whatever he asks me will all be for the sake of knowledge, and not to be bothersome. And whatever I answer when asked, he will quickly understand.”

So Ven. Ānanda said to Subhadda the wanderer, “Go ahead, friend Subhadda. The Blessed One gives you his leave.”

Then Subhadda went to the Blessed One and exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to the Blessed One, “Master Gotama, these contemplatives & brahmans, each with his group, each with his community, each the teacher of his group, an honored leader, well-regarded by people at large—i.e., Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambalin, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Sañjaya Velaṭṭhaputta, & the Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta: Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?”

“Enough, Subhadda. Put this question aside: ‘Do they all have direct knowledge as they themselves claim, or do they all not have direct knowledge, or do some of them have direct knowledge and some of them not?’ I will teach you the Dhamma, Subhadda. Listen, and pay close attention. I will speak.”

“As you say, lord,” Subhadda responded to the Blessed One.

The Blessed One said, “In any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is not ascertained, no contemplative of the first… second… third… fourth order [stream-winner, once-returner, non-returner, or arahant] is ascertained. But in any doctrine & discipline where the noble eightfold path is ascertained, contemplatives of the first… second… third… fourth order are ascertained. The noble eightfold path is ascertained in this doctrine & discipline, and right here there are contemplatives of the first… second… third… fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants.

At age twenty-nine I went forth, Subhadda,

seeking what might be skillful,

and since my going forth, Subhadda,

more than fifty years have passed.

Outside of the realm

of methodical Dhamma,

there is no contemplative.

There is no contemplative of the second order; there is no contemplative of the third order; there is no contemplative of the fourth order. Other teachings are empty of knowledgeable contemplatives. And if the monks dwell rightly, this world will not be empty of arahants."

Then Subhadda the wanderer said, "Magnificent, lord! Magnificent! Just as if he were to place upright what was overturned, to reveal what was hidden, to show the way to one who was lost, or to set out a lamp in the darkness so that those with eyes could see forms, in the same way has the Blessed One—through many lines of reasoning—made the Dhamma clear. I go to the Blessed One for refuge, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha of monks. Let me obtain the going forth in the Blessed One's presence, let me obtain the acceptance."

"Anyone, Subhadda, who has previously belonged to another sect and who desires the going forth & acceptance into this Dhamma & Vinaya, must first undergo probation for four months. If, at the end of four months, the monks feel so moved, they give him the going forth & accept him into the monk's state. But I know distinctions among individuals in this matter."

"Lord, if that is so, I am willing to undergo probation for four years. If, at the end of four years, the monks feel so moved, let them give me the going forth & accept me into the monk's state."

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, "Very well then, Ānanda, give Subhadda the going forth."

"As you say, lord," Ven. Ānanda responded to the Blessed One.

Then Subhadda said to Ven. Ānanda, "It's a gain for you, Ānanda, a great gain, that you have been anointed here, face-to-face with the Teacher, with the pupil's anointing."47

Then Subhadda the wanderer obtained the going forth in the Blessed One's presence, he obtained acceptance. And not long after his acceptance—dwelling alone, secluded, heedful, ardent, & resolute—he in no long time entered & remained in the supreme goal of the holy life, for which clansmen rightly go forth from home into homelessness, directly knowing & realizing it for himself in the here & now. He knew: "Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for the sake of this world." And thus Ven. Subhadda became another one of the arahants, the last of the Blessed One's direct-witness disciples.

[VI]

Then the Blessed One said to Ven. Ānanda, "Now, if the thought occurs to any of you—'The teaching has lost its arbitrator; we are without a Teacher'—do not view it in that way.

Whatever Dhamma & Vinaya I have pointed out & formulated for you, that will be your Teacher after my passing.

“At present, the monks address one another as ‘friend,’ but after my passing they are not to address one another that way. The more senior monks are to address the newer monks by their name or clan or as ‘friend.’ The newer monks are to address the more senior monks as ‘venerable’ or ‘sir.’

“After my passing, the Saṅgha—if it wants—may rescind the lesser & minor training rules.48

“After my passing, the monk Channa should be given the brahma-penalty.”

“What, lord, is the brahma-penalty?”

“Channa may say what he wants, Ānanda, but he is not to be spoken to, instructed, or admonished by the monks.”49

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “If even a single monk has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don’t later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn’t bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

When this was said, the monks were silent.

A second time, the Blessed One said, “If even one of the monks has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don’t later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn’t bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

A second time, the monks were silent.

A third time, the Blessed One said, “If even one of the monks has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice, ask. Don’t later regret that ‘The Teacher was face-to-face with us, but we didn’t bring ourselves to ask a counter-question in his presence.’”

A third time, the monks were silent.

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Now, if it’s simply out of respect for the Teacher that you don’t ask, let a companion inform a companion.”

When this was said, the monks were silent.

Then Ven. Ānanda said to the Blessed One, “It’s amazing, lord. It’s astounding. I have confidence in this Saṅgha of monks that there is not even a single monk in this Saṅgha of monks who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the

path or the practice."

"You, Ānanda, speak out of confidence, while there is knowledge in the Tathāgata that there is not even a single monk in this Saṅgha of monks who has any doubt or perplexity concerning the Buddha, Dhamma, or Saṅgha, the path or the practice. Of these 500 monks, the most backward is a stream-winner, never again destined for the lower realms, certain, headed for self-awakening."

Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "Now, then, monks, I exhort you: All fabrications are subject to ending & decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness." That was the Tathāgata's last statement.

Then the Blessed One entered the first jhāna. Emerging from that he entered the second jhāna. Emerging from that, he entered the third... the fourth jhāna... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the cessation of perception & feeling.

Then Ven. Ānanda said to Ven. Anuruddha, "Ven. Anuruddha,50 the Blessed One is totally unbound."

"No, friend Ānanda. The Blessed One isn't totally unbound. He has entered the cessation of perception & feeling."

Then the Blessed One, emerging from the cessation of perception & feeling, entered the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. Emerging from that, he entered the dimension of nothingness... the dimension of the infinitude of consciousness... the dimension of the infinitude of space... the fourth jhāna... the third... the second... the first jhāna. Emerging from the first jhāna he entered the second... the third... the fourth jhāna. Emerging from the fourth jhāna, he immediately totally unbound.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, there was a great earthquake, awesome & hair-raising, and rolls of the deva-drums split (the air).51

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sahampati Brahmā uttered this verse:

All beings—all—in the world,

will cast off the bodily heap

in the world

where a Teacher like this

without peer in the world

the Tathāgata, with strength attained,

the Rightly Self-Awakened One,

has totally unbound.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sakka, the deva-king, uttered this verse:

How inconstant are fabrications!

Their nature: to arise & pass away.

They disband as they are arising.

Their total stilling is bliss.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Anuruddha uttered this verse:

He had no in-&-out breathing,

the firm-minded one, the one who was Such,

imperturbable

& intent on peace:

the sage completing his span.

With heart unbowed

he endured the pain.

Like a flame's unbinding

was the liberation

of awareness.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Ven. Ānanda uttered this verse:

It was awe-inspiring.

It was hair-raising

when, displaying the foremost

accomplishment in all things,

the Rightly Self-Awakened One

totally unbound.

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, “All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!” But those monks who were free from passion acquiesced, mindful & alert: “Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?”

Then Ven. Anuruddha addressed the monks, “Enough, friends. Don’t grieve. Don’t lament. Hasn’t the Blessed One already taught the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect?52 It’s impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating. The devatās, friends, are complaining.”

[Ven. Ānanda:] “But, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the state of the devatās you are paying attention to?”

“Friend Ānanda, there are devatās who perceive space to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon, has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!’ Then there are devatās who perceive earth to be earth. Tearing at their hair, they are weeping. Uplifting their arms, they are weeping. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fall down and roll back & forth, crying, ‘All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!’ But those devatās who are free from passion53 acquiesce, mindful & alert: ‘Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?’”

Then Ven. Anuruddha & Ven. Ānanda spent the remainder of the night in Dhamma talk.

Then Ven. Anuruddha said to Ven. Ānanda, “Go, friend Ānanda. Entering Kusinārā, announce to the Kusinārā Mallans, ‘The Blessed One, Vāsiṭṭhas, has totally unbound. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.’”

Responding, “As you say, sir,” to Ven. Anuruddha, Ven. Ānanda in the early morning adjusted his lower robe and—taking his bowl & outer robe—went unaccompanied into Kusinārā. Now at that time the Kusinārā Mallans had met for some business in their reception hall. Ven. Ānanda went to the reception hall and on arrival announced to them, “The Blessed One, Vāsiṭṭhas, has totally unbound. Now is the time for you to do as you see fit.”

When they heard Ven. Ānanda, the Mallans together with their sons, daughters, & wives were shocked, saddened, their minds overflowing with sorrow. Some of them wept, tearing at their hair; they wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under

them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, "All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!"

Then the Kusinārā Mallans ordered their men, "In that case, I say, gather scents, garlands, & all the musical instruments in Kusinārā!" Then, taking scents, garlands, & all the musical instruments in Kusinārā, along with 500 pairs of cloth, the Kusinārā Mallans went to the Blessed One's body in Upavattana, the Mallans' Sal Forest near Kusinārā. On arrival, they spent the entire day in worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, in making cloth canopies and arranging floral wreaths. Then the thought occurred to them, "It's too late today to cremate the Blessed One's body. We'll cremate the Blessed One's body tomorrow." And so they spent the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth day, the sixth day in worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, in making cloth canopies and arranging floral wreaths.

Then on the seventh day the thought occurred to them, "Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, let's carry it to the south, around the outside of the town, and cremate it to the south of the town."

Then eight leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, "We'll lift up the Blessed One's body," were unable to lift it. So the Kusinārā Mallans asked Ven. Anuruddha, "What is the reason, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the cause, why these eight leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, 'We'll lift up the Blessed One's body,' are unable to lift it?"

"Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is one thing. The devas' intention is another."

"But what, Ven. Anuruddha, is the devas' intention?"

"Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is, 'Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, let's carry it to the south, around the outside of the town, and cremate it to the south of the town.' The devas' intention is, 'Worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with heavenly dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, lets carry it to the north of the town, enter the town through the north gate, carry it through the middle of the town and out the east gate to the Mallans' shrine called Makuṭa-bandhana, to cremate it there.'"

"Then let it be, venerable sir, in line with the devas' intention."

Now on that occasion Kusinārā—even to its rubbish heaps & cesspools—was strewn knee-deep in coral-tree flowers. So the devas & the Kusinārā Mallans, worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating the Blessed One's body with heavenly & human dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents, carried it to the north of the town, entered the town through the north gate, carried it through the middle of the town and out the east

gate to the Mallans' shrine called Makuṭa-bandhana. There they set it down.

Then the Kusinārā Mallans said to Ven. Ānanda, "Venerable sir, what course should we follow with regard to the Tathāgata's body?"

"The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body, Vāsiṭṭhas, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata's body."

"And what, venerable sir, is the course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body?"

"Vāsiṭṭhas, they wrap the wheel-turning monarch's body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrap it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrap it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they place the body in an iron oil-vat, cover it with an iron lid, make a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and cremate the body. Then they build a burial mound for the wheel-turning monarch at a great four-way intersection. That is the course that they follow with regard to the wheel-turning monarch's body. The course they follow with regard to a wheel-turning monarch's body, Vāsiṭṭhas, is the course that should be followed with regard to the Tathāgata's body. A burial mound for the Tathāgata is to be built at a great, four-way intersection. And those who offer a garland, a scent, or a perfume powder there, or bow down there, or brighten their minds there: that will be for their long-term welfare & happiness."

So the Kusinārā Mallans ordered their men, "In that case, I say, gather the Mallans' teased cotton-wool."

Then they wrapped the Blessed One's body in new linen cloth. Having wrapped it in new linen cloth, they wrapped it in teased cotton-wool. Having wrapped it in teased cotton-wool, they wrapped it in new linen cloth. Having done this five hundred times, they placed the body in an iron oil-vat, covered it with an iron lid, made a pyre composed totally of perfumed substances, and set the body on the pyre.

Now on that occasion Ven. Mahā Kassapa was traveling on the highway from Pāvā to Kusinārā with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 500 monks in all. Leaving the road, he sat down at the root of a tree. Meanwhile, a certain Ājīvakan ascetic, carrying a coral-tree flower from Kusinārā, was traveling on the highway to Pāvā. Ven. Mahā Kassapa saw the Ājīvakan ascetic coming from afar, and on seeing him said to him, "Do you know our teacher, friend?"

"Yes, friend, I know him. Seven days ago Gotama the contemplative totally unbound. That's how I got this coral-tree flower."

With that, some of the monks present who were not without passion wept, uplifting their arms. As if their feet were cut out from under them, they fell down and rolled back & forth, crying, "All too soon has the Blessed One totally unbound! All too soon has the One

Well-Gone totally unbound! All too soon has the One with Eyes disappeared from the world!" But those monks who were free from passion acquiesced, mindful & alert: "Inconstant are fabrications. What else is there to expect?"

Now at that time a monk named Subhadda,54 who had gone forth when old, was sitting among the group. He said to the monks, "Enough, friends. Don't grieve. Don't lament. We're well rid of the Great Contemplative. We've been harassed by (his saying,) 'This is allowable. This is not allowable.' But now we will do what we want to do, and not do what we don't want to do."55

Then Ven. Mahā Kassapa addressed the monks, "Enough, friends. Don't grieve. Don't lament. Hasn't the Blessed One already taught the state of growing different with regard to all things dear & appealing, the state of becoming separate, the state of becoming otherwise? What else is there to expect? It's impossible that one could forbid anything born, existent, fabricated, & subject to disintegration from disintegrating."

Then four leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, "We'll ignite the Blessed One's pyre," were unable to ignite it. So the Kusinārā Mallans asked Ven. Anuruddha, "What is the reason, Ven. Anuruddha, what is the cause, why these four leading Mallans, having bathed their heads and wearing new linen cloth, thinking, 'We'll ignite the Blessed One's pyre,' are unable to ignite it?"

"Your intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is one thing. The devas' intention is another."

"But what, Ven. Anuruddha, is the devas' intention?"

"The devas' intention, Vāsiṭṭhas, is, 'This Ven. Mahā Kassapa is traveling on the highway from Pāvā to Kusinārā with a large Saṅgha of monks, approximately 500 monks in all. The Blessed One's pyre will not catch fire until Ven. Mahā Kassapa has worshipped the Blessed One's feet with his bathed head.'"

"Then let it be, venerable sir, in line with the devas' intention."

So Ven. Mahā Kassapa went to the Blessed One's pyre at Makuṭa-bandhana, the Mallans' memorial near Kusinārā. On arrival, arranging his robe over one shoulder, he placed his hands palm-to-palm over his heart, circumambulated the pyre three times, uncovered the Blessed One's feet,56 and worshipped them with his head. And the 500 monks, arranging their robes over one shoulder, placed their hands palm-to-palm over their hearts, circumambulated the pyre three times, and worshipped the Blessed One's feet with their heads. As soon as it had been worshipped by Ven. Mahā Kassapa and the 500 monks, the Blessed One's pyre caught fire of its own accord. In the burning of the Blessed One's body, no cinder or ash of the outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, or oil of the joints could be discerned. Only the bone-relics57 remained. Just as in the burning of ghee or oil, no cinder or ash can be discerned; in the same way, in the burning of the Blessed One's body, no cinder or ash of the outer skin, inner skin, flesh, tendons, or oil of the joints could be discerned. Only the bone-relics remained. And of the five hundred twin-wrappings, only

two were burnt: the innermost & the outermost.

When the Blessed One's body was consumed, a cascade of water falling from the sky extinguished [nibbāpesi] the Blessed One's pyre. Water shooting up from a Sal tree as well extinguished the Blessed One's pyre. The Kusinārā Mallans, with all kinds of scented water, extinguished the Blessed One's pyre. Then for seven days the Kusinārā Mallans kept the bone-relics in their reception hall—setting them round with a lattice of spears surrounded by ramparts of bows—worshipping, honoring, respecting, & venerating them with dances, songs, music, garlands, & scents.

Then King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So he sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. I, too, am a noble warrior. I deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. I, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Licchavis of Vesālī heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Sakyans of Kapilavatthu heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was the greatest of our relatives. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Thulayans of Allakappa.... The Koḷiyans of Rāmagāma heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The brahman of Veṭṭha Island heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So he sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. I am a brahman. I deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. I, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

The Pāvā Mallans heard, "The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā." So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: "The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them."

When this was said, the Kusinārā Mallans said to the groups & factions, "The Blessed One totally unbound within the borders of our own town. We will not give up a share of the Blessed One's bone-relics."

When this was said, Doṇa the brahman addressed the groups & factions,

“Listen, good sirs,

to a word from me.

Our Awakened One was a teacher

of forbearance.

It’s not good that there should be combat

over the sharing of the relics

of the highest person.

Let us, masters, unite in concord,

on friendly terms,

and make eight shares.

Let there be

burial mounds

in the various directions,

many people made confident

in the One with Eyes.”

“In that case, brahman, you yourself divide the Blessed One’s bone-relics into eight equal shares.”

Responding, “As you say, good sirs,” to the groups & factions, Doṇa the brahman divided the Blessed One’s bone-relics into eight equal shares and then said to the groups & factions, “Good sirs, give me this urn. I will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for the urn.” They gave him the urn.

Then the Moriyans of Pipphalivana heard, “The Blessed One, they say, has totally unbound in Kusinārā.” So they sent an envoy to the Kusinārā Mallans: “The Blessed One was a noble warrior. We, too, are noble warriors. We deserve a share of the Blessed One’s bone-relics. We, too, will build a burial mound and hold a ceremony for them.”

“There is no (remaining) share of the Blessed One’s bone-relics. They have been divided. Take the ashes from here.” They took the ashes from there.

Then King Ajātasattu Vedehiputta of Magadha built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Rājagaha.

The Licchavis of Vesālī built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One’s relics in Vesālī.

The Sakyans of Kapilavatthu built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics in Kapilavatthu.

The Thulayans of Allakappa built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics in Allakappa.

The Koliyans of Rāmagāma built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics in Rāmagāma.

The brahman of Veṭṭha Island built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics on Veṭṭha Island.

The Pāvā Mallans built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics in Pāvā.

The Kusinārā Mallans built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the Blessed One's relics in Kusinārā.

Doṇa the brahman built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the urn.

The Moriyans of Pipphalivana built a burial mound and held a ceremony for the embers in Pipphalivana.

Thus there were eight burial mounds for the bone-relics, a ninth for the urn, and a tenth for the embers.

That is how it was in the past.

Eight portions were the relics

of the One with Eyes,

the highest, the foremost of men:

seven honored in Jambudīpa,

and one in Rāmagāma

honored by kings of the nāgas.

One tooth

the Devas of the Thirty-three worship;

one is honored in Gandhārapura;

one in the realm of the king of Kāliṅga;

another is honored by kings of the nāgas.

These, with their splendor,

their excellent gifts,

embellish this wealth-bearing earth.

Thus the relics of the One with Eyes

are honored by those honored

by those who are honored.

He is worshiped by deva kings,

nāga kings, human kings,

and likewise is worshiped

by the most excellent people.

So pay homage to him,

with hands palm-to-palm

over the heart,

for the Awakened are rarely encountered

in the course of one hundred eons.58

Notes

1. There is a play on words in this sentence, between Tathāgata (“one truly gone,” or “one who has become true”) and vi-tathaṁ, “untruthfully.”

2. Notice that Vassakāra, by addressing the Buddha as “Master Gotama,” shows a lesser degree of respect to the Buddha than King Ajātasattu had told him to. Vassakāra also appears in MN 108, AN 4:35, and AN 4:183, and in each instance displays a limited understanding of the Dhamma.

3. According to the Commentary, that is precisely what Vassakāra did, thus enabling King Ajātasattu to defeat the Vajjians without bloodshed. In addition to being ironic—showing how benighted Ajātasattu was, trying to get military advice from the Buddha—this passage has a poignant meaning for the Saṅgha. As the following passage shows, the conditions of no decline in the Saṅgha are not that different from those for no decline in the Vajjians. And although those conditions may prevail in the Saṅgha, the example of the Vajjians shows that they can easily be abandoned. This passage thus serves as a warning not to be heedless. See also AN 5:77–80.

4. See AN 7:21.

5. See MN 29–30.

6. See MN 53 and AN 7:63.

7. See SN 46:51 and SN 46:53.

8. See AN 10:60.

9. The Burmese edition does not contain the word, “further,” here.

10. See MN 48 and AN 6:12.

11. See MN 61.

12. See AN 10:95.

13. See Ud 8:6.

14. The translation here follows the Burmese and Sri Lankan editions of the text. The PTS version of the passage doesn’t state the time of day, whereas the Thai version states that the Buddha went to the rest-house hall in the morning—which, given the events that follow, doesn’t seem right, for he would have spent the entire day teaching the lay followers of Pāṭali Village.

15. Pāṭaliputta later became the capital of King Asoka’s empire. The “breaking open of the seed-pods (pūṭa-bhedana)” is a wordplay on the last part of the city’s name.

Archaeological evidence from what may have been part of Asoka’s palace in Pāṭaliputta shows burnt wooden posts buried in mud—perhaps a sign that the palace burned and then was buried in a flood.

16. The five lower fetters are self-identification views, uncertainty, grasping at habits & practices, sensual desire, & ill will. The five higher fetters, abandoned by the arahant in addition to the lower five, are passion for form, passion for what is formless, conceit, restlessness, and ignorance. See AN 10:13.

17. The four pairs are (1) the person on the path to stream entry, the person experiencing the fruit of stream entry; (2) the person on the path to once-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of once-returning; (3) the person on the path to non-returning, the person experiencing the fruit of non-returning; (4) the person on the path to arahantship, the person experiencing the fruit of arahantship. The eight individuals are the eight types forming these four pairs.

18. For another way to gauge whether one has attained stream-entry, see MN 48. Notice that in this Dhamma-mirror, the Buddha gives criteria only for gauging one’s own level of attainment, and not that of others. On this point, see AN 10:75.

19. Ambapālī apparently ordained as a nun later in life. Her verses are recorded in Thig 13:1.

20. Following the Thai edition. The Sinhalese and PTS editions have “we’ve been totally defeated (parājitamhā)” rather than “cheated” (vañcitamhā); the Burmese edition has Little Mango (Ambakā) instead of Little Ambapālī (Ambapālikā).

21. In other words, the Buddha had no esoteric version of the Dhamma that he taught only to an inner circle or a select class of privileged beings. The Dhamma that he taught to his close disciples was consistent with the Dhamma he taught at large.

22. In other words, he did not hold back any teachings from his students until he was about to die. As the narrative of this sutta makes clear, the teachings he taught up to the night of his unbinding were identical to the teachings he had taught for his entire career.

23. As the text will make clear, these are some of the locations where, in the past, the Buddha had commented to Ven. Ānanda on how refreshing the location was, implying that living on would not be a burden, and that he could, if he so desired, extend his life. The reference to these locations was apparently to remind Ānanda of what he had said there.

24. “And what is the base of power? Whatever path, whatever practice, leads to the attainment of power, the winning of power: That is called the base of power.

“And what is the development of the base of power? There is the case where a monk develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on desire & the fabrications of exertion. He develops the base of power endowed with concentration founded on persistence… concentration founded on intent… concentration founded on discrimination & the fabrications of exertion. This is called the development of the base of power.” — SN 51:26

25. An eon, in the Buddhist cosmology, is an immensely long stretch of time. According to the Commentary here, it can also mean the full lifespan of a human being in that particular period of the eon (Buddhist cosmology allows for a huge fluctuation in human lifespans over the course of an eon). The Commentary adopts this second meaning in this passage, and so takes the Buddha’s statement here as meaning that a person who has developed the bases of power could live for a full lifespan or for a little bit more. In this case, the Pali for the last part of this compound, kappāvasesaṁ, would mean, “an eon plus a remainder.”

26. DN 11 defines the miracle of instruction as instruction in training the mind to the point of where it gains release from all suffering and stress.

27. In other words, the Buddha relinquished the will to live longer. It was this relinquishment that led to his total unbinding three months later.

28. Reading tulaṁ as a present participle.

29. The image is of splitting a coat of mail with an arrow.

30. Anupādisesa-nibbāna-dhātu. Unbinding as experienced by an arahant at death. According to Iti 44, there are two unbinding properties: that with fuel remaining, and that with no fuel remaining. The first refers to unbinding as experienced before death. The second, to unbinding as experienced after death. Thag 15:2 hints at the image behind these terms. The first unbinding property corresponds to a fire that has gone out but whose embers are still glowing. The second, to a fire so totally out that no glowing embers remain. See the discussion in The Mind Like Fire Unbound, chapter 1.

31. This list is apparently a description both of the ways in which beings on different levels of the cosmos are percipient, and of experiences that a meditator—particularly one who is inclined to visions—might have. AN 10:29 adds this comment to the list:

"Now, of these eight dimensions of mastery, this is supreme: when one percipient of the formless internally sees forms externally as white, white in their color, white in their features, white in their glow. And there are beings who are percipient in this way. Yet even in the beings who are percipient in this way there is still aberration, there is change. Seeing this, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with that. Being disenchanted with that, he becomes dispassionate toward what is supreme, and even more so toward what is inferior."

32. This, too, is a list of the stages of meditation as experienced by one who is inclined to visions.

These lists of eight factors are not randomly chosen. They all highlight the grandeur of the Buddha's attainment, and add to the marvelous savor of this entire passage.

33. These are the 37 bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammas. For a full account, see The Wings to awakening.

34. The Buddha will repeat these two statements as his last exhortation before his total unbinding. On the topic of heedfulness, see SN 35:97 and SN 55:40. On the topic of consummation, see MN 53.

35. The Mātikā is a list of dhamma-topics—such as the 37 Wings to awakening—that formed the basis for the Abhidhamma.

36. The Commentary notes a wide range of opinions on what "pig-delicacy" means. The opinion given in the Mahā Aṭṭhakathā—the primary source for the Commentary we now have—is that pig-delicacy is tender pork. Other opinions include soft bamboo shoots or mushrooms that pigs like to nibble on, or a special elixir. Given that India has long had a history of giving fanciful names to its foods and elixirs, it's hard to say for sure what the Buddha ate for his last meal.

37. This style of narrative—in which prose passages alternate with verses retelling parts of what was narrated in the prose—is called a campū. This is one of the few passages in the Canon where this style is used, two others being the Kuṇāla Jātaka (J 5:416-456) and Udāna 8:5, which also narrates these events, minus the Buddha's conversation with Pukkusa Mallaputta. The fact that this is the only section of this sutta using this style suggests that perhaps the version of the narrative given in Ud 8:5 was composed first as a separate piece and then later incorporated into this sutta.

38. Ven. Ānanda's description of the water is alliterative in the Pali: sātodakā sītodakā setodakā.

39. The narrative in Ud 8:5 skips from this poem to the place in the narrative where the Buddha goes to the Kakudha River, skipping over the story of Pukkusa Mallaputta.

40. Āḷāra Kālāma was the teacher from whom the Buddha, before his awakening, learned how to attain the dimension of nothingness, one of the formless attainments. See MN 26. The Vibhaṅga to Pārājika 4 indicates that the purity of one's mastery of any of these formless attainments can be measured by the extent to which one does not hear sounds while in that attainment. The same passage also indicates that if one does hear sounds, that does not mean that one has not achieved that attainment, simply that one's mastery of the attainment is not entirely pure. It further indicates that "purity" here does not mean purity from defilements. After all, in the Vibhaṅga to Pārājika 4, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna's attainment of the formless states is said to be impure, and yet he is an arahant. "Purity" refers instead to the strength of one's concentration.

41. Āyasmant: This is a term of respect usually reserved for senior monks. The Buddha's using it here was probably meant to emphasize the point that Cunda's gift of the Buddha's last meal should be treated as a very honorable thing.

42. Up to this point in the sutta, the standard phrase describing the Buddha's act of lying down to rest ends with the phrase, "having made a mental note to get up." Here, however, the Buddha is lying down for the last time and will pass away in this posture, so he makes no mental note to get up.

43. SN 12:67 states: "If a monk practices for the sake of disenchantment, dispassion, & cessation with regard to aging-&-death… birth… becoming… clinging/sustenance… craving… feeling… contact… the six sense media… name-&-form… consciousness… fabrications… ignorance, he deserves to be called a monk who practices the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma." SN 22:39 states: "For a monk practicing the Dhamma in accordance with the Dhamma, what accords with the Dhamma is this: that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to form, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to feeling, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to perception, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to fabrications, that he keep cultivating disenchantment with regard to consciousness." SN 22:40–41 add that this is to be done by remaining focused on stress, inconstancy, and not-self with regard to the five aggregates.

44. From Vedic times, it has been considered auspicious in India to gaze on a holy person or heavenly being, and to be gazed on by such a being as well. Here the fact that heavenly beings themselves want to gaze on the Buddha indicates the high regard they have for him (this is also the motive for their Great Meeting in DN 20); the phrase later in this paragraph, "the One with Eyes," indicates that they also regarded his gaze as highly auspicious for them. Later passages in this discourse indicate that human beings have similar feelings about the auspiciousness of the Buddha's gaze and the Buddha as an object of one's own gaze. A great deal of the later history of Buddhism in India—including devotional practice, Buddhology, meditation practice, and even the architecture of monasteries—grew out of the continuing desire to have a vision of the Buddha and to be gazed on by the Buddha, even after his Parinibbāna.

It is sometimes assumed, based on a passage in SN 22:87, that the Pali Canon is uniformly negative toward this aspect of Buddhist tradition. There, Ven. Vakkali, who is ill, states that "For a long time have I wanted to come & see the Blessed One, but I haven't had the bodily strength to do so," and the Buddha comforts him, "Enough, Vakkali. Why do you want to see this filthy body? Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me; whoever sees me sees the Dhamma." It should be noted, however, that the Buddha's treatment of this topic is sensitive to the context. In SN 22:87, he is talking to a monk who (1) is too sick to come see the Buddha on his own strength; and (2) is on the verge of arahantship. Here in DN 16, however, the Buddha dismisses Ven. Upavāṇa so as to honor the desire of the devas who want to see him in his last hour; and he sends Ven. Ānanda into Kusinārā to inform the lay people there so that they too will be able to see him in his last hour. His motive here may be similar to that given for encouraging the building of a burial mound dedicated to him: seeing him will help human & heavenly beings brighten their minds, and that will be for their long-term welfare & happiness. Thus the attitudes expressed on this topic in the Pali Canon, when taken in their entirety, are more complex than is generally recognized.

45. Reading chinna-pada with the Thai edition.

46. The desire to have one's name announced to a holy person appears to have been a part of pre-Buddhist devotional practice in India. This passage, along with others in the Canon (see, for example, MN 89), indicates that it was quickly adopted into Buddhist devotional practice as well. It lived on in later Buddhist practice in the custom of having the donor's name inscribed in bas-reliefs and other offerings placed near or on a stupa, even in locations where the name would not be visible to human eyes.

47. The commentary notes that Subhadda makes this statement based on non-Buddhist practices he knew from his previous sectarian affiliation.

48. The Cullavagga (XI.9) tells of how the monks at the First Council could not agree on which rules should be classed as lesser & minor. Ven. Ānanda himself confessed that he neglected to ask the Buddha on this point. One of the monks made a motion that—because many of the rules affect the laity, and the laity would look down on the monks for rescinding them after the Buddha's death—none of the rules should be rescinded. This motion was adopted by the Council.

49. A monk named Channa is depicted at several spots in the Vinaya as despising all other monks on the grounds that "The Buddha is mine, the Dhamma is mine, it was by my young master that the Dhamma was realized." (Saṅghādisesa 12) This would fit in with the post-canonical tradition identifying Channa as the horseman who accompanied the young Prince Siddhartha on the night of the latter's Great Renunciation. Two rules in the Vinaya—Saṅghādisesa 12 & Pācittiya 12—depict him as devious & impossible to admonish. Cv.XI reports events after the Parinibbāna, telling of how news of the brahma-penalty shocked Channa to his senses. As a result, he changed his ways and eventually became an arahant. As Ven. Ānanda then explains in that passage, the brahma-penalty was automatically lifted at the moment of Ven. Channa's final attainment. SN 22:90 tells a different version of how Ven. Channa changed his attitude and broke through to the Dhamma.

50. Ven. Ānanda, assuming that the Buddha has passed away, addresses Ven. Anuruddha—his senior—as "venerable sir," in line with the Buddha's instructions.

51. This is one of the earthquakes forecast in Part III.

52. See AN 5:49 and AN 5:57.

53. This apparently refers to the devas who are non-returners, living in the Pure Abodes.

54. A different Subhadda from the Buddha's last direct-witness disciple.

55. In Cullavagga XI.1, Ven. Mahā Kassapa cites this statement as good reason to hold a council for standardizing the Dhamma & Vinaya "before what is not-dhamma shines out and dhamma is obscured, before what is not-discipline shines out and discipline is obscured; before those who speak what is not-dhamma become strong and those who speak what is dhamma become weak; before those who speak what is not-discipline become strong and those who speak what is discipline become weak." Thus the First Council was held during the Rains retreat following the Buddha's Parinibbāna.

56. The commentary notes that Ven. Mahā Kassapa entered the fourth jhāna, which he used as the basis for a feat of psychic power so that the Buddha's feet would appear out of their extensive wrappings.

57. Up to this point in the narrative, the Buddha's body is called a sarīra (singular). Here the noun becomes plural—with the meaning of "relics"—and remains plural for the remainder of the narrative.

58. According to the Commentary, this closing poem was added to the sutta by elder monks in Sri Lanka. The Thai, Sri Lankan, and Burmese editions end the sutta with a further, fairly anticlimactic, verse that appears to be an even later composition:

Altogether forty teeth,

and all the head-hairs & body-hairs

were taken by the devas

one after another

around the universe.