

DN 16
Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta
“Great Discourse on Lord Buddha’s Final Release”
Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

Copyright © Bhikkhu Candana 2022

Part One
In Māgadha

I have personally heard this.

At one time, The Blessed One was living high up on the Vultures’ Peak, in the City of Rājagaha. It was during that time that king Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Vedehi, was keen on going into battle against the Vajjis, while reflecting to himself: *‘Despite the fact that the Vajjis are powerful, I will, nevertheless, destroy them, by bringing death and destruction upon them.’*

Then, King Ajātasattu of Māgadha, the son of Vedehi, addressed his chief minister, the brahmin Vassakāra and said:

“Brahmin, go and approach The Blessed One, and in my name pay respect to Him with your head at His feet. Then, ask whether the Blessed One is in good health and has a pleasant abiding, while you express to The Blessed One: *‘Bhante, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, son of Vedehi, pays homage to The Blessed One with his head at Your feet, and he asks whether the Blessed One is in good health, without any physical ailments, and if He is living comfortably, having a pleasant abiding.’*

“Furthermore, inform the Blessed One by saying: Blessed Lord, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Vedehi, is planning to attack the land of the Vajjis, as he declares: *‘I will attack and destroy the powerful Vajjis, as I throw them into oblivion!’*

“Now Vassakāra, pay close attention to whatever The Blessed One says, listening carefully as you report back to me everything you hear, for the Tathāgata does not tell any lies.”

“Yes, great king,” said Vassakāra.

1. The brahmin, Vassakāra.

Then, the brahmin Vassakāra, the Chief Minister of Magadha, followed the instructions given to him by King Ajātasattu of Magadha, as he went and approached The Blessed One. After exchanging friendly greetings, he sat at one side, and said to The Blessed One:

“Master Gautama, *King Ajātasattu of Magadha, son of Vedehi, pays homage to The Blessed One with his head at Your feet, and he asks whether the Blessed One is in good health, without any physical ailments, and if He is living comfortably, having a pleasant abiding.’*

“Furthermore, Bhante, King Ajātasattu of Magadha, son of Vedehi, plans to attack the land of the Vajjis, as he declares: *‘I will attack and destroy the powerful Vajjis, as I throw them into oblivion!’*”

2. Principles that Protect against Crumbling & Destruction.

Meanwhile, the Venerable Ānanda was standing behind The Blessed One fanning him, as The Blessed One addressed him and said:

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes continue to frequently join and meet together?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard that the Vajji princes continue to frequently join and meet together.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes continue to frequently join and meet together, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes come together conducting their affairs in harmony and leave together in harmony?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes continue to come together conducting their affairs in harmony and leave together in harmony.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes come together conducting their affairs in harmony and leave together in harmony, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes neither appoint new rules nor break those rules that are already in place, as the ancient laws of the Vajjis are being observed?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes neither appoint new rules nor break those rules that are already in place, as the ancient laws of the Vajjis are being observed.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes neither appoint new rules nor break those rules that are already in place, and so long as the ancient laws of the Vajjis are being observed, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes honor, revere, and hold in high regard their Elder Vajjis by listening to their counsel and following their guidance?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes honor, revere, and hold in high regard their Elder Vajjis by listening to their counsel and following their guidance.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes honor, revere, and hold in high regard their Elder Vajjis by listening to their counsel and following their guidance, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes neither abduct women and girls nor oppress or take advantage of them, or force them to live with them?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes neither abduct women and girls nor oppress or take advantage of them or force them to live with them.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes neither abduct women and girls nor oppress or take advantage of them, or force them to live with them, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes pay homage to, respect, and honor their Vajji Shrines, both those that are within the city walls and those that lie beyond, as they continue in providing support for them by making offerings as before, and without breaking that tradition?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes pay homage to, respect, and honor their Vajji Shrines, both those that are within the city walls and those that lie beyond, as they continue in providing support for them by making offerings as before, and without breaking that tradition.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes pay homage to, respect, and honor their Vajji Shrines, both those that are within the city walls and those that lie beyond, as they continue in providing support for them by making offerings as before, and without breaking that tradition, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

“Ānanda, have you heard if the Vajji princes provide the appropriate protection for the Arahants, by supporting them with necessary shelter and care, so that those Arahants who have not yet gone to their domain, would start going there, and those who have already gone there would find living there pleasant and comfortable?”

“Yes, Bhante, I have heard the Vajji princes provide the appropriate protection for the Arahants, by supporting them with necessary shelter and care, so that those Arahants who have not yet gone to their domain, would start going there, and those who have already gone there would find living there pleasant and comfortable.”

“Ānanda, so long as the Vajji princes provide the appropriate protection for the Arahants, by supporting them with necessary shelter and care, so that those Arahants who have not yet gone to their domain, would start going there, and those who have already gone there would find living there pleasant and comfortable, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

Then, The Blessed One addressed the brahmin Vassakāra:

“Brahmin, at one time I was abiding in the Sārandada Shrine when I taught the Vajjis these seven principles that do not lead to decline. So long as these seven principles that do not lead to decline are well-established in the Vajjis and practiced among them, and so long as these seven are carefully observed by the Vajjis, then what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline.”

Once the Blessed One had finished speaking, the brahmin Vassakāra said:

“Master Gautama, when the Vajjis live while observing even one of these principles, what is to be expected is their progress and growth, not their decline. How much more so when they live as they observe all these seven principles!

“Master Gautama, surely King Ajātasattu of Magadha, the son of Vedehi, will not be able to overcome the Vajjis, unless through some form of diplomatic trickery or by creating dissention among them.

“Now we must take our leave, Master Gautama, for we have much work to do.”

“Brahmin, you may do now as you see fit.”

And the brahmin Vassakāra, having been delighted by the words spoken by The Blessed One, got up from his seat and left.”

3. Principles that Protect the Bhikkhus from Crumbling & Destruction.

Then, soon after Vassakāra's left, The Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ānanda by saying: “Ānanda, now go and have all the Bhikkhus living in Rājagaha come and gather in the assembly hall.”

“Very well, Lord,” replied Venerable Ānanda as he quickly went and did as he was directed by The Blessed One.

Once the Bhikkhus had gathered, then Venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One by informing Him:

“Bhante, the Sangha of Bhikkhus is now assembled. Now may The Blessed One do as He sees fit.”

Thereupon, the Blessed One arose from His seat and went to the assembly hall, and by taking His appointed seat there, He addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling. Listen and attend carefully. I shall now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling?

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus constantly come together in good faith and for the promotion of the Sāsana, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus assemble in harmony, dismiss in harmony, and attend to their affairs in harmony, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not appoint new rules that have not been put in place, while also abiding by the already appointed rules, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus honor, venerate, hold in high regard, and pay respects to those true Bhikkhus of long standing, the genuine guides, and true protectors of the Sangha, while they listen and heed their advice, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are not led by nor are under the powerful influence of craving, which would lead them to constantly want to experience new things and have renewed existences, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus wish to live in seclusion, such as in forest dwellings, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as each of the Bhikkhus diligently works by establishing *sati* within himself, as he seeks to make his place of residence into a refuge, where true and genuinely celibate Bhikkhus striving to attain the highest goal of living the Holy Life would want to flock to and stay, while at the same time, all those good Bhikkhus already residing there continue to do so without any trouble, living comfortably there and at ease, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“In this way, Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are closely adhering to and living by these seven principles that prevent crumbling, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.”

“Further, Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven more principles to be followed to prevent crumbling. Listen and attend carefully. I shall now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling?

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not delight in being active, being neither attached to nor indulging in constant engagement with work or to being active, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not delight in being talkative, being neither attached to nor indulging in constant conversations, or being chatty, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not delight in sleep, being neither attached to nor indulging in sleep, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not delight in company, being neither attached to nor indulging in having companions around them, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus’ hearts are empty of evil intentions, where neither their behaviors nor actions are guided or overcome by evil intentions, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are not associating with evil companions, neither spending time with nor enjoying the companionship of wicked people, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus do not stop halfway from striving to complete the ultimate goal of the Holy Life, simply for having attained some mundane level of distinction, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“In this way, Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are closely adhering to and living by these seven principles that prevent crumbling, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.”

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven more principles to be followed to prevent crumbling. Listen and attend carefully. I shall now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling?

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while possessing faith in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while possessing wise moral shame in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while possessing wise moral consideration in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are learned while studying the Dhamma, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live with energetic effort in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live with mindfulness in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live with wisdom in their hearts, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“In this way, Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are closely adhering to and living by these seven principles that prevent crumbling, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.”

Bojjhaṅga (Seven Factors of Awakening)

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven more principles to be followed to prevent crumbling. Listen and attend carefully. I shall now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling?

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of mindfulness, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of investigation of states, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of persevering energy, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of joy, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of tranquility of mind, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of collectedness of mind, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus live while cultivating the awakening factor of equanimity, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“In this way, Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are closely adhering to and living by these seven principles that prevent crumbling, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.”

Seven Perceptions

“Bhikkhus, I will teach you seven more principles to be followed to prevent crumbling. Listen and attend carefully. I shall now speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” the Bhikkhus replied.

The Blessed One continued:

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the seven principles to be followed to prevent crumbling?

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception of impermanence, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception on the lack in any substantiality of a self, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception on the repulsive, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception of the dangers to be encountered, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception of relinquishing, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception on dispassion, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus develop the perception on cessation, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.

“In this way, Bhikkhus, so long as the Bhikkhus are closely adhering to and living by these seven principles that prevent crumbling, then it is their success and growth that is to be expected, *not* their crumbling.”

Six Qualities of Warm-Heartedness

“Bhikkhus, there are these six qualities of warm heartedness. These are six conditions that lead to the wellbeing, success, and growth of the Sangha of Bhikkhus. Now, listen and pay close attention to what I shall say.”

“Yes, Bhante,” replied the Bhikkhus.

“Here, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu treats his companions in the Holy Life with his bodily actions of loving kindness, both in public and in private, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

“Again, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu treats his companions in the Holy Life with his verbal actions of loving kindness, both in public and in private, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

“Again, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu treats his companions in the Holy Life with his mental actions of loving kindness, both in public and in private, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

“Again, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu generously and equally shares with his virtuous companions in the Holy Life whatever offerings he has rightfully obtained, including the contents of his alms bowl, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

“Again, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu dwells with his companions in the Holy Life, whether in public and in private, living with virtue that is continuously kept, blameless, unbroken, flawless, stainless, liberating him from his old negative patterns of behavior; virtues that are praised by the wise as pure, all of which leads him to the collectedness of mind, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

“Again, Bhikkhus, when the Bhikkhu dwells with his companions in the Holy Life, whether in public and in private, living with the Noble View which, when adhered to and continuously practiced, naturally leads to the utter destruction of suffering, then it is the success and growth of the Sangha that is to be expected, *not* its crumbling.

Bhikkhus, these are the six qualities of warm-heartedness.

More Advice Given to the Bhikkhus

Furthermore,

Whenever the Blessed One was staying on the hilltop at the Gijja Peaks in Rājagaha, He would often advise the Bhikkhus in this manner:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Rājagaha for as long as He pleased, He addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Ambalaṭṭhikā.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence at Ambalaṭṭhikā.

While at Ambalaṭṭhikā, The Blessed One stayed in the royal vacation house, and there also, The Blessed One often gave teachings to the Bhikkhus thus:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Ambalaṭṭhikā for as long as He pleased, He addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Nālandā.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence at Nālandā. While at Nālandā, The Blessed One stayed in the mango grove of Pāvārika.

4. Sāriputta's Lion's Roar

Then, the Venerable Sāriputta went to The Blessed One, and after respectfully paying homage to Him, sat down at one side, and spoke the following words:

“Bhante, I have such faith, such confidence in The Blessed One, that I declare that there has never been, there can never be, nor could there be in the present, any other recluse or brahmin more exalted and superior in their Awakening than the Blessed One.”

“Sāriputta, that indeed is quite a lofty proclamation for you to be making!

“Sāriputta, that indeed is a bold declaration, a true sounding of the lion's roar!

“But how is it, Sāriputta, that you make such a categorical declaration? After all, have you had the direct experience of knowing the Fully Awakened Buddhas from the past, those Arahants from bygone eras? Do you have direct and personal understanding of the quality of the Heart of all those Tathāgatas from the past, or have you gained personal knowledge of the level of their virtue, their meditation, their level of wisdom, their inner state, and their freedom from defilements and from future rebirths?”

“No, Blessed Lord.”

“And how about those Arahants, Sāriputta? Do you have the direct experience of knowing the Fully Awakened Buddhas that are to appear in the future? Do you have direct and personal understanding of the quality of the Heart of all those Tathāgatas who have not yet appeared, or have you gained personal knowledge of the level of their virtue, their meditation, their level of wisdom, their inner state, and their freedom from defilements and from future rebirths?”

“No, Blessed Lord.”

“And how about me, Sāriputta? Do you have the direct experience of knowing The Fully Awakened Buddha sitting in front of you at this present moment? Do you have direct and personal understanding of the quality of the Tathāgata's Heart, here and now, or have you gained personal knowledge of the level of My virtue, My meditation, My level of wisdom, My inner state, and My freedom from defilements and from any future rebirths?”

“No, Blessed Lord.”

“Then, Sāriputta, it seems that you do not have the direct personal knowledge or understanding of the quality of the Heart of all those Tathāgatas from the past, those to appear in the future, or The Tathāgata at the present. Therefore, how is it that you dare to set forth a proclamation, such a lofty and bold utterance, a veritable sounding of the lion's roar, by stating:

'Bhante, I have such faith, such confidence in The Blessed One, that I declare that there has never been, there can never be, nor could there be in the present, any other recluse or brahmin more exalted and superior in their Awakening than the Blessed One?'

“Blessed Lord, indeed, I do not possess the direct experience of knowing the Heart of the Fully Awakened Buddhas from the past, those Arahants from bygone eras, those to come in the future, or of the Tathāgata Himself, in the present. Nevertheless, I have personally come to know and see the Truth of the Dhamma, and it is this realization itself, which allows me to infer and make such a proclamation.

“Suppose, Bhante, a king's frontier fortress was strongly fortified, with strong ramparts and turrets, which had only a single gate, and there was a gatekeeper who was intelligent, alert, experienced, and very cautious, keeping all strangers out, only permitting those who are friendly to enter. Now, as the gatekeeper carefully monitors and patrols the path that leads all around the fortress, he does not observe there being even a tiny hole or crack in the thick walls, that would be big enough to allow even a cat to slip through. In this way, he comes to the conclusion:

'Whatever decent sized living beings wanting to enter or leave this city, they will all have to do so by going through this gate, and this gate only!'

“In the same way, Bhante, I have personally come to know and see the Truth of the Dhamma, and it is this realization itself which allows me to infer and make such a proclamation.

“This is because, Bhante, all the Arahants, all the Fully Awakened Buddhas of the past had already abandoned the five hindrances, the corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom; having well established their minds in the four foundations of mindfulness, they had duly cultivated the seven factors of Awakening, and thus had liberated themselves by waking up to the Unsurpassed, Supreme, and Perfect Enlightenment.

“Similarly, Bhante, all the Arahants, all the Fully Awakened Buddhas that will appear in the future would have abandoned the five hindrances, the corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom; well establishing their minds in the four foundations of mindfulness, while duly cultivating the seven factors of Awakening, and thus will liberate themselves by waking up to the Unsurpassed, Supreme, and Perfect Enlightenment.

“And similarly, Bhante, at present, all the Arahants, starting with the Blessed One Himself, all have already abandoned the five hindrances, the corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom; having well established their minds in the four foundations of mindfulness and duly cultivated the seven factors of Awakening, and thus having liberated themselves by waking up to the Unsurpassed, Supreme, and Perfect Enlightenment.”

Thus, in Nālandā, while staying at the mango grove of Pāvārika, in addressing the Bhikkhus there also, the Blessed One taught them the following:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.

5. The Barriers of Immoral Behavior

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Nālandā for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Paṭaligāma.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Paṭaligāma.

Then the lay students of Paṭaligāma, in hearing that The Blessed One had arrived at Paṭaligāma, quickly went and approached The Blessed One, and after respectfully greeting Him, sat down at one side and addressed The Blessed One in this manner:

“May The Blessed One, Lord, kindly come and stay at our main guesthouse.” And The Blessed One consented with his silence.

Knowing The Blessed One's consent, the lay students of Paṭaligāma arose from their seats, respectfully saluted Him, and keeping their right sides towards Him, departed for the guesthouse of their city. Once there, they immediately began preparing by covering the floor all over with precious carpeting, arranging seats and water, and placing oil lamps. Having done this, they went back to The Blessed One, respectfully greeted Him, and while standing at one side, announced:

“Lord, the guest house is now ready, with the floor covered all over with carpets, seats and water being prepared, with oil lamps that have been set up and ready. May The Blessed One approach the guest house, at His convenience.”

Then, when it was morning, The Blessed One put on His robes, and by taking his alms bowl and outer robe, went to the Paṭaligāma’s guesthouse together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus.

Once there, the lay disciples washed The Blessed One’s feet, before He entered into the guesthouse, as He took His prepared seat against the central pillar, facing east. This was followed by the Sangha of Bhikkhus, who also entered the guesthouse, after having their feet washed by the lay disciples, and took their seats near the western wall, facing east, so that the Blessed One was now seated before them. Meanwhile, the lay disciples from Paṭaligāma, also having washed

their own feet, entered the council hall and sat down near the eastern wall, facing west, so that the Blessed One was seated in front of them.

The Fruits of an Immoral, and a Moral Life

Then, The Blessed One, by addressing the crowd gathered in Paṭaligāma, said:

“Householders, there are these five dangers to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character. What are these five?

“The one living without morality, as he neglects to develop a virtuous character, comes to a great loss of wealth, as a result of his negligence. This is the first danger to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

“Also, the one living without any morality gets a bad reputation, as his ill fame keeps spreading. This is the second danger to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

“Also, the one living without any morality, whatever gathering he approaches, whether of Khattiya warriors, brahmins, ordinary householders, or those of recluses and ascetic brahmins, he does so while being flustered and without confidence. Bhikkhus, this is the third danger to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

“Also, the one living without any morality, once the body fails and is no more, he dies a deluded and confused death. This is the fourth danger to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

“Also, the one living without any morality, after death he reappears in the miserable realms, as he is reborn in hell. This is the fifth danger to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

“Therefore, householders, these are the five dangers to be faced by one who lives without any morality, because of his negligence in developing a virtuous character.

6. The Benefits of Moral Behavior

“On the other hand, householders, there are these five benefits to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, as he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character. What are these five?

“Householders, the one living with morality, as he diligently develops a virtuous character, accumulates a great deal of wealth, as a result of his heedfulness. This is the first benefit to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, because he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.

“Furthermore, the one living with morality, gets a good reputation, as his good fame keeps spreading. This is the second benefit to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, because he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.

“Furthermore, the one living with morality, whatever gathering he approaches, whether of Khattiya warriors, brahmins, ordinary householders, or those of recluses and ascetic brahmins, he does so while being calm, composed, and with confidence. This is the third benefit to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, because he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.

“Furthermore, the one living with morality, once the body fails and is no more, he dies a serene and an unconfused death. This is the fourth benefit to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, because he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.

“Furthermore, the one living with morality, after death, he reappears in the happy realms, as he is reborn in the heavens. This is the fifth benefit to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, because he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.

“Therefore, householders, these are the five benefits to be enjoyed by the one who lives with morality, as he diligently strives to develop a virtuous character.”

In this manner, The Blessed One spent much of the night instructing the lay disciples of Paṭaligāma in the Dhamma, as he inspired, roused, and lightened their hearts with an enlivening talk on the Dhamma, after which he dismissed them, by saying:

“The night is now far advanced, householders. You may go at your convenience.”

“As you wish, Bhante,” said the lay disciples of Paṭaligāma as they rose from their seats, and after respectfully paying homage to The Blessed One and keeping Him to their right, they departed.

Once they had left, the Blessed One went into His resting area.

7. The Building of a Fortress

Now, during that time, the two chief ministers of Magadha, Sunidha and Vassakāra, were jointly building a fortress at Paṭaligāma, as a defense against any possible attacks by their neighboring Vajji principality.

Also, at that time, many Devas in large numbers, counted in the thousands, had already taken possession of various sites at Paṭaligāma, whereby senior royal ministers and powerful members of the Magadhan society, who were engaged in constructing various palaces, had these structures of theirs soon enough being guarded by numerous powerful Devas. Similarly, mid-level royal ministers and powerful members of the Magadhan society who were engaged in constructing various dwellings for themselves, soon enough had their new homes also being guarded by numerous mid-level powerful Devas. And the same was the case with the lower-level royal

ministers and other official members of the Magadhan society, who were also engaged in constructing various buildings, had their new buildings guarded by numerous lower-level Devas.

All this, The Blessed One saw with His Divine Eye, that is pure and far surpasses the visual faculty of humans, as He observed how a large number of Devas, to be counted in the thousands, were coming in to take possession and guardianship of the newly constructed structures being built in Paṭaligāma.

And at the crack of dawn, having already arisen, The Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ānanda by saying:

“Ānanda, who are those, busily engaged in the construction of a fortress city within Paṭaligāma?”

“Bhante, they are Sunidha and Vassakāra, the two chief ministers of Magadha, who are building a fortress at Paṭaligāma, as a defense against any possible attacks by their neighboring Vajji princes.”

“It is as if, Ānanda, both Sunidha and Vassakāra had been taking advice from the gods of the Thirty-three. For, Ānanda, I see and observe with the Divine Eye, that is pure and far surpasses the visual faculty of humans, how there is a large number of Devas, to be counted in the thousands, who are coming in to take possession and guardianship of the newly constructed structures being built in Paṭaligāma.

Thus, I observe how those senior royal ministers and powerful members of the Magadhan society who were engaged in constructing various palaces, are having the structures they are building possessed and guarded by numerous powerful Devas. Similarly, mid-level royal ministers and powerful members of the Magadhan society who are engaged in constructing various dwellings for themselves, soon enough are having their new homes also possessed and guarded by numerous mid-level powerful Devas. And the same is the case with the lower-level royal ministers and other official members of the Magadhan society, who are themselves engaged in constructing various buildings, and who are having their new buildings possessed and guarded by numerous lower-level Devas.

“Truly, Ānanda, as far as the Aryan race extends and trade routes spread, this will be the foremost city, Pātaliputta, a major trading-center. But Pātaliputta, Ānanda, will be destroyed by three perils: fire, water, and dissension.”

Later, the two chief ministers, Sunidha and Vassakāra, went to The Blessed One, and after paying their respects and exchanging many pleasant words, stood together at one side and addressed Him by saying:

“May the Blessed Gautama please accept our invitation for tomorrow's meal, together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus.”

And The Blessed One consented through His silence.

Then, understanding that The Blessed One accepted their offer for a meal for the Sangha, the two chief ministers, Sunidha and Vassakāra, both left as they returned to their homes, and had choice food, hard and soft, prepared. And on the next morning, when it was time, they sent word to The Blessed One:

“It is time, Blessed Gautama; the meal is ready, Sir.”

Thereupon, early in the morning, The Blessed One, having put on His robes and by taking His outer robe and alms bowl, together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus went to the guest house, where the meal was to be served by the two chief ministers, Sunidha and Vassakāra. Once there, The Blessed One sat on His prepared seat, and both Sunidha and Vassakāra, with their own hands, began serving the Sangha of Bhikkhus headed by the Buddha, various choice foods, both the hard and soft kinds.

Later, when The Blessed One had finished His meal and had removed His hand from the bowl, the ministers took low seats and sat down at one side.

And The Blessed One expressed His appreciation by uttering these verses:

*“Wherever he may make his dwelling, the wise man
Should take care of those virtuous ones, living the chaste Holy Life;
And having attended to these worthy ones, having made offerings to them,
All this does not get ignored by those local Devas, witnessing these gifts being made.
And by him transferring and sharing the merits of these with the local Devas,
He himself becomes revered and honored by the Devas themselves,
Who tremble with happiness and care for him,
Becoming like mothers for him, their only son.
Thus, he who thus enjoys their grace,
And when one becomes the beloved of the Devas,
One is always met with good fortune.”*

After saying these words, The Blessed One arose from his seat and departed.

Crossing the Ganges

Then, both Sunidha and Vassakāra followed closely behind The Blessed One, step by step, saying:

“Whichever gate the recluse Gautama passes through today while He leaves Paṭaligāma, that we will name the ‘Gautama-gate; and the ford by which He crosses the river Ganges, shall also be named the ‘Gautama-ford.’”

In this way, the gate through which The Blessed One left, came to be known as “the Gautama gate.”

But later, when The Blessed One came to the river Ganges to cross it, it was full to the brim, so that even crows, standing on its banks, could easily drink from it. Meanwhile, people were trying to obtain a boat, while others were tying up reeds into rafts, to ferry themselves across.

But, as easily as a strong man might stretch out his bent arm or draw in his outstretched arm, The Blessed One vanished from this side of the river Ganges, along with all the Sangha of Bhikkhus, and immediately reappeared on the other bank of the flooding Ganges.

Looking at all the people trying to obtain a boat, whereas others were tying up reeds into rafts to ferry themselves across the flooding Ganges, The Blessed One uttered these heartfelt words:

*“While wanting to ferry themselves across the ocean vast,
Many try building boats or binding rafts,
Meanwhile the wise ones have already crossed,
Leaving the lowlands far behind.”*

Part Two
The Journey to Vesālī

8. The Four Noble Truths

Then, The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Koṭigāma.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Koṭigāma.

Then, while addressing the Bhikkhus, The Blessed One stated:

“Bhikkhus, it is due to not understanding, because of not penetrating into the Four Noble Truths that both you and I have been wandering and migrating ceaselessly through this long course of rebirths. What are these Four?

“They are the Noble Truth of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Origin of Suffering; the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering; and the Noble Truth of the Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

“But Bhikkhus, now that these have been understood and penetrated, cut off is the craving for further existence; destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more rebirth into future lives.”

This is what was said by The Blessed One, as The Happy One, the Master, continued in verse:

*“By not being able to see how the Four Noble Truths take place,
Long has been this exhausting path from one birth to the next.
But now that these are clearly seen and understood for what they are,
The very cause for rebirth is removed,
And with the root of suffering fully plucked,
Rebirth has ended, then and there!”*

Then, while still at Koṭigāma, The Blessed One continued giving discourses to the Bhikkhus by instructing them:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

9. Those Never to Return Back Again to this World

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Koṭigāma for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Nāḍika.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went to Nāḍika and took up residence at the Brick House.

The Four Supramundane States of Nobility

Then, Venerable Ānanda approached The Blessed One, and after greeting Him respectfully, sat down at one side and said to The Blessed One:

“Bhante, here in Nāḍika, the Bhikkhu Sālha has died. Where is he now reborn, Lord?”

“The Bhikkhuni Nandā has also died, Bhante. Where is she now reborn?”

“Likewise, the lay male disciple Sudatta and the lay female disciple Sujātā of Nāḍika, have also passed away, Lord. Where have they reappeared in their next birth?”

“Likewise, the Upāsakas Kukkuṭa, Kālinga, Nikāṭa, Kaṭissaha, Tuṭṭha, Santuṭṭha, Bhadda, and Subhadda of Nāḍika, have all died. What is their destination, Lord? What is their future state of rebirth?”

“Ānanda, the Bhikkhu Sālha, through the destruction of all the mental contaminants, in this very lifetime, has finally attained the taintless Release of the Heart, along with the Release through Wisdom, having directly known and understood it by himself.

“The Bhikkhuni Nanda, Ānanda, through the destruction of the five lower fetters (that bind beings to the world of the sense pleasures), has reappeared spontaneously among the Suddāvāsā

Brahma Gods, and there she will realize Final Release in that very place, never again to take rebirth into any lower realm than that Pure Abode.

“As for the Upāsaka Sudatta, Ānanda, having already destroyed the three fetters (self-belief, doubt, and faith in the efficacy of pujas and rituals), and through the lessening of lust, hatred, and delusion, he has become a once-returner and is bound to make an end of suffering after having returned only once more to this world.

“As for the Upāsika Sujātā, Ānanda, having already destroyed the three fetters, she is now completely safe from ever falling into the states of misery, assured and bound for Full Awakening.

“Now, for the Upāsakas Kukkuṭa, Kālinga, Nikāṭa, Kaṭṭissaha, Tuṭṭha, Santuṭṭha, Bhadda, and Subhadda of Nāḍika, Ānanda, through the destruction of the five lower fetters (that bind beings to the world of the sense pleasures), they have all reappeared spontaneously among the Suddāvāsā Brahma Gods, where they will realize Final Release in that very place, never again to take rebirth into any realm other than the Pure Abodes.

“Further, Ānanda, more than fifty such lay disciples died in Nāḍika, having already eradicated the five lower fetters, and as a result, they have reappeared spontaneously in the Pure Abodes, where they too will realize Final Release, never again to take rebirth into any other realms.

“Also, Ānanda, more than ninety lay disciples who have passed away in Nāḍika, through the destruction of the three fetters and the lessening of lust, hatred, and delusion, have become once-returners and are bound to make an end of suffering after having returned only once more to this world.

“That is not all, Ānanda, because more than five hundred lay disciples who died in Nāḍika, having already eradicated the three lower fetters, as a result, have all become Stream-Winners, no longer subject to be reborn into the miserable, lower realms, guaranteed to attain Full Awakening.

10. Those Never to Return Back Again to this World

“Truly, Ānanda, there is nothing surprising in that human beings should die. But if each time it happens, you were to come to the Tathagata and ask about this or that person who died, in this manner, that indeed would be burdensome for Me!

“Therefore, Ānanda, I will give you the teaching called ‘The Mirror of the Dhamma,’ by possessing which the Noble Disciple in Training, if he so desires, can declare of himself:

‘There is no more rebirth for me in the hells, nor as an animal or as a ghost, nor in any of the lower realms. I am a Stream-Winner, safe from ever falling back into those states of misery! Now, I stand assured and destined for Full Awakening.’

“And what, Ānanda, is the teaching called ‘The Mirror of Dhamma,’ by possessing which the Noble Disciple in Training may go ahead and make such a proclamation?

"Here, Ānanda, the Noble Disciple in Training possesses unshakable faith in the Buddha thus:

‘The Blessed One is an Arahant, Perfectly Awakened, endowed with Sublime Knowledge and Supremely Pure Conduct, the Well-Gone, the Knower of worlds, the Incomparable Tamer of those to be tamed, the Teacher of gods and humans, the Enlightened, Truly the Blessed One.’

“Further, Ānanda, the Noble Disciple in Training possesses unshakable faith in the Dhamma thus:

‘The Dhamma of The Blessed One is well expounded, it is directly visible here and now, immediately effective, inviting one to come and investigate for oneself, taking one straight forward, undeterred, and to be understood and personally realized by the wise, each for oneself.’

“Further, Ānanda, the Noble Disciple in Training possesses unshakable faith in the Sangha of Noble Disciples thus:

‘The Disciples of The Blessed One are practicing well the good way, which is the Threefold Training of Sīla, Samādhi, Paññā (morality, mental cultivation and wisdom); the Disciples of The Blessed One are practicing the straight path of the Threefold Training, which is the Middle Path; the Disciples of The Blessed One are practicing wisely to realize Nibbāna, in a methodical way; the Disciples of The Blessed One are practicing the Dhamma, in harmony; Such are the Four Pairs of Eight Great Beings, comprising the Eight Noble Disciples of The Blessed One, the ones to be honored and respected, deserving of hospitality, worthy of offerings, to be venerated with reverential salutation with one’s palms pressed together at the heart, the incomparable field of merit for the world.’

“Further, Ānanda, the Noble Disciple in Training possesses the virtuous behavior that is loved by all the Noble Ones, for it is complete and perfect, spotless, pure, which is the reason why it is liberating, as it stands unaffected nor influenced by worldly concerns, and thus takes one into the various states of Samādhi, the Collectedness of the Heart.

“Ānanda, this therefore is the teaching called ‘The Mirror of the Dhamma,’ by possessing which the Noble Disciple in Training, if he so desires, can declare of himself:

‘There is no more rebirth for me in the hells, nor as an animal or as a ghost, nor in any of the lower realms. I am a Stream-Winner, safe from ever falling back into those states of misery! Now, I stand assured and destined for Full Awakening.’”

And there too, in Nāḍika, while staying at the Brick House, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus and taught them the following:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Nāḍika for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Vesālī.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Vesālī, at Ambapālī’s Grove.

Mindfulness and Clear Comprehension

Then, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

"Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu must always remain mindful, living with full alertness, and clearly aware. This is my instruction to you!"

"And how, Bhikkhus, must a Bhikkhu always remain mindful?"

“Here, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu is fully attentive, carefully staying with the body, mindful of it in all its transitions and states, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Similarly, he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever feeling that is occurring, mindful of it in all its transitions, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Similarly, he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever state that is occurring in the Citta (*Heart*), mindful of it in all its transitions and states, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Similarly, he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever phenomena, along with their relationships, that he detects are occurring, mindful of them in all their transitions, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world. In this manner, he is said to be mindful.

"And how, Bhikkhus, does a Bhikkhu live with full alertness and is clearly aware?

"Here, Bhikkhus, while going somewhere or returning, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While looking forward, around him, or in any direction, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While bending and stretching his body, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While putting on and wearing his robes, his outer robe, and holding his alms bowl, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While eating and drinking, chewing, and tasting his food, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While urinating and defecating, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. While walking, standing, sitting, sleeping, waking up, talking, and keeping silent, the Bhikkhu behaves with full alertness and is clearly aware. In this manner, he is said to live with full alertness and is clearly aware.

"Therefore, Bhikkhus, this is my instruction that I give to you all! The Bhikkhu must always remain mindful, living with full alertness, and be clearly aware."

11. Ambapālī the Courtesan

It was during that time, that Ambapālī, the famous courtesan came to know:

"The Blessed One, they say, has already arrived in Vesālī and is now staying at my own Mango Grove!"

And she quickly ordered a large number of magnificent carriages to be made ready, mounted one of them herself, and while being accompanied by the rest, drove out from Vesālī towards her park. This way, she rode her chariot as far as it could go, and then dismounted, as she went the rest of the way on foot. Having approached The Blessed One, she respectfully paid homage to Him and sat down to one side.

Then, The Blessed One encouragingly spoke, as he inspired, instructed, roused, and gladdened Ambapālī the courtesan's heart, with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma.

Afterwards, Ambapālī the courtesan addressed The Blessed One, and said:

"Bhante, may The Blessed One, please accept my Dāna for tomorrow's meal, accompanied together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus."

And The Blessed One consented with His silence.

Then, having become certain of The Blessed One's acceptance of the next day's meal, Ambapālī the courtesan rose from her seat, and after respectfully paying homage to Him, and while keeping her right side towards The Blessed One, she left.

Meanwhile, the Licchāvi Princes of Vesālī also heard the news:

"The Blessed One, they say, has already arrived in Vesāli and is now staying at Ambapālī's Grove!"

And they quickly ordered a large number of magnificent carriages to be made ready, where each mounted one, and while being accompanied by the rest, drove out from Vesāli towards the park. Now, among these Licchāvi Princes, there were some who were dressed in blue, with clothing and ornaments all decked in blue, while others were in yellow, red, and white.

While on their way, it so happened that Ambapālī the courtesan drove up against the young Licchavis, axle to axle, wheel to wheel, and yoke to yoke.

Thereupon the Licchavis exclaimed:

"Why do you drive up with such gusto against us, rushing so fast, Ambapālī?"

"My dear Princes, and so it is, as I am in a rush! For the Blessed One has been invited by me for tomorrow's Dāna meal, together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus!"

"Ambapālī, give up the Dāna to us! We will give you a hundred thousand gold coins!"

"My dear Princes, *even* if you were to give me the entirety of Vesāli, together with its tributary lands, I still would not give up to you a Dāna meal of such great importance!"

Then, the Licchavis snapped their fingers in amusement:

"See, friends! We've been completely outdone by this woman! We are utterly defeated by this woman!" And they continued on their way to Ambapālī's Grove.

As the Princes approached the park, The Blessed One, in seeing the Licchavis from afar, addressed the Bhikkhus and exclaimed:

"Those among you, Bhikkhus, who have not yet seen the Gods of the Thirty-three, go ahead and look at them! Gaze upon this assembly of Licchavis, Bhikkhus! For they surely resemble the Gods of the Thirty-three in appearance!"

The Licchavi Princes rode their chariots as far as they could go, and then dismounted, as they went the rest of the way on foot. Having approached The Blessed One, they respectfully paid homage to Him and sat down to one side.

Then, The Blessed One encouragingly spoke, as He inspired, instructed, roused, and gladdened the Licchavi's hearts with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma.

Afterwards, the Licchavi Princes addressed The Blessed One, and said:

"Bhante, may The Blessed One, please accept our Dāna for tomorrow's meal, accompanied together with the Sangha of Bhikkhus."

And The Blessed One said:

“The invitation for tomorrow's Dāna meal, Licchavis, has been accepted by Me from Ambapālī the courtesan.”

Then, the Licchavis again snapped their fingers in amusement:

“See, friends! We’ve been completely outdone by this woman! We are utterly defeated by this woman!”

And the Licchavis, while being delighted in hearing The Blessed One's words, rose from their seats, respectfully paid homage to Him, and while keeping their right sides towards The Blessed One, they all left.

Early the next morning, after the night had passed, Ambapālī the courtesan had already prepared a variety of delicious foods in her own home, and she sent word to The Blessed One, announcing:

"It is time, Bhante. The meal is now ready, O Blessed Lord."

Thereupon, in the morning, The Blessed One put on His robes, and by taking His alms bowl and outer robe, along with His Sangha of Bhikkhus, He walked to Ambapālī's dwelling, and there He took the seat that was prepared for Him. And Ambapālī herself attended on the Sangha of Bhikkhus headed by the Buddha, as she served them with a variety of delicious foods. Later, when The Blessed One had finished His meal and had removed His hand from His bowl, Ambapālī the courtesan took a low seat, and by sitting herself at one side, spoke to The Blessed One thus:

“Bhante, this Grove, O Lord, I offer to the Sangha of Bhikkhus headed by the Buddha.” And The Blessed One, having accepted the park, went on instructing Ambapālī in the Dhamma, and having uplifted, taught, and gladdened her heart, He rose from His seat and departed.

And there too, in Vesālī, while staying at Ambapālī's grove, The Blessed One again addressed the Bhikkhus, and taught them the following:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one's behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

12. Spending the Vassa in Veḷuvagāma

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Vesāli for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Veḷuvagāma.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Veḷuvagāma.

The Blessed One's Terminal Illness

At that time, The Blessed One spoke to the Bhikkhus, by saying:

“Go now, Bhikkhus, and seek shelter anywhere in and around Vesāli where you are welcome, staying with acquaintances and friends, and there spend the Vassa, the Rains’ Retreat. As for me, I shall spend the Vassa here, in this very place, in Veḷuvagāma.”

“As You wish, Lord,” those Bhikkhus replied.

Not long after, however, as The Blessed One entered the Vassa period, He became severely ill, experiencing sharp and deadly pains, the kind that could make a person wish for death itself.

Yet, The Blessed One endured all of these mindfully, with full alertness and while being clearly aware and unperturbed by these painful experiences.

Then, it occurred to The Blessed One:

“It would not be fitting if I attain Final Full Release without first addressing my attendants, and without taking leave of the Sangha of Bhikkhus. Therefore, let me suppress this illness by strength of will, and resolve to maintain the life process and live on.”

And The Blessed One suppressed the illness by strength of His will, as He resolved to maintain the life process, and lived on. And The Blessed One's pains disappeared.

Soon, having recovered from His sickness, The Blessed One came out of His dwelling place and sat down in the shade within the courtyard of the monastery, on a seat prepared for Him.

Then, the Venerable Ānanda approached The Blessed One, and after paying homage to and greeting Him, he sat down at one side, and spoke to The Blessed One, by saying:

“Bhante, it is so wonderful to see The Blessed One at ease again! So fortunate it is for me, O Lord, to see The Blessed One recovered! For truly, Lord, when I saw The Blessed One's sickness, it was as though my own body became weak as a creeper, everything around became dim to me, and my senses failed me. Yet, Lord, I kept consoling myself with the encouraging thought that The Blessed One would not come to His Final Full Release until He first give some last instructions to the Sangha of Bhikkhus.”

After the Venerable Ānanda spoke these words, The Blessed One addressed him, by saying:

"But Ānanda, what more does the Sangha of Bhikkhus expect from me? I have set forth the Dhamma without making any distinctions whatsoever of esoteric and exoteric teachings; there has never been a time, Ānanda, where the Tathagata somehow held a closed fist as a teacher, to somehow keep some things back or secret from you all!

“Whoever may think that he should now lead the Sangha of Bhikkhus instead, or that the Sangha depends upon him, then let him believe in such futile things. For it would be such a person who would worry about giving last instructions to the Sangha of Bhikkhus.

“However, Ānanda, the Tathagata has no such concerns as to who should lead the Sangha of Bhikkhus, or that the Sangha depends upon Him. So, why should the Tathāgata be concerned about giving instructions to the Sangha of Bhikkhus?

“Ānanda, I am now old, frail, aged, far gone in years. This is my eightieth year, and my life is spent. Even as an old and broken-down cart is held together with much difficulty, Ānanda, so is the body of the Tathagata kept going only with much support.

“Ānanda, it is only when the Tathagata, by ignoring all external objects, with the cessation of certain feelings, enters into and stays in the signless collectedness of mind, that the Tathāgata's body experiences comfort.

"Therefore, Ānanda, you must become islands unto yourselves, becoming your own refuge, seeking no external refuge whatsoever. Make the Dhamma your island. Let the Dhamma be your only refuge, no longer seeking any other refuge.

“And how, Ānanda, does a Bhikkhu become an island unto himself, becoming one's own refuge, seeking no external refuge whatsoever, making the Dhamma his island and only refuge, no longer seeking any other refuge?

“When a Bhikkhu is fully attentive, carefully staying with the body, mindful of it in all its transitions and states, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Similarly, when he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever feeling that is occurring, mindful of it in all its transitions, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Also, when he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever state that is occurring in the Citta (*Heart*), mindful of it in all its transitions and states, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world.

“Also, when he is fully attentive, carefully staying with whatever phenomena, along with their relationships, that he detects are occurring, mindful of them in all their transitions, striving ardently after having overcome longing and sorrow in regard to the world. In this manner, he is said to be mindful. Then, he truly becomes an island unto himself, becoming one’s own refuge, seeking no external refuge whatsoever, making the Dhamma his island and *only* refuge, no longer seeking any other refuge.

"Whether now or long after I am gone, Ānanda, all those Bhikkhus of mine, who truly become islands unto themselves, becoming one’s own refuge, seeking no external refuge whatsoever, making the Dhamma their island and only refuge, no longer seeking any other refuge: it is those Bhikkhus who will get to the very summit, who are desirous of the Training.”

Part Three

Relinquishing the Will to Continue Living

13. A Clear Indication

Then, having risen in the morning, The Blessed One put on His robes, and by taking His alms bowl and outer robe, He went into Vesāli for alms. On His return from the alms round, The Blessed One ate His meal and then spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Ānanda, let us spend the day at the Cāpāla shrine. Bring along the sitting cloths with you.”
“As You wish, Lord.”

And by taking the sitting cloths with him, the Venerable Ānanda followed closely behind The Blessed One, step by step.

The Blessed One went to the Cāpāla shrine and sat down on the seat that was prepared for Him. And after paying homage to The Blessed One, the Venerable Ānanda sat to one side, and The Blessed One said to him:

“Ānanda, Vesāli is quite lovely. Its shrines too are lovely, be it the Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sārandada, or the Cāpāla shrine.”

And The Blessed One continued by saying:

“Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span.”

But, despite such an obvious clue, the Venerable Ānanda was unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication given by The Blessed One. As though his mind was veiled by Māra, for he did not make use of this great opportunity to beseech The Blessed One:

“Bhante! May The Blessed One, please, remain for an entire lifespan! May The Sugata, please, remain and fully complete it, until the end of His life span! Please O Lord, stay for the welfare and happiness of the multitude of beings throughout, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing, and happiness of both Devas and humans!”

And for a second and a third time, The Blessed One repeated His words:

“Ānanda, Vesālī is quite lovely. Its shrines too are lovely, be it the Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sārandada, or the Cāpāla shrine.”

As He continued by saying:

“Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of it that life span.”

But, for a second and a third time, despite such an obvious hint, the Venerable Ānanda remained quiet, unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication offered by The Blessed One. As though his mind was veiled by Māra, for he did not make use of this great opportunity to beseech The Blessed One:

“Bhante! May The Blessed One, please, remain for an entire lifespan! May the Sugata, please, remain and fully complete it, until the end of His life span! Please O Lord, stay for the welfare and happiness of the multitude of beings throughout, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing, and happiness of both Devas and humans!”

Then, The Blessed One arose from His seat and said to the Venerable Ānanda:

“Go now, Ānanda, and do whatever seems fit to you.”

“Very well, Bhante,” replied the Venerable Ānanda, as he got up from his seat, and after respectfully saluting The Blessed One and keeping Him to his right, he left and found himself a place to sit under a tree, some distance away.”

14. Māra’s Plea

Once the Venerable Ānanda had left The Blessed One’s side, Māra, the Mischievous One, approached The Blessed One. Standing to one side, Māra spoke these words to The Blessed One: “It is now time, Bhante, for The Blessed One to attain His Final Full Release; let the Sugata fully and completely pass away! The time *has* come for the Parinibbāna of the Lord.

“After all, Bhante, The Blessed One Himself once spoke these words to me:

‘I shall not come to my final passing away, O Mischievous One, until my Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples have all come to be true Noble Disciples, who are wise, well disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; until my Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master’s word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them

thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.'

“But now, Bhante, The Blessed One *does* have Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples, who have all come to be true Noble Disciples indeed, who are wise, well disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; The Blessed One's Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear. Also, they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.'

“Therefore, it is now time, Bhante, for The Blessed One to attain His Final Full Release; let the Sugata fully and completely pass away! The time has come for the Parinibbāna of the Lord.

“After all, Bhante, The Blessed One once spoke these words to me:

'I shall not come to my Final and Full Release, O Mischievous One, until this Holy Life taught by Me has become successful, prosperous, widespread, popular, extensive, and well-known, until it is well proclaimed and spread far and wide among Devas and humans.'

“And now, Bhante, this *too* has been achieved, for the Holy Life taught by The Blessed One has become successful, prosperous, widespread, popular, extensive, and well-known, for it is well proclaimed and spread far and wide among Devas and humans.

“Therefore, *now* is the time, Bhante, for The Blessed One to attain His Final Full Release; let the Sugata fully and completely pass away! The time *has* come for the Parinibbāna of the Lord.”

15. The Blessed One Relinquishes His Will to Live

When this was said, The Blessed One spoke to Māra, the Mischievous One, by saying: “Do not trouble yourself, O Mischievous One. Before long, the Parinibbāna of The Tathāgata will soon come to pass. Three months from now, The Tathāgata will enter Final Full Release.”

And it was then, while at the Cāpāla shrine, that The Blessed One mindfully and with full alertness and careful consideration, relinquished his will to continue living. Immediately, upon The Blessed Lord's renouncing his will to live on, there took place a tremendous earthquake, terrifying, dreadful, and hair-raising, as thunders rolled across the skies. Understanding the significance of this extraordinary event, The Blessed One uttered these solemn words:

*“Whether appearing within worlds that are measurable or immeasurable,
Or confined within the world of the six senses,*

*This the Sage has renounced by giving up the craving for becoming,
Inwardly remaining serene and calm,
Much cutting through a thick chainmail,
He bursts out of this self-made shell of an armor.”*

16. Eight Causes for Earthquakes

Then it occurred to the mind of the Venerable Ānanda:

“How marvelous it is indeed and most breathtaking! The earth shakes powerfully, so tremendously! How terrifying, dreadful, and hair-raising it is, as thunders roll across the skies like this! Now, what could be the reason for this, what is the cause for such a mighty earthquake to be taking place?”

And the Venerable Ānanda went straight back to The Blessed One, and after respectfully greeting him, sat down to one side, and said:

“Bhante, how marvelous it is indeed and most breathtaking! The earth shakes powerfully, so tremendously! How terrifying, dreadful, and hair-raising it is, as thunders roll across the skies like this! Now, what could be the reason for this, what is the cause for such a mighty earthquake to be taking place?”

Then, The Blessed One said:

“Ānanda, there are eight reasons, eight causes for a mighty earthquake to take place. What are those eight?

“This great earth, Ānanda, is positioned upon liquid, the liquid upon the atmosphere, and the atmosphere upon space. And when, Ānanda, mighty atmospheric disturbances take place, the liquid underneath becomes agitated. And because of the agitation of the liquid underneath, tremors and earthquakes shake up this great earth. This is the first reason, the first cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when a recluse or a religious practitioner of great psychic power, one who has gained mastery of his mind, or a Deva who is mighty and powerful, while developing his intense concentration to a limited extent upon the earth element, but while at the same time being focused in his concentration (and to a boundless degree) upon the liquid element, then, he too can cause the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the second reason, the second cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when the Bodhisatta departs from the Tusita realm and descends into his mother's womb, mindfully, fully alert, with careful consideration, that especially significant event too causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the third reason, the third cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when the Bodhisatta comes out of his mother's womb, mindfully, fully alert and with careful consideration, that especially significant event too causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the fourth reason, the fourth cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when The Tathagata becomes Fully Awakened in Unsurpassed, Supreme Enlightenment, that especially significant event too causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the fifth reason, the fifth cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when The Tathagata sets the Excellent Wheel of the Dhamma in motion by teaching it for the first time, that especially significant event too causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the sixth reason, the sixth cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Also, Ānanda, when The Tathagata relinquishes his will to continue living, that especially significant event too causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the seventh reason, the seventh cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“Finally, Ānanda, when The Tathagata breathes His last breath by entering into Final Parinibbāna, with no residues whatsoever remaining, nor clinging to anything, then that very significant event especially causes the earth to tremble, quiver, and shake. This is the eighth reason, the eighth cause for the arising of mighty earthquakes.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight reasons, the eight causes for a mighty earthquake to take place.”

17. The Eight Assemblies

“Further, Ānanda, there are these eight kinds of assemblies: assembly of Khattiyas (warriors); assembly of brahmins; assembly of householders; assembly of recluses; assembly of Devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings; assembly of Devas of the realm of the Thirty-Three; assembly of Māras; and the assembly of Brahmās.

“And I recall, Ānanda, how I have been to each of these eight kinds of assemblies, be they the assembly of Khattiyas, brahmins, householders, recluses, Devas in the realm of the Four Great Kings, Devas in the realm of the Thirty-three, assembly of Māras, and the assembly where Brahma gods would gather; all these assemblies I have attended, where the attendants were in the hundreds in each.

“And before seating myself among them or starting the conversation or the discussion, I transformed myself so that both my appearance and voice were just like theirs. All this, so that I may be able to teach them the Dhamma, as I instructed, inspired, uplifted, explained, and gladdened their hearts. Yet, throughout the time that I was speaking to them thus, they did not know or recognize me, and they would enquire of one another, asking:

‘Who is he, speaking to us like this? Is he a man or a Deva?’

“Then, having taught them the Dhamma, and having instructed, inspired, uplifted, explained, and gladdened their hearts, I would immediately vanish from their midst. And once I had vanished too, they still they did not know or recognize me, and they would enquire of one another, asking:

‘Who is he who just vanished? Was it a man or a Deva?’

“These, therefore, Ānanda, are the eight kinds of assemblies.”

18. Eight Bases of Transcendence

“Also, Ānanda, there are these eight bases of transcendence. And what are the eight?

“When someone, on perceiving objects in his mind, whether seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are small and limited in their size and outline, whether beautiful or ugly, he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares:

‘I know and see it for what it is!’ This is the first base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, on perceiving objects in his mind, whether seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are vast and limitless in their size and outline, whether beautiful or ugly, he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *‘I know and see it for what it is!’* This is the second base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, only seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are small and limited in their size and outline, whether beautiful or ugly, he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *‘I know and see it for what it is!’* This is the third base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, only seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are vast and limitless in their size and outline, whether beautiful or ugly, he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *‘I know and see it for what it is!’* This is the fourth base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are blue in color, blue in their tone, or of blue luster like the blossoms of a flax flower, which is blue, or like fine blue silk from Benares, smoothed on both sides, blue in its luster, blue in its tone, blue in its color.

Similarly, such a person, although unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, but who sees forms and shapes external to himself that are blue in color, blue in their tone, or of blue luster, yet he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *‘I know and see it for what it is!’* This is the fifth base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are yellow in color, yellow in their tone, or of yellow luster like a

kaṇikara flower, which is yellow, or like fine yellow silk from Benares, smoothed on both sides, yellow in its luster, yellow in its tone, yellow in its color.

Similarly, such a person, although unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, but who sees forms and shapes external to himself that are yellow in color, yellow in their tone, or of yellow luster, yet he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *'I know and see it for what it is!'* This is the sixth base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are red in color, red in their tone, or of red luster like a bandhujīvaka flower, which is red, or like fine red silk from Benares, smoothed on both sides, red in its luster, red in its tone, red in its color.

Similarly, such a person, although unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, but who sees forms and shapes external to himself that are red in color, red in their tone, or of red luster, yet he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *'I know and see it for what it is!'* This is the seventh base of transcendence.

“Also, when someone, unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, seeing forms and shapes external to himself that are white in color, white in their tone, or of white luster like a morning star, which is white, or like fine white silk from Benares, smoothed on both sides, white in its luster, white in its tone, white in its color.

Similarly, such a person, although unable to perceive objects in his mind subjectively, but who sees forms and shapes external to himself that are white in color, white in their tone, or of white luster, yet he is able to transcend them by penetrating into and perceiving their true essence, whereby he declares: *'I know and see it for what it is!'* This is the eighth base of transcendence.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight bases of transcendence.

19. The Eight Freedoms

“Now, Ānanda, there are these eight freedoms. And what are the eight?

“While having form oneself, one perceives forms. This is the first freedom.

“No longer being aware of having form, one perceives forms outside of oneself. This is the second freedom.

“Seeing and experiencing only what is beautiful. This is the third freedom.

“By completely transcending all perceptions having to do with material form; by the disappearance of all perceptions having to do with sense-reaction; and by giving no attention to perceptions of diverse phenomena, one becomes aware of, attains to, and remains in the sphere of infinite space. This is the fourth freedom.

“By completely transcending the sphere of infinite space, one becomes aware of, attains to, and remains in the sphere of infinite consciousness. This is the fifth freedom.

“By completely transcending the sphere of infinite consciousness, one becomes aware of, attains to, and remains in the sphere of nothingness. This is the sixth freedom.

“By utterly transcending the sphere of nothingness, one attains to and remains in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. This is the seventh freedom.

“And by utterly transcending the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, one attains to and remains in the cessation of perceptions and feelings. This is the eighth freedom.

“These, Ānanda, are the eight freedoms.

Māra's Former Temptation

“Further, Ānanda, at one time, soon after my Supreme Awakening, once when I was staying at Uruvelā, on the bank of the Nerañjarā River, at the foot of the goatherds’ banyan-tree, Māra, the Mischievous One, approached me. Standing to one side, Māra then spoke these words to me:

“It is now time, Bhante, for The Blessed One to attain His Final Full Release; let the Sugata fully and completely pass away! The time *has* come for the Parinibbāna of the Lord.”

“Then, Ānanda, I replied to Māra, the Mischievous One, saying:

‘I shall not come to my final passing away, O Mischievous One, until my Bhikkhus have all come to be true Noble Disciples, who are wise, well-disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; until my Bhikkhus live by the appropriate conduct and, having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.’

‘I shall not come to my final passing away, O Mischievous One, until my Bhikkhunis have all come to be true Noble Disciples, who are wise, well-disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; until my Bhikkhunis live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.’

‘I shall not come to my final passing away, O Mischievous One, until my male lay disciples have all come to be true Noble Disciples, who are wise, well-disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; until my

male lay disciples live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.'

'I shall not come to my final passing away, O Mischievous One, until my female lay disciples have all come to be true Noble Disciples, who are wise, well-disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; until my female lay disciples live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear; until they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.'

“Further, Ānanda, I said to Māra:

'I shall not come to my Final and Full Release, O Mischievous One, until this Holy Life taught by Me has become successful, prosperous, widespread, popular, extensive, and well-known, until it is well-proclaimed and spread far and wide among Devas and humans.'

“Today, Ānanda, Māra, the Mischievous One, again approached me at the Cāpāla Shrine, while saying:

'Now, Bhante, The Blessed One does have Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples, who have all come to be true Noble Disciples indeed, who are wise, well-disciplined, capable and learned, preservers of the Dhamma, living according to and firmly established in the Dhamma; The Blessed One's Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples live by the appropriate conduct, and having learned the Master's word, are able to expound it, preach it, proclaim it, establish it, reveal it, explain it in detail, and make it clear. Also, they are fully able to refute any adverse opinions and doctrines that might arise, being able to overcome them thoroughly while explaining in a convincing manner, as they teach the True and Liberating Dhamma.'

“Also, Bhante,” he added, “the Holy Life taught by The Blessed One has become successful, prosperous, widespread, popular, extensive, and well-known, for it is well-proclaimed and spread far and wide among Devas and humans.

'Therefore, now is the time, Bhante, for The Blessed One to attain His Final Full Release; let the Sugata fully and completely pass away! The time has come for the Parinibbāna of the Lord.'

“When this was said, I spoke to Māra, the Mischievous One, by saying:

'Do not trouble yourself, O Mischievous One. Before long the Parinibbāna of The Tathāgata will soon come to pass. Three months from now, The Tathāgata will enter Final Full Release.'

“In just this manner, Ānanda, it was at the Cāpāla shrine, that The Tathāgata relinquished His will to continue living on.”

20. Venerable Ānanda's Appeal

In hearing these words, the Venerable Ānanda spoke to The Blessed One by saying:

“Bhante! May The Blessed One, please, remain for an entire lifespan! May the Sugata, please, remain and fully complete it, until the end of His life span! Please O Lord, stay for the welfare and happiness of the multitude of beings throughout, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing, and happiness of both Devas and humans!”

The Blessed One, however, replied by saying:

“Enough, Ānanda. Do not make this request from The Tathagata, for the time is now past, Ānanda, for such an appeal to be made.”

But for a second and a third time, the Venerable Ānanda kept intreating The Blessed One:

“Bhante! May The Blessed One, please, remain for an entire lifespan! May the Sugata, please, remain and fully complete it, until the end of His life span! Please O Lord, stay for the welfare and happiness of the multitude of beings throughout, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, the wellbeing, and happiness of both Devas and humans!”

Then, The Blessed One said:

“Ānanda, do you have faith in the Awakening of The Tathagata?”

And the Venerable Ānanda replied: “Yes, of course, O Blessed Lord, I do!”

“Then why, Ānanda, do you keep persisting against The Tathāgata even up to the third time?”

Then, the Venerable Ānanda said:

“Because, O Blessed Lord, I have heard and learned from The Blessed One Himself when The Blessed One spoke these words to me:

‘Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span.’

“And did you believe these words spoken to you by The Tathāgata, Ānanda?”

“Yes, of course, O Blessed Lord, I did.”

“Then, Ānanda, the fault is yours and yours alone. For you have failed, because despite this very obvious hint I have given you, yet you remained quiet, unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication offered to you by The Tathagata, and therefore, you did not then entreat The Tathagata to remain. Because, if you had done so, Ānanda, twice The Tathagata might have declined, but on the third time He would have consented. Therefore, Ānanda, the fault is yours and yours alone, for you have failed.

“At Rājagaha, Ānanda, while we were staying at the Vultures’ Peak, I spoke to you these words:

‘Ānanda, Rājagaha is quite lovely and so are its Gijja cliffs, with their Vultures’ Peak.’

“Then, I added:

‘Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span.’

“But, despite this very obvious clue, Ānanda, you did *not* grasp this very clear and significant indication given to you by The Tathāgata, and instead you remained quiet, unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication, and therefore you did not then entreat The Tathagata to remain. Because, if you had done so, Ānanda, twice The Tathagata might have declined, but on the third time He would have consented. Therefore, Ānanda, the fault is yours and yours alone, for you have failed.

“Ānanda, the same occurred again in Rājagaha, but this time, while we were staying at the Gautama Banyan Tree, and later at the Robbers’ Cliff, at the Sattapaṇṇi Cave on the Vebhara Mountain, at the Black Rock of Isigili, at the Serpents’ Pool in the Cool Forest, at the Tapoda Hot Springs Monastery, at the Bamboo Grove in the Squirrels’ Feeding-ground, at Jīvaka’s Mango Grove, and at the Maddakucchi Deer Park, where I spoke to you the same words, by saying:

‘Ānanda, Rājagaha is quite lovely, as are all these other places.’

“Then, I added:

‘Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span.’

“But, despite this very obvious clue, Ānanda, you did *not* grasp this very clear and significant indication given to you by The Tathāgata, and instead you remained quiet, unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication, and therefore you did not then entreat The Tathagata to remain. Because, if you had done so, Ānanda, twice The Tathagata might have declined, but on the third time He would have consented. Therefore, Ānanda, the fault is yours and yours alone, for you have failed.

Similarly, Ānanda, on different occasions The Tathagata has spoken to you, by saying:

‘Ānanda, Vesāli is quite lovely. Its shrines too are lovely, be it the Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sārāṇadā, or the Cāpāla shrine.’

“Then, I added:

‘Ānanda, whoever has fully developed and cultivated, practiced, retained, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power, could, if he so desired, remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span. The Tathagata, Ānanda, has perfected those constituents of psychic power. Therefore, if The Tathagata so desires, He could remain alive for an entire lifespan, or fully complete it, until the end of that life span.’

“But, despite this very obvious clue, Ānanda, you did *not* grasp this very clear and significant indication given to you by the Tathāgata, and instead you remained quiet, unable to grasp this very clear and significant indication, and therefore you did not then entreat The Tathagata to remain. Because if you had done so, Ānanda, twice The Tathagata might have declined, but on the third time He would have consented. Therefore, Ānanda, the fault is yours and yours alone, for you have failed.

“Anyhow, Ānanda, have I not taught you from the very beginning, that with all things and relationships that are near and dear to us, there is the inevitability of change, of separation, and of saying goodbye?

“After all, whatever that is born, comes into being, is conditioned, and therefore subject to crumbling and decay. How can one then expect them to somehow not fall apart?” For such a state of affairs can never come to be, as it is not the nature of things.

“But this itself, Ānanda, is what The Tathāgata has left behind and finished with, that which He has relinquished, given up, abandoned, rejected, and along with it, He has relinquished His will to continue to live on. And to this effect, Ānanda, now The Tathagata’s words have been spoken, once and for all:

‘Before long, the Parinibbāna of The Tathāgata will soon come to pass. Three months from now, The Tathāgata will enter Final Full Release.’

“And for The Tathagata to somehow withdraw His words for the sake of continuing to live on, once the life force has been given up, such a thing is itself an impossibility.”

The Last Admonition

“So, then, Ānanda, let us now go to the hall of the Gabled House, in the Great Forest.”

And the Venerable Ānanda replied: “As You wish, Lord.”

Then The Blessed One, accompanied by the Venerable Ānanda, went to the hall of the Gabled House, in the Great Forest. And once there, The Blessed One instructed the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Now, Ānanda, go and have all the Bhikkhus living in Vesāli come and gather in the assembly hall.”

“Very well, Lord,” replied the Venerable Ānanda, as he quickly went and did as he was directed by The Blessed One.

Once the Bhikkhus had gathered, then Venerable Ānanda approached The Blessed One, by informing Him:

“Bhante, the Sangha of Bhikkhus is now assembled. May The Blessed One do as He sees fit.”

Thereupon, The Blessed One arose from His seat and went to the assembly hall, and by taking His appointed seat there, He addressed the Bhikkhus thus:

“O Bhikkhus, all these years past, the teachings that I have made known to you, by sharing them with you, stem from directly knowing and experiencing them myself. These, you must apply yourselves to thoroughly know the Dhamma that I taught you, by learning, cultivating, developing, and constantly engaging in its practice, so that the Pure and Holy Life may be firmly established, as it sustains itself by lasting for a long time. This is essential for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, wellbeing, and happiness of both Gods and humans.

“Again, Bhikkhus, what are these teachings? They are the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Right Efforts, the Four Constituents of Psychic Power, the Five Spiritual Faculties, the Five Spiritual Powers, the Seven Factors of Awakening, and the Noble Eightfold Path.

“These, Bhikkhus, are what I have taught you from my own direct and personal experience, having known and understood them unequivocally through direct knowledge, and thus I have guided and instructed you in, which you should now thoroughly learn, cultivate, develop, and constantly engage in its practice, so that the Pure and Holy Life may be firmly established, as it sustains itself by lasting for a long time. This is essential for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, wellbeing, and happiness of both Gods and humans.”

Then, The Blessed One said to the Bhikkhus:

“So, Bhikkhus, I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to fall apart and vanish. Strive now with diligence. The time of The Tathagata’s Parinibbāna is near. Three months from now, The Tathagata will attain Final Full Release and die.”

And after having spoken these words to the Bhikkhus, the Sugata, the Master continued by uttering these verses:

*“My years are now fully ripe,
With a very short life span left.
Having relinquished it all,
I shall depart from you,
While relying on no one else but myself, as my Refuge.*

*Be earnest, then, O Bhikkhus,
Always remaining mindful and with pure virtue!
Equipped with firm resolve,
Guard well your own Hearts!*

*For, whoever untiringly lives according to the Dhamma and the Vinaya,
Leaves behind the cycles of rebirths,
And puts the final end to all suffering.”*

Part Four

The Last Meal

21. The Elephant's Gaze

Then, when it was morning, The Blessed One put on His robes, and by taking His alms bowl and outer robe, He went into Vesāli for alms. After the alms round and after the meal, on his return, The Blessed One looked upon Vesāli with the elephant's gaze, while addressing the Venerable Ānanda:

“This, Ānanda, is the very last time that The Tathāgata will gaze upon Vesāli. Come, Ānanda, let us go to Bhaṇḍagāma.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Bhaṇḍagāma.

Then, while addressing the Bhikkhus, The Blessed One stated:

“Bhikkhus, it is due to not understanding, because of not penetrating Four Principles that both you and I have been wandering and migrating ceaselessly through this long course of rebirths. What are these four?

“They are Noble Virtue; Noble Collectedness of Mind; Noble Wisdom; and Noble Freedom.

“But Bhikkhus, now that these Four Principles have been understood and penetrated, cut off is the craving for further existence; destroyed is that which leads to renewed becoming, and there is no more rebirth into future lives.”

This is what was said by The Blessed One. As The Happy One, the Master, continued in verse:

*“Virtue, Collectedness of mind, Wisdom, and Freedom unsurpassed,
These are the principles realized by Gautama the renowned.
And by thoroughly knowing them, He, the Buddha,
Has taught the Dhamma to His monks.
He, the Destroyer of suffering, the Master,
The One who sees, is fully released.”*

And there too, in Vesāli, while staying at Bhaṇḍagāma, The Blessed One again addressed the Bhikkhus and taught them the following:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Bhaṇḍagāma for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Hatthigāma.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, went and took up residence in Hatthigāma.

When The Blessed One had stayed at Hatthigāma for as long as He pleased, He traveled to Ambagāma, and from there He went to Jambugāma, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, where He stayed before moving in further.

Now, at each of these stops made, The Blessed One would instruct the Bhikkhus thus:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one’s behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Jambugāma for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Bhoganagara.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with the Sangha of Bhikkhus, went to Bhoganagara, where he took up residence at Ānanda’s Shrine.

22. The Four Great Sources

There, while addressing the Sangha of Bhikkhus, The Blessed One said:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Bhante!” the Bhikkhus replied.

“Bhikkhus,” The Blessed One continued, “I will teach you about these four great sources. Listen carefully, as I will now speak.”

“Yes, Lord,” the Bhikkhus replied.

“And what, Bhikkhus, are the four great sources?”

“Here Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: ‘I have heard this in the presence of The Blessed One, and from his own lips! This was acknowledged in His presence: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline, and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are neither found within the suttas nor evidenced in the discipline, then it should be concluded that those are *not* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Instead, they are exposed as being none other than the wrongfully grasped words of that Bhikkhu and thus should be thrown out.

“Further Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: ‘I have heard this in the presence of The Blessed One, and from his own lips! This was acknowledged in His presence: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline, and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are both found within the suttas and evidenced in the Discipline, then it should be concluded that these *are* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Thus, the Bhikkhu is to be regarded as one who has rightfully learned the Dhamma of The Blessed One. This, Bhikkhus, you should remember as your first great source.

“Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: ‘In such and such a location, Sangha members are gathered, made up of many senior monks and monks of distinction; it was in the presence of the Sangha that I heard these words; it was from their own lips that I learned the following: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline; and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are neither found within the suttas nor evidenced in the discipline, then it should be concluded, that these are *not* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Instead, they are exposed as being none other than the wrongfully grasped words of that Bhikkhu and thus should be thrown out.

“Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: “In such and such a location, Sangha members are gathered, made up of many senior monks and monks of distinction; it was in the presence of the Sangha that I heard these words; it was from their own lips that I learned the following: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline; and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are both found within the suttas and evidenced in the Discipline, then it should be concluded that these *are* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Thus, the Bhikkhu is to be regarded as one who has rightfully learned the Dhamma of The Blessed One. This, Bhikkhus, you should remember as your second great source.

“Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: “In such and such a location, several learned Sangha members are living together, and they are known to be true heirs to the Tathāgata's Dispensation; they are experts on the Vinaya, the Discipline. It was in the presence of these elder Sangha members that I heard these words: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline, and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are neither found within the suttas nor evidenced in the discipline, then it should be concluded that these are *not* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Instead, they are exposed as being none other than the wrongfully grasped words of that Bhikkhu and thus should be thrown out.

“Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: “In such and such a location, several learned Sangha members are living together, and they are known to be true heirs to the Tathāgata's Dispensation; they are experts on the Vinaya, the Discipline. It was in the presence of those elder Sangha members that I heard these words: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline; and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught

within the suttas and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are both found within the suttas and evidenced in the Discipline, then it should be concluded that these *are* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Thus, the Bhikkhu is to be regarded as one who has rightfully learned the Dhamma of The Blessed One. This, Bhikkhus, you should remember as your third great source.

“Further Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: “In such and such a location, a single elder Bhikkhu is residing who is known to be a true heir to the Tathagata's Dispensation, an expert on the Vinaya, the Discipline. It was in the presence of this elder Sangha member that I heard these words; it was from his own lips that I learned the following: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline; and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are neither found within the suttas nor evidenced in the discipline, then it should be concluded that these are *not* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Instead, they are exposed as being none other than the wrongfully grasped words of that Bhikkhu and thus should be thrown out.

“Further, Bhikkhus, a Bhikkhu might say: “In such and such a location, a single elder Bhikkhu is residing who is known to be a true heir to the Tathagata's Dispensation, an expert on the Vinaya, the Discipline. It was in the presence of this elder Sangha member that I heard these words; it was from his own lips that I learned the following: *‘This is the Dhamma; this is the Discipline; and this is the Dispensation of the Teacher!’*”

“Now, the words of that Bhikkhu should neither be approved nor rejected. Instead, those words and statements should first be thoroughly learned, checked, and compared with what is taught within the suttas, and evidenced in the discipline, which serve as your source, in order to prove whether they are truly the Dhamma. If those words and statements are both found within the suttas and evidenced in the Discipline, then it should be concluded that these *are* in fact the words of The Blessed One, the Arahant, the Perfectly Awakened Buddha. Thus, the Bhikkhu is to be regarded as one who has rightfully learned the Dhamma of The Blessed One. This, Bhikkhus, you should remember as your fourth great source.

Bhikkhus, these are the four great sources for you to preserve.

Afterwards, while still at Bhoganagara's Ānanda shrine, The Blessed One again instructed the Bhikkhus, in this manner:

“Bhikkhus, such is virtue; such is collectedness of mind; and such is wisdom.

“Bhikkhus, when one lives with virtues throughout one's behavior, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows such a person to possess the very condition for Right Collectedness of mind to take place. When there is Right Collectedness of mind, it becomes very fruitful, for it allows a person to

settle into the stability of mind. Then, such a person possesses the condition for wisdom which itself is very fruitful, for it develops into the Knowledge and Vision, allowing one to see things as they truly are. And his unliberated heart becomes fully released, where his contaminants of sensual lust, rebecoming, and ignorance are ended and he is finally freed; attaining that, which up to that point had not yet been attained, reaching the safe shore of no more suffering.”

Afterwards, when The Blessed One had stayed at Bhoganagara for as long as He pleased, He again addressed the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Pāvā.”

“As You wish, Lord.”

And The Blessed One, along with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, went to Pāvā, where he stayed at Cunda, the goldsmith’s Mango Grove.

23. Cunda the Goldsmith

The Blessed One’s Last Meal

Then, Cunda the goldsmith heard the news:

“The Blessed One, they say, has already arrived in Pāvā and is now staying at my own Mango Grove!”

And he quickly went and approached The Blessed One, as he respectfully paid homage to Him and sat down to one side.

Then, The Blessed One encouragingly spoke, as he inspired, instructed, roused, and gladdened Cunda the goldsmith’s heart with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma.

Afterwards, Cunda the goldsmith addressed The Blessed One and said:

“Bhante, may The Blessed One, please, accept my Dāna for tomorrow’s meal, accompanied with the Sangha of Bhikkhus.”

And The Blessed One consented with His silence.

Then, having become certain of The Blessed One’s acceptance of the next day’s meal, Cunda the goldsmith rose from his seat, and after respectfully paying homage to Him, and while keeping his right side towards The Blessed One, he left.

Early the next morning, after the night had passed, Cunda the goldsmith had already prepared a variety of delicious foods and fine delicacies at his own home, including a rare dish made with truffles called *sūkara maddava*. Once everything was ready, he sent word to The Blessed One, announcing:

“It is time, Bhante. The meal is now ready, O Blessed Lord.”

Thereupon, in the morning, The Blessed One put on His robes, and by taking His alms bowl and outer robe, accompanied by His Sangha of Bhikkhus, He headed to Cunda the goldsmith’s home, and there He took the seat that was prepared for Him.

Now, before being served the food, The Blessed One addressed Cunda by saying:

“Cunda, the *sūkara maddava* dish you have prepared, you may go ahead and serve it to me, but to me alone, no one else, whereas all the other dishes and delicacies, hard and soft, you may offer to all the Bhikkhus present.”

“As you wish, Blessed Lord,” replied Cunda the goldsmith. And as instructed, he served The Blessed One with his own hands the delicate truffle dish he had prepared especially for The Blessed One, and then offered the other dishes of food, hard and soft, to the rest of the Bhikkhus.

Later, The Blessed One spoke to Cunda the goldsmith by saying:

“Now, Cunda, whatever that is left of the *sūkara maddava*, take it away and bury it in a pit, for I do not see in all of existence, with its Gods, Māras, and Brahmās, this world with its recluses and religious practitioners of all kinds, *anyone* who is able to eat this meal and fully digest it, except for the Tathāgata!”

“As you wish, Blessed Lord,” replied Cunda the goldsmith, and he did what The Blessed One had advised by removing whatever was left of the truffle dish he had offered to The Blessed One and taking it away and burying it in a pit. Then, he returned to The Blessed One and after paying homage to Him, he sat down to one side.

Then, The Blessed One again encouragingly spoke, as he inspired, instructed, roused, and gladdened Cunda the goldsmith’s heart with an enlivening Talk on the Dhamma. Once this was over, The Blessed One arose from his seat and departed.

Meanwhile, soon after The Blessed One had eaten the meal provided by Cunda the goldsmith, He became terribly sick, experiencing bloody dysentery, while suffering sharp and deadly pains that could have easily killed anyone else undergoing them. But The Blessed One endured them mindfully, while being fully alert and with careful consideration, with a mind that was completely unperturbed.

Then, The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Come, Ānanda, let us go to Kusinārā.”

And the Venerable Ānanda answered:

“As You wish, Blessed Lord.”

*After eating the meal offered by Cunda the goldsmith, I heard
How with such great fortitude the three deadly pains He bore.*

*A terrible sickness came upon the Lord.
Who had just eaten the delicate sūkara-maddava.*

*But while enduring the bleeding purges,
The Blessed Lord’s dauntless words were:
“Come, let us go to Kusinārā.”*

24. Water to Quench The Blessed One’s Thirst

The Clearing of the Waters

While travelling, The Blessed One, then by leaving the main road came and stopped at the foot of a tree. And He said to the Venerable Ānanda:

“Ānanda, please fold my upper robe into fours, and place it down here. I am tired and want to rest a little.”

“Yes, of course, Bhante,” replied the Venerable Ānanda, as he quickly folded The Blessed One’s outer robe into fours and placed it down at the foot of the tree.”

The Blessed One sat down on the seat prepared for Him and then said to the Venerable Ānanda:

“Ānanda, please bring me some water. I am thirsty and need to drink some water.”
But the Venerable Ānanda turned to The Blessed One and said:

“Bhante, just now, a great number of carts, almost five hundred, have passed over the creek, and its shallow waters have been churned up through the crossing of so many travelling wheels, because of which it is now all muddy and unsuitable to drink. But the Kakutthā River, Bhante, is quite close by, and its waters are clear, lovely, cool, and refreshingly translucent. It is easily accessible and delightfully placed. By going there instead, The Blessed One can quench his thirst and refresh His limbs in its cool waters.”

For a second time, The Blessed One made His request for some water to quench His thirst by saying:

“Ānanda, please bring me some water. I am thirsty and need to drink some water.”

But the Venerable Ānanda again turned to The Blessed One and repeated, that it is better to walk further and drink water from the Kakutthā River instead.

And for a third time, The Blessed One made His request for some water from the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Ānanda, please bring me some water. I am thirsty and need to drink some water.”
Then the Venerable Ānanda answered:

“So be it, Lord.” And he took the bowl and went to the stream.

Meanwhile, the shallow water, however, which had been churned up by the crossing of so many travelling carts and their wheels, and thus had become all muddy and unsuitable to drink, suddenly became clear, lovely, cool, and refreshingly translucent, as the Venerable Ānanda drew near to it.

And the Venerable Ānanda thought:

“This is truly marvelous! This indeed is most wonderful and incredible, how it demonstrates the power and majesty of the Tathagata!”

And while still being astonished by what he witnessed, he took up the water in the bowl and carried it to The Blessed One, and said:

“Bhante, it is truly marvelous! This indeed is most wonderful and incredible, how it demonstrates the power and majesty of the Tathagata!” For, the shallow water, which had been churned up by the crossing of so many travelling carts and their wheels, and thus had become all muddy and unsuitable to drink, however, as I drew near to it, suddenly became clear, lovely, cool, and refreshingly translucent!

“Now, let The Blessed One drink the water. Let the Sugata drink and quench His thirst.”

And The Blessed One drank the water.

25. Pukkusa the Mallan

Now, it so happened that Pukkusa of the Malla clan, who had himself been a disciple of Āḷāra Kālāma, was passing through Kusinārā on his way to Pāvā.

When Pukkusa the Mallan saw The Blessed One seated at the foot of a tree, he went up to Him, and after respectfully greeting Him, he sat down at one side and then spoke to The Blessed One, by saying:

“It is truly such a wonderful thing, Bhante! It is so marvelous Bhante, how those who have gone forth from the home life into homelessness are able to attain to and remain in such states of calmness and peace.”

“Once, Bhante, I remember how Āḷāra Kālāma was on a journey, and then by leaving the main road, he came and sat at the foot of a tree to avoid the intense heat of the day. It so happened, Bhante, that a great number of carts, probably five hundred in number, passed by him, one by one. And then, Bhante, someone who was trying to catch up to that caravan of carts, on seeing him sitting there under a tree, came and inquired:

‘Did you, Sir, see a great number of carts that just passed you by?’

“And Āḷāra Kālāma replied:

‘No, friend, I did not see such a thing.’

“And the man exclaimed:

‘But the noise, Sir, surely you must have heard the great noise of so many animals and carts passing you by?’

‘No, friend, I did not hear it.’

“Then that man asked him: *‘Then, Sir, perhaps you were sleeping as they passed you by?’*

‘No, friend, I was not sleeping.’

‘Then, Sir, were you conscious?’

‘Yes, friend, I was.’

“Then that man said:

‘Then, Sir, while conscious and awake as you sat here, you say you still did not see the great number of carts passing you by, not a few, but five hundred carts, that passed you by one after another, nor heard their clamor or noise? Yet, Sir, your very robe is covered with their dust!’

“And Āḷāra Kālāma replied in agreement, by saying:

‘Well, so it seems, friend.’

“Then, Bhante, that man started reflecting to himself:

‘It is truly such a wonderful thing, Sir! It is so marvelous Sir, how those who have gone forth from the home life into homelessness are able to attain to and remain in such states of calmness and peace.’

“And there arose in him great faith towards Āḷāra Kālāma, as he continued on his way.”

Then, The Blessed One addressed Pukkusa the Mallan, by asking him:

“Now what do you think, Pukkusa? What is more difficult to do or accomplish, more rare to witness or come across: a man who, while conscious and awake, would neither see a great number of carts, even five hundred carts, that passed him by one after another, nor hear their clamor and noise; or someone else who, while conscious and awake, sitting in the midst of a heavy downpour, with thunderstorms rolling, lightnings flashing, and thunderbolts crashing, would neither see it nor hear their roaring noise?”

“Bhante, there is no comparison! After all, what are mere five hundred carts, or even six, seven, eight, nine hundred, or a thousand or even hundreds of thousands of carts, compared with such a thunderous event?”

“Now, Pukkusa, once I was passing through Ātumā, where I was spending the night in a barn. And at that time there was a heavy downpour, with thunderstorms rolling, lightnings flashing, and thunderbolts crashing. On that thunderous night, two farmers, who were brothers, were killed close to the barn where I was staying at together with four oxen, and a great crowd came forth from Ātumā to the spot where they were killed by the lightning strike.

“Now, Pukkusa, around the time that people began gathering there, I had just come out of the barn and was walking back and forth, walking in meditation near the entrance of the barn. Then, someone from the crowd, on seeing me walking there, approached and after respectfully greeting me, stood to one side.

“Then, I asked him:

‘Friend, why has this great crowd gathered here?’

“And he answered me:

‘Just now, Bhante, there was a heavy downpour, with thunderstorms rolling, lightnings flashing, and thunderbolts crashing. And two farmers, who were brothers, were killed close to the barn where you are staying at, together with four oxen! The great crowd came to see the spot where they were killed by the lightning strike.

‘But Bhante, where were you while this was happening?’ “The man asked in turn.

‘I was right here, friend,’ I answered.

“But Bhante, did you not see all that commotion?”

‘No, friend, I did not see any of it.’

‘But the noise, Bhante, surely you must have heard the great noise of so many thunderstorms rolling?’

'No, friend, I did not hear a thing.'

“Then that man asked me:

'Then, Bhante, perhaps you were sleeping as all the chaos was happening outside?'

'No, friend, I was not sleeping,' I answered.

'In that case, Bhante, were you conscious?'

'Yes, friend, I was.'

“Then that man said:

'Then, Bhante, while conscious and awake, you still did not see or hear any of the heavy downpour, with thunderstorms rolling, lightnings flashing, or thunderbolts crashing?'

'Yes, friend.'

“Then, Pukkusa, that man started reflecting to himself:

'It is truly such a wonderful thing, Sir! It is so marvelous Sir, how those who have gone forth from the home life into homelessness are able to attain to and remain in such states of calmness and peace.'

“And there arose in that man great faith in me, as he paid homage respectfully, and after circumambulating me and keeping me to his right, he went on his way.”

When this had been said, Pukkusa of the Mallan addressed The Blessed One, by saying:

“Bhante, the faith and confidence I had in Ālāra Kālāma, I now fling away, as if thrown into the mighty wind, tossed and carried away as if by a powerfully moving stream!

“Magnificent, Bhante! Excellent, Bhante! The Blessed One has made the Dhamma clear for me in many ways, as though He were turning upright what had been turned upside-down, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost; holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see. I go to The Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus. From this day forward, may The Blessed One remember me as a lay disciple who has taken refuge in Him, until the end of life.”

“Then, Pukkusa the Mallan spoke to one of his attendants and said:

“Friend, go and get me at once, two sets of glistening and golden colored robes, ready to wear.”

“As you wish, Sir,” the man answered and did as he was told.

And when the robes were brought, Pukkusa the Mallan offered them to The Blessed One, by saying:

“May The Blessed One, O Lord, accept these from me, out of compassion.”
And The Blessed One said:

“In that case, Pukkusa, go ahead and present me with one, while giving the other robe to Ānanda.”

As you wish, Blessed Lord,” said Pukkusa the Mallan, as he offered The Blessed One a robe, and gave the other to the Venerable Ānanda.

Afterwards, The Blessed One instructed Pukkusa the Mallan in the Dhamma, as he inspired, roused, and lightened his heart with an enlivening talk on the Dhamma, after which, Pukkusa rose from his seat, respectfully bowed to The Blessed One, and by keeping his right side towards Him, went on his way.

Then, after Pukkusa the Mallan had left, the Venerable Ānanda placed the glistening gold colored robe upon The Blessed One. But as soon as the robes were placed upon the body of The Blessed One, they became dull-colored, as though faded, with their earlier glistening splendor dimmed.

In witnessing this, the Venerable Ānanda exclaimed to The Blessed One:

“It is astounding, O Lord! Most wonderful indeed, how exceedingly clear The Tathāgata’s skin is, as it shines radiantly, whereby even this new and glistening set of gold-colored robes, Lord, now look so dull in their color when being placed upon the body of The Blessed One, as though faded, with their earlier glistening splendor dimmed.”

“Indeed, it is so, Ānanda! Indeed, it is! For there are two occasions, Ānanda, when the skin of The Tathāgata appears exceedingly clear, as it shines radiantly. And what are these two occasions?

“The night, Ānanda, when The Tathagata becomes Fully Awakened in Unsurpassed, Supreme Enlightenment, and the very night, when The Tathāgata attains His Final Full Release into the Nibbāna element, with no residues remaining. These, Ānanda, are the two occasions when the skin of The Tathagata appears exceedingly clear, as it shines radiantly.

“Ānanda, during the last watch of this very night, between two Sala trees within the Mallas’ Sal Forest, at Upavattana, near Kusinārā, The Tathāgata will attain His Final Parinibbāna, the Full and Final Release.

“Now come, Ānanda, let us go to the Kakutthā River.”

“Yes, Blessed Lord,” replied the Venerable Ānanda.

*A pair of robes, glistening in gold color
Both gifts made by Pukkusa,
Being clothed in them
The Master's form became exceedingly clear,
Shining radiantly for all to behold.*

At the Kakutthā River

Afterwards, The Blessed One went to the Kakutthā River together with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus. Once there, He submerged into the water as He bathed and drank.

And on emerging out of the water, The Blessed One went to the Mango Grove, and there addressed the Venerable Cundaka, by saying:

“Please fold my upper robe into four, Cundaka, and place it down for me. I am tired and need to rest for a while.”

“As You wish, Lord,” replied the Venerable Cundaka as he folded The Blessed One's robe into four and placed it gently on the ground for Him to rest.

The Blessed One then laid down on His right side, in the lion's posture, resting one foot upon the other, with complete mindfulness and full awareness, having already determined in His mind the time for rising up.

Meanwhile, the Venerable Cundaka sat close and in front of The Blessed One.

*The Buddha went to Kakutthā,
Where cool and translucent flows the lovely stream;
There He submerged, washing in its clear water
His drained and exhausted frame
The Buddha – The One who stands supreme in all the world systems!*

*And having bathed and drank, the Teacher emerged
As He stood in the middle of throngs of Bhikkhus,
All gathered there in His wake.
The Great Master who taught them
In this very life, the Teaching that leads straight to Nibbāna,
To the Mango Grove His path did take.*

*There, in addressing the Bhikkhu named Cundaka, He spoke:
“Please, lay down my robe, by folding it into four.”
Then the Bhikkhu, ever so swiftly
Did, as he was told.*

*Drained from being exhausted in His body,
The Blessed Lord lay down on the prepared mat,
While Cundaka quietly sat on the ground next to Him, with care.*

Remedying Cunda's Sense of Guilt

Later, The Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Ānanda, it may so happen that some might incite a sense of guilt to arise in Cunda the goldsmith, by saying:

‘It is terrible! It is so sad, friend Cunda, to know that it was because of you that this happened! After all, it was from your own hands that The Tathāgata took His very last meal and thus came to His end. This will surely bring you much misfortune! You certainly will have to pay for this dearly!’

“However, Ānanda, the sense of guilt that is incited within Cunda should be quickly dispelled and remedied in this manner:

‘It is wonderful! It is such a great honor, friend Cunda, a true blessing to know that it was from your own hands that The Tathāgata took His very last meal, and thus came to His end. For, friend Cunda, we have heard in the presence of The Blessed One and from The Blessed One’s own lips the following clear statement:

‘There are two offerings of alms food which are of equal fruition, of equal outcome, exceeding in grandeur and more fruitful in their outcome than any other offering of alms food ever made. What are these two?’

‘The alms food offered to The Tathāgata just before attaining His Full Awakening in the Unsurpassed and Supreme Enlightenment; and the alms food offered to The Tathāgata before His Final and Full Release into the Nibbāna element, with no residues remaining.

‘Thus, these two offerings of alms food are of equal fruition, of equal outcome, exceeding in grandeur and more fruitful in their outcome than any other offering of alms food ever made.

‘After all, through this very generous action, the worthy Cunda the goldsmith has accumulated the merits which will bring him a long life, beauty, wellbeing, glory, heavenly rebirth, and sovereignty.’

“In this way, Ānanda, the sense of guilt incited within Cunda the goldsmith should be quickly dispelled and remedied.”

Then The Blessed One, in understanding the significance of this, uttered these solemn verses:

“For the one who gives, with an open hand,

His virtuous merits only increase.

*For the one who is self-restrained,
No enmity accumulates.*

*For the one who is skilled in living life with virtue,
By giving up and shunning all evil,*

*Comes to the peace of Nibbāna,
By the rooting out of all lust, hatred, and delusion.”*

Part Five
At Kusinārā

26. The Twin Sal Trees

Last Place of Rest

Then, The Blessed One addressed the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Come, Ānanda, let us cross over to the other side of the Hiraññavati River, and make our way to the Mallas’ Sal Forest of Upavattana, in Kusinārā.”

“As You wish, Bhante,” replied Ānanda.

And The Blessed One, together with a large Sangha of Bhikkhus, crossed over to the other side of the Hiraññavati River, as they all made their way to the Sal Forest of the Mallas of Upavattana, in the district of Kusinārā.

And it was there that The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Please, Ānanda, prepare for me a sleeping mat between those twin Sal trees, with the head pointing to the north. I am tired, Ānanda, and want to lie down.”

“As You wish, Blessed Lord,” replied the Venerable Ānanda, as he did what The Blessed One had asked.

Then, The Blessed One laid down on His right side in the lion's posture, resting one foot upon the other, with complete mindfulness and full awareness, having already determined in His mind the time for rising up.

Just then, the Sal trees around The Blessed One suddenly broke out into full bloom, even though it was not their season for flowering.

And the Sal Tree blossoms started to rain down upon the body of the Tathāgata, while they fell and scattered about Him, being strewn in loving worship of The Tathāgata.

Then, suddenly, the celestial Mandārava flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder also began raining down from the sky upon the body of The Tathāgata, as they scattered about Him, being strewn in loving worship of The Tathāgata.

Meanwhile, heavenly choir voices softly sang, along with heavenly instruments playing divine music, in honor of and reverence for The Tathāgata.

And The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Ānanda, the twin Sal trees are breaking out into full bloom, even though it is not their season for flowering.

“The Sal Tree blossoms have started to rain down upon the body of the Tathāgata, while they fall and scatter about me, being strewn in loving worship of The Tathāgata.

“Not only that, but the celestial Mandārava flowers and heavenly sandalwood powder have also begun raining down from the sky upon the body of The Tathāgata, as they scatter about me, being strewn in loving worship of The Tathāgata.

“Meanwhile, heavenly choir voices are singing softly, along with heavenly instruments playing divine music, in honor of and reverence for The Tathāgata.

“But Ānanda, this really is *not* how The Tathagata is to be truly respected, venerated, cherished, loved, and honored in the highest degree.

“Ānanda, it is when a Bhikkhu or a Bhikkhuni, a male or female lay disciple lives by the Dhamma, lives and practices properly as taught in the Dhamma, walks in the way of the Dhamma, for it is by such a person that The Tathāgata is to be truly respected, venerated, cherished, loved, and honored in the highest degree.

“Therefore, Ānanda, you should train yourselves in this manner:

‘We shall live by the Dhamma, live and practice properly as taught in the Dhamma, as we walk in the way of the Dhamma.’”

27. The Venerable Upavāna

The Grief of the Gods

It was at that time, that the Venerable Upavāna was standing before The Blessed One, fanning Him. And The Blessed One rebuked him, by saying:

“Move aside, Bhikkhu, do not stand in front of me.”

And the thought came to the Venerable Ānanda:

“This Venerable Upavāna has been attending to The Blessed One for a long time, closely associating with Him and serving Him. Yet now, in His final hours, The Blessed One rebukes him. I wonder what the reason for this could be; what might be the cause for The Blessed One to rebuke the Venerable Upavāna in this manner, by saying:

‘Move aside, Bhikkhu, do not stand in front of me!’

And the Venerable Ānanda conveyed what he was thinking to The Blessed One. The Blessed One then replied:

“Ānanda, hardly any Devas are left throughout the tenfold world-systems, who are not already gathered here; all come together to gaze upon The Tathāgata, for the final time.

“Ānanda, for a distance of twelve yojanas around the Sala Forest of the Mallas, in the district of Kusinārā, there is not a spot that could be pricked with the tip of a hair, which is not filled with powerful deities. And these Gods, Ānanda, are complaining:

‘We have come from afar to gaze upon The Tathāgata! For so rare in the world is the arising of Tathāgatas, Arahants, Fully Awakened Ones. And on this day, in the last watch of the night, the Tathāgata’s Parinibbāna will take place. But this Bhikkhu of great powers has placed himself right in front of The Blessed One, concealing him, obstructing our view of The Blessed Lord, so that now, at the very end, we are prevented from looking at Him.’

“In this manner, Ānanda, the Devas were complaining.”

“Just how many different classes of Devas are gathered here, that the Blessed One is aware of at this moment?”

“Ānanda, there are Devas, both those in the sky and the ones who are connected to earth; they have their hair all disheveled as they weep and mourn, flailing their uplifted arms in tears; flinging themselves on the ground, they roll from side to side, sobbing with sorrowful cries:

‘Too soon has The Blessed One come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon has The Sugata come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon will the Eye of the World vanish forever from our sight!’

“But those Gods who are freed from passion, who are mindful and fully aware, are currently reflecting in this way:

‘All things that are conditioned, are also impermanent. Therefore, how could there be any other outcome than this?’”

28. The Four Spiritually Inspiring Locations

Venerable Ānanda’s Concern

The, the Venerable Ānanda addressed The Blessed One, by saying:

“In the past, Bhante, after having completed the Vassa, whenever Bhikkhus left their regions, they would set out to come and see The Tathagata. This was also a great opportunity for us, as we would again benefit from receiving and associating with those very revered Bhikkhus who

would come to have an audience with The Blessed One, and to wait upon Him. But Bhante, after The Blessed One has gone, we shall no longer have that benefit of paying homage.”

“Ānanda, there are four spiritually inspiring locations, where a faithful person and those of good families should visit and look upon with a heart full of appreciation and reverence. What are these four?

‘Here, the Tathāgata was born!’

“Thus reflecting, Ānanda, the faithful person and those of good families visit the spiritually inspiring location, where the Tathāgata was born, looking upon it with a heart full of appreciation and reverence.

‘Here the Tathāgata became Fully Awakened as the Sammā Sambuddha, the Supremely and Unsurpassed Awakened One!’

“Thus reflecting, Ānanda, the faithful person and those of good families visit the spiritually inspiring location, where the Tathāgata attained Supreme and Unsurpassed Enlightenment, looking upon it with a heart full of appreciation and reverence.

‘Here the Tathāgata set the Supreme Wheel of Dhamma in motion!’

“Thus reflecting, Ānanda, the faithful person and those of good families visit the spiritually inspiring location, where the Tathāgata set the Supreme Wheel of Dhamma in motion, looking upon it with a heart full of appreciation and reverence.

‘Here the Tathāgata passed away by attaining the Final Full Release of the Nibbāna Element, with no residues remaining!’

“Thus reflecting, Ānanda, the faithful person and those of good families visit the spiritually inspiring location, where the Tathāgata attained the Final Full Release of the Nibbāna Element, with no residues remaining, looking upon it with a heart full of appreciation and reverence.

“These, Ānanda, are the four spiritually inspiring locations, where a faithful person and those of good families should visit and look upon with a heart full of appreciation and reverence. And truly there will come to these places, Ānanda, those faithful Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, those faithful male and female lay disciples, while they reflect:

‘Here, the Tathāgata was born! Here the Tathāgata became Fully Awakened as the Sammā Sambuddha, the Supremely and Unsurpassed Awakened One! ‘Here the Tathāgata set the Supreme Wheel of Dhamma in motion! And Here the Tathāgata passed away by attaining the Final Full Release of the Nibbāna Element, with no residues remaining!’

“And if, Ānanda, anyone should die while making such a pilgrimage to these Four Spiritually Inspiring Locations, but with strong faith and confidence in his heart firmly established, upon the

breaking up of the body, after death, he will be reborn into a happy state, enjoying the bliss of heavenly realms.”

29. Further Questions from the Venerable Ānanda

Then, the Venerable Ānanda asked The Blessed One:

“Bhante, how should we conduct ourselves when it comes to women?”

“Do not look at them, Ānanda.”

“But, Blessed Lord, what if we do have to look at them?”

“Then, do not engage in a conversation with them, Ānanda.”

“But, Blessed Lord, what if they start speaking to us?”

“Then, Ānanda, you should proceed carefully with mindfulness firmly established in you.”

Then, the Venerable Ānanda continued with yet another question:

“Bhante, how should we act, as it relates to venerating and honoring the body of the Tathāgata?”

“Do not get involved with such trifle matters, Ānanda, such as respecting and venerating the body of the Tathāgata! Instead, you should strive diligently, Ānanda, applying exceptional effort as you zealously engage in your own practice, working on towards attaining the highest goal of the Holy Life! Therefore, Ānanda, be unflinching in your determination, ardent, and resolute. After all, Ānanda, there are wise nobles, wise brahmins, and wise householders who are devoted to the Tathāgata, and it is they who will do the venerating and honoring of the body of the Tathāgata! So, leave such trifle matters to them!”

“Then, the Venerable Ānanda said:

“But Bhante, what are the protocols in how they should conduct the procedure of venerating and honoring the body of the Tathāgata?”

“They should follow the same protocols, Ānanda, as they would while venerating and honoring the body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch.”

“And what are the procedures and protocols, Bhante, to be followed in venerating and honoring the body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch?”

“The body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, Ānanda, is first wrapped around with new linen, and then with teased cotton wool, and so it is done up to five hundred pieces of linen cloth

and five hundred pieces made of cotton wool. Once this is done, then the body of the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch is placed in a golden vessel filled with sesame oil, which is then placed inside another golden vessel, after which a funeral pyre is built, comprised of all kinds of sweet-scented wood, and so the body of the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch is burned and cremated. Afterwards, a stupa mound is raised at a crossroads, built from bricks for the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch.

“Thus, Ānanda the same procedure is followed in relation to the body of The Tathāgata; whereby, a stupa mound is to be raised at a crossroads, built from bricks for the Tathagata also. And whoever shall visit that place with garlands or incense or sandal paste, or pay reverence, with the calm serenity of the heart, that act itself will be for his lasting happiness and wellbeing, for a very long time.”

30. Those Worthy of Stupas

“Ānanda, there are these four beings who are worthy of stupas to be built in their memory. Who are these four?

“A Tathāgata, who is an Arahant, a Fully Self-Awakened Buddha, is worthy of a stupa, so is a Paccekabuddha, as well as a Disciple of a Tathāgata, and finally, a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch.

“And why is it, Ānanda, that a Tathāgata, who is an Arahant, a Fully Self-Awakened Buddha, is worthy of a stupa?

“Because Ānanda, at the very thought that one has: *‘This is the stupa of that Blessed One, the Arahant, The Fully Awakened One!’* the hearts of many beings will become serenely calm and happy. By becoming thus tranquil and with strong faith and confidence in their hearts firmly established, as a result, upon the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn into a happy state, enjoying the bliss of heavenly realms.”

“And also at the thought: *‘This is the stupa of that Paccekabuddha!’* or *‘This is the stupa of a Disciple of the Tathāgata, who is an Arahant, the Fully Awakened One!’* or *‘This is the stupa of that righteous Wheel Turning Universal Monarch who ruled according to Dhamma!’* – the hearts of many beings will become serenely calm and happy. By becoming thus tranquil and with strong faith and confidence in their hearts firmly established, as a result, upon the breaking up of the body, after death, they will be reborn into a happy state, enjoying the bliss of heavenly realms.”

“This, Ānanda, is therefore the reason for these four beings who are worthy of stupas to be built in their memory.”

31. Venerable Ānanda's Wonderful Qualities

Venerable Ānanda's Lament

Then, the Venerable Ānanda went into a quiet pavilion within the vihāra and leaning against the doorpost, began weeping:

“My Master, who has been so compassionate towards me all these years, is about to pass away into Parinibbāna, forever! But alas! I am still *only* a Noble Disciple in Training, *and* with so much work to do for my own liberation!”

At that moment, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus next to Him, by asking:

“Bhikkhus, where is Ānanda?”

“The Venerable Ānanda, Bhante, has gone into a quiet pavilion within the vihāra, and leaning against the doorpost, he began weeping:

‘My Master, who has been so compassionate towards me all these years, is about to pass away into Parinibbāna, forever! But alas! I am still only a Noble Disciple in Training, and with so much work to do for my own liberation!’”

Then, The Blessed One asked a certain Bhikkhu to call the Venerable Ānanda to him, by saying:

“Go, Bhikkhu, and say to Ānanda: ‘Friend Ānanda, the Teacher calls you.’”

“As You wish Bhante!” replied the Bhikkhu, as he went and informed the Venerable Ānanda what The Blessed One had instructed him to do.

And the Venerable Ānanda immediately went to The Blessed One, paid homage to Him, and sat down to one side.

Then, The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Enough, Ānanda! Do not lament, enough with the grieving! After all, have I not taught you all these years and from the very beginning, how all that is dear and beloved to us will inevitably undergo change, sooner or later? And how all that is born, comes into being, as the result of various conditions coming together, remains to be subject to decay. Hence, how can one truly say:

‘May it not come to an end or dissolution!’?

“After all, there can never be such a state of affairs, Ānanda.

“For a long time, Ānanda, you have served the Tathāgata with such loving-kindness through physical deed, word, and thought, and you did these happily and always with a measureless loving heart, and never with any hesitation. You have indeed accrued immeasurable merits and many blessings, Ānanda!

“Therefore, Ānanda, now you should *just* focus on putting forth exceptional energy, and soon you too will be free from the mental contaminants.”

Praise of Ānanda

Then, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

“Bhikkhus, The Blessed Ones, the Arahants, the Fully Self-Awakened Buddhas of times past also had excellent and devoted attendant Bhikkhus, exactly as I have had in Ānanda. And similarly, Bhikkhus, all The Blessed Ones, the Arahants, the Fully Self-Awakened Buddhas of the future, will also have excellent and devoted attendants, just like Ānanda.

“For, Ānanda is indeed efficient and thoughtful, Bhikkhus, because he knows the appropriate time for Bhikkhus to have an audience with the Tathāgata, and the time for Bhikkhunis, the time for male and female lay disciples, the time for kings and for ministers of state, and the time for teachers of other sects and for their followers.

“Bhikkhus, there are four very rare and superlative qualities that are to be found in Ānanda. What are these four?

“If, Bhikkhus, a company of Bhikkhus would go to see Ānanda, their hearts would become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks to them on the Dhamma, they become uplifted by his discourse; and when he stops talking to them, they are disappointed for not having had enough.

“So, it is also when Bhikkhunis, male and female lay disciples who go to see Ānanda; their hearts become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks to them on the Dhamma, they become uplifted by his discourse; and when he stops talking to them, they are disappointed for not having had enough.

“These are the four very rare and superlative qualities that are to be found in Ānanda.

“Bhikkhus, there are four very rare and superlative qualities that are to be found in a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch. What are those four?

“If, Bhikkhus, a group of Khattiya Warrior Kings would go to see the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, their hearts would become joyful on seeing him; and if he then speaks to them, they become uplifted by his speech; and when he stops talking to them, they are disappointed for not having heard enough.

“So, it is also when groups of brahmins, householders, or of ascetics and religious practitioners who go to see the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, their hearts become joyful on seeing him;

and if he then speaks to them, they become uplifted by his speech; and when he stops talking to them, they are disappointed for not having heard enough.

“And in just the same way, Bhikkhus, those same very rare and superlative qualities are also to be found in Ānanda.”

32. Discourse about Mahāsudassana: the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch

The Past Glory of Kusinārā

Once this had been said, the Venerable Ānanda addressed The Blessed One, by saying:

“Bhante, please, may The Blessed One not pass away here, in this wasteland of a town, this uncivilized and insignificant township in the midst of the jungle, a mere outpost of the province. After all, Blessed Lord, there are several great cities not far from here, such as Campā, Rājagaha, Sāvatti, Sāketa, Kosambī, and Benares - let The Blessed One, please, have his Parinibbāna take place in one of those cities. Because in those cities, there are many wealthy nobles and brahmins and householders who are devotees of the Tathāgata, and they will be able to appropriately venerate and honor the remains of the Tathāgata.”

“Do not say so, Ānanda! Do not say so! For in times long past, Ānanda, there was a king by the name of Mahā Sudassana, who was a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, who ruled with righteousness; a conqueror of the four quarters of the earth, whose realm was established in security, and who was endowed with the Seven Jewels. Now, Ānanda, that King Mahā Sudassana had his royal residence here at Kusinārā, which was then called Kusāvati, and it extended twelve yojanas from east to west, and seven yojanas from north to south.

“And King Mahā Sudassana’s capital, Kusāvati, was mighty, Ānanda, prosperous, rich, and well populated, much visited by people, and abundantly provided with food and resources. Just as the royal residence of the deities, Ālakamandā, is mighty, prosperous, rich, and well populated, much visited by deities and abundantly provided with food and resources, so was the royal capital of Kusāvati.

“Also, Ānanda, Kusāvati, resounded throughout both day and night with ten types of sound - the trumpeting of elephants, the neighing of horses, the rattling of chariots, the beating of drums and tambours, with music and song, cheers, the clapping of hands, and cries of ‘Eat, drink, and be merry!’ as the tenth.

“Now, Ānanda, go to Kusinārā and announce to the Mallas:

“Today, Vāseṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the Tathāgata’s Parinibbāna will take place. Therefore, Come O Vāseṭṭhas, come before it is too late! Otherwise, you might regret later at the thought: ‘Even though the Tathāgata attained Final Parinibbāna in our very own township, we failed to see or pay our respects to Him at the final hour!’”

“As You wish, Bhante,” replied the Venerable Ānanda as he prepared himself, and by taking his alms bowl and outer robe, he entered the city of Kusinārā, along with a companion.

33. The Mallas Come Paying Their Respects

Lamentation of the Mallas

Now at that time, the Mallas had gathered in their city hall, conducting some public affair. And the Venerable Ānanda approached their gathering and announced to them:

‘Today, Vāseṭṭhas, in the last watch of the night, the Tathāgata’s Parinibbāna will take place. Therefore, Come O Vāseṭṭhas, come before it is too late! Otherwise, you might regret later at the thought: ‘Even though the Tathāgata attained Final Parinibbāna in our very own township, we failed to see or pay our respects to Him at the final hour!’’”

In hearing these words spoken by the Venerable Ānanda, the stunned elders of the Mallas, along with their sons, their wives, and their daughters-in-law, suddenly became deeply distraught, with grief-stricken hearts. Some removed their turbans and began to dishevel their hair, with arms uplifted in despair, weeping, flinging themselves on the ground and rolling from side to side, as they sobbed, exclaiming:

‘It is far too soon for The Blessed One to attain His Final Parinibbāna! It is way too soon for The Sugata to come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon will the Eye of the World vanish entirely from our sight!’

And thus, being deeply afflicted and with anguish in their hearts for their upcoming loss, the Mallas, with their sons, their wives, and their daughters-in-law, went to the Mallan Sal Tree Forest, at Upavattana, to the place where the Venerable Ānanda had already returned to, as each requested an audience with The Blessed One.

Then, the Venerable Ānanda began reflecting to himself:

“Well, if I were to allow all the Mallas of Kusinārā gathered here to pay their respects to The Blessed One one-by-one, then the night would have long passed and dawn appeared, before all of them had presented themselves to The Blessed One! So, let me divide them up according to their respective clans, and by putting each family into a group, present them to The Blessed One thus:

‘The Malla of such and such a clan and family name, Bhante, has come with his wives and children, his attendants and friends, paying his respects at the feet of The Blessed One.’

And that is exactly what the Venerable Ānanda did. Consequently, he was able to have all the Mallas of Kusinārā be presented to The Blessed One, where before long, and prior to the first watch of the night having fully passed, each Malla and their family had already approached and paid homage at the feet of The Blessed One.

34. Subhadda, the Wandering Ascetic

The Last Convert

Now at that time, a wandering ascetic by the name of Subhadda was living in the vicinity of Kusinārā, and he happened to hear the following announcement being made by the townspeople:

“Today, during the third watch of the night, the Final Parinibbāna of the recluse Gautama will take place.”

And he began thinking to himself:

‘I have often heard it being said by senior and venerable wandering ascetics, the teachers of teachers, that the arising of Tathāgatas, those who are Arahants, Self-Awakened Buddhas, is very rare indeed in the world. Yet this very day, during the third watch of the night, the Final Parinibbāna of the recluse Gautama will take place.

‘Now, I still feel the presence of skeptical doubts in my heart. But this much I also know and know for certain, that I do have within me enough faith and if anyone is able to remove that thorn of skeptical doubts from my heart, then it surely must be the recluse Gautama.’

Then, the wandering ascetic Subhadda also went to the Mallas’ Sal Tree Forest, and in approaching the Venerable Ānanda, he expressed his desire to speak with The Blessed One, by saying:

“I have often heard it being said by senior and venerable wandering ascetics, the teachers of teachers, that the arising of Tathāgatas, those who are Arahants, Self-Awakened Buddhas, is very rare indeed in the world. Yet this very day, during the third watch of the night, the Final Parinibbāna of the recluse Gautama will take place.

“Now, I still feel the presence of skeptical doubts in my heart. But this much I also know and know for certain, that I do have within me enough faith and if anyone is able to remove that thorn of skeptical doubts from my heart, then it surely must be the recluse Gautama.

“Therefore, Friend Ānanda, it would be good if I may be allowed into the presence of the recluse Gautama and have an audience with Him.”

But the Venerable Ānanda replied:

“I am sorry, friend Subhadda! The Blessed One is tired and does not have the energy. Please do not trouble the Tathagata.”

But for a second and a third time, the wandering ascetic Subhadda kept making his request, and a second and a third time the Venerable Ānanda refused to allow him to see The Blessed One.

In hearing the dialogue going on between the two, The Blessed One called out to the Venerable Ānanda and said:

“Stop, Ānanda! Do not reject Subhadda’s request. Ānanda, allow Subhadda to come into the presence of the Tathāgata. For whatever he will ask me, he would be doing so for the sake of gaining understanding and not as a way to trouble the Tathāgata. For the answer I will be giving him, he will quickly grasp and understand.”

Thereupon, the Venerable Ānanda said to the wandering ascetic Subhadda:

“In that case, friend Subhadda, go forward, for The Blessed One has given you the opportunity to have an audience with Him.”

Then, the wandering ascetic Subhadda approached The Blessed One and saluted him courteously. And having exchanged pleasant and civil greetings with The Blessed One, the wandering ascetic Subhadda sat to one side and addressed The Blessed One, by saying:

“There are, Venerable Gautama, ascetics and brahmins who are teachers to many disciples, who have large retinues of followers, and are leaders of various schools, well-known and renowned, while being highly respected and esteemed by many, such teachers as Pūraṇa Kassapa, Makkhali Gosāla, Ajita Kesakambali, Pakudha Kaccāyana, Saṅjaya Belaṭṭhiputta, Nigaṇṭha Nāṭaputta.

“Now, based on what each of these teachers, as well as their own students, have all claimed, they have already attained Full Realization. But I am here to ask whether or not these are false claims by all of them, or at least some of them have attained to Full Realization.”

“Enough, Subhadda! How is this going to help your situation now?” Why does it matter to you whether these individuals have indeed attained or not?

“Instead, I will teach you the Dhamma, Subhadda. Now listen and pay very close attention, and I will speak.”

“Yes, Bhante,” replied Subhadda, the wandering ascetic.

The Lion’s Roar

And The Blessed One spoke, by saying:

“In whatever Dhamma and Discipline, Subhadda, where the Noble Eightfold Path is not found nor practiced, there too cannot be found a true religious practitioner, no Samana of the first level, no Samana of the second level, no Samana of the third level, and no Samana of the fourth level of Sainthood.

“But Subhadda, in whatever Dhamma and Discipline, where the Noble Eightfold Path is found and practiced, there too can be found a true religious practitioner, a Samana of the first level, a

Samana of the second level, a Samana of the third level, and a Samana of the fourth level of Sainthood.

“Now, Subhadda, the Noble Eightfold Path is both found and practiced within this Dhamma and Discipline, and therefore in it alone are also found true religious practitioners, Samanas of the first level, Samanas of the second level, Samanas of the third level, and Samanas of the fourth level of Sainthood.

“As you see, Subhadda, empty of true religious practitioners, devoid of true Samanas are the systems of all other teachers, their schools, and their traditions.

“And so long as, Subhadda, the Bhikkhus continue to practice constantly, while living the proper religious life with virtuous behavior, then this world will never be deprived of Arahants.

*“I was just twenty-nine years old, Subhadda,
When I renounced the world by going forth, seeking what is Good;
Fifty-one years have now passed since then, Subhadda,
And in all that time a wanderer I have been,
With a mind that is collected and wisdom in the heart,
I have been showing the way to virtue and of true Dhamma.*

*Outside of here, there cannot be found a true practitioner,
A genuine Samana of the first level of Sainthood.*

*Outside of here, there cannot be found a true practitioner,
A genuine Samana of the second level of Sainthood.*

*Outside of here, there cannot be found a true practitioner,
A genuine Samana of the third level of Sainthood.*

*Outside of here, there cannot be found a true practitioner,
A genuine Samana of the fourth level of Sainthood.*

“And Subhadda, so long as the Bhikkhus continue to practice constantly, while living the proper religious life with virtuous behavior, then this world will never be deprived of Arahants.”

When this was said, the wandering ascetic Subhadda spoke to The Blessed One, by saying:

“It is excellent Blessed One! It is marvelous, Blessed One! The Blessed Lord has clarified the Dhamma for me in many ways, as though he were to turn upright what had been turned upside-down, revealing what was hidden, showing the way to one who was lost, holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see. Bhante, I go to The Blessed One for refuge and to the Dhamma and to the Sangha of Bhikkhus.”

“Bhante, may I receive the Going Forth, by being granted the Higher Ordination in the presence of The Blessed One.”

“Subhadda, whoever formerly has received ordination in another religious tradition, hence a follower of another creed, on wishing to receive admission and the Higher Ordination in this Dhamma and Discipline, must remain on probation for a period of four months. At the end of those four months, if the Bhikkhus are satisfied with him, they may grant him full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu. However, in this matter, I do see differences of personalities and recognize you as an exception.”

“Blessed Lord, seeing that it is a requirement for me to be on probation for four months prior to being granted the full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu, then I will remain on probation for a period of four years! And at the end of those four years, if the Bhikkhus are satisfied with me, let them then grant me the full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu.”

However, The Blessed One called the Venerable Ānanda and said to him:

“In that case, Ānanda, let Subhadda go forth by giving him admission into the Order.”

“As You wish, Bhante,” replied Ānanda.

Then, the wandering ascetic Subhadda said to the Venerable Ānanda:

“Friend Ānanda, it is such a blessing! What a great fortune and a marvelous gain for me that in the presence of the Master himself, you, Friend Ānanda, are about to give me the sprinkling of ordination as a disciple!”

Thus, the wandering ascetic Subhadda, in the presence of The Blessed One, received his full admission and the Higher Ordination as a Bhikkhu, from the Venerable Ānanda and the Sangha of Bhikkhus.

From the moment of his ordination, the Venerable Subhadda lived alone, secluded, and withdrawn from the crowd, energetic, and diligently working, while maintaining continuity of mindfulness throughout. And before long, the Venerable Subhadda realized for himself, directly, with Unshakable Wisdom and through his own efforts, the Supreme Goal of the Holy Life, for the purpose of which Good Sons of families rightfully leave the household life and go forth, becoming homeless, as he entered into and remained in that Unshakable Serenity of the Heart.

Right then, he knew for himself:

‘Birth is now finally destroyed! The Holy Life has now been fully lived! Whatever work that had to be completed, is now completed, and done! There is no more return to any state of becoming!’

And the Venerable Subhadda became one of the Arahants, and he became known as the last personal disciple of The Blessed One.

Part Six
The Passing Away

35. The Blessed One's Final Teaching

Then, The Blessed One spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, and said:

“It may be, Ānanda, that some among you have started thinking:

‘The word of the Teacher is now ended; we have nothing left, now that our Master is no more!’

But Ānanda, such a way of thinking should neither be entertained nor considered. For that which I have proclaimed and made known to you all as the Dhamma and the Discipline, *that* itself shall be your Master when I am gone.

“Also, Ānanda, although now the Bhikkhus have had the custom of addressing one another as “*Āvuso*” (*Friend*),’ once I am gone, that needs to change. For the senior Bhikkhus, Ānanda, may address the junior ones by their name, their family name, or as “*Āvuso*” or “*Friend*,” but the novices and junior Bhikkhus should address the senior Bhikkhus as “*Bhante*” or “*Āyasma*” (*Venerable Sir*).

“Further, Ānanda, if it is desired, the Sangha may, when I am gone, abolish the lesser and minor training rules.

“In addition, Ānanda, when I am gone, let the *brahmadāṇḍa* (higher penalty) be imposed upon the Bhikkhu Channa.”

“But Bhante, what is the ‘higher penalty’?”

“The Bhikkhu Channa, Ānanda, may say whatever he wants, but the Bhikkhus should neither interact nor converse with him, nor exhort, instruct, or admonish him, whatsoever.

Then, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

“Bhikkhus, if any of you is in doubt or confused about anything pertaining to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the Path, or the Practice, then go ahead and question, Bhikkhus, without any hesitation! Do not be given to regrets later on, with the thought:

“While in the presence of The Master Himself, given the opportunity to see and ask The Teacher face to face, we missed such an opportunity by failing to ask him.””

But when this was said, the Bhikkhus kept silent.

And The Blessed One repeated this invitation to go ahead and ask for a second and a third time, by encouraging them yet again:

“Bhikkhus, if any of you is in doubt or confused about anything pertaining to the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the Path, or the Practice, then go ahead and question, Bhikkhus, without any hesitation! Do not be given to regrets later on, with the thought:

And for a second and a third time, the Bhikkhus kept silent.

Then, The Blessed One said to them:

“It may be, Bhikkhus, that you are keeping silent out of respect for your Teacher, not wanting to ask any questions. If that is the case, Bhikkhus, then go ahead and convey any unresolved matters or questions you may have, by telling a friend who could then announce it instead, anonymously.”

But the Bhikkhus again kept silent.

Then, the Venerable Ānanda spoke to The Blessed One, by saying:

“How Wonderful it is Bhante! How Astonishingly Marvelous, indeed, it is Bhante! For I am confident that within this Sangha of Bhikkhus, Bhante, there is not even a single Bhikkhu who could be in doubt or perplexity about the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the Path, or the Practice!”

“You speak this out of confidence, Ānanda, but The Tathāgata knows it for a fact, that among this Sangha of Bhikkhus there is not even a single Bhikkhu who could ever be in doubt or perplexity about the Buddha, the Dhamma, or the Sangha, the Path, or the Practice. For, Ānanda, among these five hundred Bhikkhus gathered here, even the lowest in attainment is a Stream-Winner, safe and secure from downfall, assured, and destined for Full Awakening!”

At that point, The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus one more time, and said:

“And now the time has come, Bhikkhus. I urge you, one last time:

“All conditioned things *will* vanish and disperse! So, be relentlessly diligent in your mindfulness, striving, non-stop!”

These were the very last words of The Tathāgata.

36. The Blessed One's Final Release

After saying these words, The Blessed One entered the first jhāna, and successively, by emerging from the first jhāna, He entered the second jhāna; emerging out from the second jhāna, He entered the third jhāna. Rising from the third jhāna, He entered the fourth jhāna. And emerging from the fourth jhāna, He entered the sphere of infinite space, and from the attainment of the sphere of infinite space, He entered the sphere of infinite consciousness and from the attainment of the sphere of infinite consciousness, He entered the sphere of nothingness, followed by Him

entering the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. And emerging out of the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, He attained to the cessation of perception and feeling.

Meanwhile, the Venerable Ānanda spoke to the Venerable Anuruddha who was sitting close by, by saying:

“Venerable Anuruddha, The Blessed One has passed away.”

“No, friend Ānanda, The Blessed One has not yet passed away. He has entered the state of the cessation of perception and feeling.”

Then, The Blessed One, by emerging from the cessation of perception and feeling, entered the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. Then, He successively emerged from one and reentered the lesser jhāna, thus by coming out from the attainment of the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception, He entered the sphere of nothingness, and emerging from that He entered the sphere of infinite consciousness, followed by the sphere of infinite space. Then, by entering the fourth jhāna, He emerged from it, and entered the third jhāna. Coming out from the third jhāna, he entered the second jhāna. And from there, He entered back to the first jhāna.

Then, again, by rising from the first jhāna, The Blessed One reentered the second jhāna. Emerging from it, He entered the third jhāna, followed by the fourth jhāna. And finally, by emerging from the fourth jhāna, The Blessed One immediately attained to the Full and Final Release of Parinibbāna.

The World's Echo

When The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, simultaneously with his Parinibbāna there came a tremendous earthquake, hair-raising and astounding, while thunders kept rolling across the skies.

And when The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, Brahma Sahampati spoke the following verse in honor of The Blessed One:

*‘All must depart
All beings that have lived
Must shed their forms by laying down this body.
Indeed, even a Master such as He,
The Peerless Being,
The Tathāgata who has attained to unrivaled power
The Buddha Supreme, has now passed away, never to be reborn again.’*

And when The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, Sakka, Ruler of the Devas, spoke the following verse in honor of The Blessed One:

*“Impermanent are all compounded things,
With their transient nature,
They’re all subject to appear and then disappear;
Having come into existence, arisen from a cause
They vanish and are no more;
Happy is the peace that comes when they forever cease.”*

And when The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, the Venerable Anuruddha spoke the following verse in honor of The Blessed One:

*“No more is there breathing in or out
For the One with unwavering Heart,
Unshakable, with utter dedication to tranquility and peace
The Graceful Sage has now come to His end.
Untouched by mortal feelings,
His liberated Heart, like a flame
Now finds Final Release.”*

Then, when The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, the Venerable Ānanda spoke the following verse in honor of The Blessed One:

*“Then there was terror,
And the hairs all stood up,
When He, The All-accomplished One,
The Buddha,
Attained to Final Full Release.”*

And when The Blessed One had passed away by attaining to Full and Final Release, some of the Bhikkhus, who were not yet freed from passion, became deeply distraught, with grief-stricken hearts, and with arms uplifted in despair, they began weeping, flinging themselves on the ground and rolling from side to side, as they sobbed, exclaiming:

‘It was far too soon for The Blessed One to attain His Final Parinibbāna! It was way too soon for The Sugata to come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished entirely from our sight!’

But other Bhikkhus who were freed from passion, living mindfully, with full and clear awareness, quietly dwelled while reflecting in this way:

‘All things that are conditioned, are also impermanent. Therefore, how could there be any other outcome than this?’

Then, the Venerable Anuruddha addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

“Enough, friends! Do not grieve, do not lament!

“For, has not The Blessed One declared by teaching us from the very beginning that with all things and relationships that are near and dear to us, there is the inevitability of change, of separation, and of saying goodbye?”

“After all, whatever that is born or comes into being, is conditioned, and therefore subject to crumbling and decay. How can one then expect them to somehow not fall apart? For such a state of affairs can never come to be, as it is not the nature of things.’

“Also, friends, you are distressing the Devas by your behavior!”

And the Venerable Ānanda asked:

“But, Venerable Sir, what classes of Devas might the Venerable Anuruddha be aware of?”

“Ānanda, there are Devas, both those in the sky and the ones who are connected to earth; they have their hair all disheveled as they are weeping and mourning, flailing their uplifted arms in tears, flinging themselves on the ground, rolling from side to side, sobbing with sorrowful cries:

‘It was far too soon for The Blessed One to attain His Final Parinibbāna! It was way too soon for The Sugata to come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished entirely from our sight!’

“But those Devas who are freed from passion, who are mindful and fully aware, are meanwhile reflecting in this manner:

‘All things that are conditioned, are also impermanent. Therefore, how could there be any other outcome than this?’”

Afterwards, the Venerable Anuruddha and the Venerable Ānanda, together spent the rest of the night engaged in a discussion on the Dhamma. Then, the Venerable Anuruddha spoke to the Venerable Ānanda, by saying:

“Go now, friend Ānanda, to Kusinārā, and announce to the Mallas:

‘The Blessed One, Vāseṭṭhas, has now passed away. You may come at your own convenience.’”

“As you wish, Bhante,” replied the Venerable Ānanda.

Later, when it was early morning, the Venerable Ānanda put on his robes, and by taking his alms bowl and outer robe, he went with a companion into Kusinārā.

Now, at that time the Mallas had gathered in their city hall, conducting some public affair. And the Venerable Ānanda approached their gathering and announced to them:

“The Blessed One, Vāseṭṭhas, has now passed away. You may come at your own convenience.”

In hearing these words spoken by the Venerable Ānanda, the elders of the Mallas, along with their sons, their wives, and their daughters-in-law, suddenly became deeply distraught, with grief-stricken hearts; some removed their turbans and began to dishevel their hair, with arms uplifted in despair, weeping, flinging themselves on the ground and rolling from side to side, as they sobbed, exclaiming:

‘It was far too soon for The Blessed One to attain His Final Parinibbāna! It was way too soon for The Sugata to come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished entirely from our sight!’

37. Paying Homage to The Buddha’s Body

Then, the Mallas of Kusinārā gave orders to their men, announcing to them:

“Mallas, go now and gather all the fragrant oils and flower-garlands that you can find within Kusinārā, and bring along all its musicians!”

And so, the Mallas, having gathered and taken with them all the fragrant oils and flower-garlands they could find within Kusinārā, as well as bringing with them its musicians and five hundred sets of clothing, they all went to the Sal Tree Forest, the Mallas’ favorite recreation park, as they approached The Blessed One’s body.

Having approached thus, the Mallas then paid their respects to the body of The Blessed One with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and spreading of fragrant oils and incense. They then expressed their veneration by building canopies and pavilions around the Buddha’s body, as they spent the day showing their respect, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One.

Then, the Mallas of Kusinārā thought:

‘Well now, Mallas, the day is too far spent for us to begin cremating The Blessed One’s body. It would be more appropriate for us to commence the cremation tomorrow.’

But each consecutive day, this kept happening, where on the second, third, fourth, fifth, and sixth day too, they continued paying homage to The Blessed One’s body with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and spreading of fragrant oils and incense. They then expressed their veneration by building canopies and pavilions around The Lord Buddha’s body, as they spent the day showing their respect, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One.

But on the seventh day, the thought came to them:

‘We have paid homage to the body of The Blessed One with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and fragrant oils, and have shown respect, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One. Let us now carry the body of The Blessed One to the southern part of town and there, outside of town, let us cremate the body of The Blessed One.’

Then, eight strong men representing the royal Mallan families, having bathed from the top of their heads down, and by putting on never-before-worn fine clothes, approached with the thought:

‘We will lift up the body of The Blessed One and carry it.’

But try as they did, they could neither lift it nor even move it.

Then the Mallas spoke to the Venerable Anuruddha, by asking:

“What is the cause, Venerable Anuruddha, what is the reason that these eight strong men representing the royal Mallan families, having bathed from the top of their heads down, and by putting on never-before-worn fine clothes, approached with the thought:

‘We will lift up the body of The Blessed One and carry it.’

“But try as they do, they are neither able to lift it nor even move it?”

“Vāsetṭhas, your intention is one, but that of the Devas is entirely another.”

“Then what, Bhante, is the intention of the Devas?”

“Your intention, Vāsetṭhas, is this:

‘We have paid homage to the body of The Blessed One with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and fragrant oils, and have shown respect, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One. Let us now carry the body of The Blessed One to the southern part of town and there, outside of town, let us cremate the body of The Blessed One.’

“But the purpose of the Devas, Vāsetṭhas, is this:

‘We have paid homage to the body of The Blessed One with our Divine dances, songs, music, flower-garlands, and fragrances, and have shown respect, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One. Let us now carry the body of The Blessed One to the northern part of town and having carried it through the northern gate, let us then carry it eastward to the eastern part of town, and then having gone through the eastern gate, once there, outside of town, then let us carry it to the Mallan Shrine at Makuṭabandhana, where we will cremate the body of The Blessed One.’

Then, in hearing this, the Mallas replied to the Venerable Anuruddha by saying:

“In that case, Bhante, let it be as the Devas wish it to be.”

Thereupon, the whole of Kusinārā became covered by the raining down of celestial flowers, especially the Mandārava, blanketing the entire city, as it became covered knee-deep in them.

Thus, both Devas and humans gathered in Kusinārā and paid homage to The Blessed One's body with dance, songs, music, flower-garlands, and fragrances, both Divine and human, as they offered their respects, in veneration to the body of The Blessed One. Then, the body of The Blessed One was carried to the northern part of town and having been carried through the northern gate, it was then taken eastward to the eastern part of town, and then having gone through the eastern gate, once there, outside of town, they carried it to the Mallan Shrine at Makuṭabandhana, where The Blessed One's body was placed back down.

Then, the Mallas of Kusinārā approached the Venerable Ānanda, and asked him the following question:

“Bhante, what are the protocols in how we should conduct the procedure of venerating and honoring the body of the Tathāgata, as it relates to the cremation?”

“Vāsetṭhas, you should follow the same protocols as you would while venerating and honoring the body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch.”

“And what is the procedure, Bhante, to be followed in venerating and honoring the body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch?”

“The body of a Wheel Turning Universal Monarch, Vāsetṭhas, is first wrapped around with new linen, and then with teased cotton wool, and so it is done up to five hundred pieces of linen cloth and five hundred pieces made of cotton wool. Once this is done, then the body of the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch is placed in a golden vessel filled with sesame oil, which is then placed inside another golden vessel, after which a funeral pyre is built, comprised of all kinds of sweet-scented wood, and so the body of the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch is burned and cremated. Afterwards, a stupa mound is raised at a crossroads, built from bricks for the Wheel Turning Universal Monarch.

“Thus, Vāsetṭhas, the same procedure is followed in relation to the body of The Tathāgata, whereby a stupa mound is to be raised at a crossroads, built from bricks for the Tathagata also. And whoever shall visit that place with garlands or incense or sandal paste, or pay reverence, with the calm serenity of the heart, that act itself will be for his lasting happiness and wellbeing, for a very long time.”

Soon after hearing this, the Mallas gave orders to their men, while instructing them:

“Go, now O Mallas! Gather all the teased cotton wool you could find in Kusinārā!”

Thus, with all the needed materials ready, the Mallas of Kusinārā wrapped The Blessed One's body with new linen, and then with teased cotton wool, and so it was done up to five hundred pieces of linen cloth and five hundred pieces made of cotton wool. Once this was done, then the body of The Blessed One was placed in a golden vessel filled with sesame oil, which was then placed inside another golden vessel, after which a funeral pyre was built, comprised of all kinds of sweet-scented wood, and then finally, the Mallas placed the body of the Tathāgata upon the pyre.

38. The Venerable Mahā Kassapa Arrives

Now at that time, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa was walking from Pāvā to Kusinārā, along with a large Sangha of five hundred Bhikkhus. Feeling tired while on the way, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa came off the main road and sat down at the foot of a tree.

Then, a certain Ājīvaka came by, on his way to Pāvā, and in his hand he was seen carrying a Divine Mandārava flower taken from Kusinārā. And the Venerable Mahā Kassapa, on seeing the Ājīvaka coming from a distance, waited until he drew near, and then spoke to him, by saying:

“Friend, have you any news about our Teacher?”

“Yes, friend. It has now been seven days since the recluse Gautama passed away. It is due to that special occasion that I was able to get this Divine Mandārava flower!”

On hearing the news, some Bhikkhus, not yet freed from passion, began weeping with arms uplifted in despair, flinging themselves on the ground and rolling from side to side, as they sobbed, exclaiming:

‘It was far too soon for The Blessed One to attain His Final Parinibbāna! It was way too soon for The Sugata to come to His Parinibbāna! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished entirely from our sight!’

But other Bhikkhus who were freed from passion, living mindfully, with full and clear awareness, quietly dwelled while reflecting in this way:

‘All things that are conditioned, are also impermanent. Therefore, how could there be any other outcome than this?’

Meanwhile, a certain monk who was seated among them, by the name of Subhadda, who had recently gone forth from home life into homelessness, and only in his old age, turned to the other Bhikkhus and exclaimed:

“Enough, friends! Do not grieve. There is nothing to grieve! After all, we are now finally rid of that Great Recluse! For it has been too long, friends, that we have been oppressed by him constantly chastising and telling us:

‘This is suitable for you Bhikkhus; that is not suitable for you, Bhikkhus.’

“But now, finally, we will be able to do whatever we want, and not do whatever we do not want!”

Then, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa, witnessing what was taking place, addressed the Bhikkhus, by saying:

“Enough, friends! Do not grieve, do not lament!

“For has not The Blessed One declared by teaching us from the very beginning, that with all things and relationships that are near and dear to us, there is the inevitability of change, of separation, and of saying goodbye?”

“After all, whatever that is born or comes into being, is conditioned, and therefore subject to crumbling and decay. How can one then expect them to somehow not fall apart? For, such a state of affairs can never come to be, as it is not the nature of things.

While this was taking place in Pāvā, in Kusinārā, four men representing royal Mallan families, having bathed from the top of their heads down, and by putting on never-before-worn fine clothes, said:

“We will now light The Blessed One’s funeral pyre.”

But try as they did, they could not do so, for it would refuse to catch fire.

Then, the Mallas spoke to the Venerable Anuruddha, by asking:

“What is the cause, Venerable Anuruddha, what is the reason that these four men representing royal Mallan families are unable to light The Blessed One’s funeral pyre?”

“Vāsetṭhas, the reason is because the Devas have an entirely different intention than yours, hence they will not allow you to start the cremation.”

“But what, Bhante, is the intention of the Devas?” asked the Mallas.

“The purpose of the Devas, Vāsetṭhas, is this:

“The Venerable Mahā Kassapa is on his way from Pāvā to Kusinārā, together with a large Sangha of five hundred Bhikkhus. We shall not let The Blessed One’s funeral pyre be set alight until the Venerable Mahā Kassapa also has paid homage at the feet of His Master, The Blessed One.”

Hearing this, the Mallas replied to the Venerable Anuruddha, by saying:

“In that case, Bhante, may it be as the Devas wish it to be.”

Sometime later, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa reached Kusinārā and directly approached the funeral pyre of The Blessed One, which had been placed at the Mallan Shrine at Makuṭabandhana.

Arranging his upper robe on one shoulder, and with his clasped hands raised in salutation to his heart, the Venerable Mahā Kassapa walked three times circling the pyre, keeping his right side towards The Blessed One’s body, as he paid homage one last time at the feet of his Teacher, The Blessed One, as did his five hundred Bhikkhus.

And then, right at that moment when the Venerable Mahā Kassapa and the five hundred Bhikkhus had paid their respects, the funeral pyre of The Blessed One burst into flames, suddenly all on its own.

Later, when the body of The Blessed One had been consumed by the fire, no ashes or soot were to be seen of what used to be His skin, tissues, flesh, sinews, or any fluids, except only for some bones that remained. Just as when ghee or fine oil is burned, it leaves no soot or ashes behind, even so when the body of The Blessed One had been burned, no ashes or particles were to be seen of what used to be His skin, tissues, flesh, sinews, or any fluids, except only for some bones that remained. And of the five hundred linen wrappings around The Blessed One's body, only two were not consumed, the innermost and the outermost.

And when the body of The Blessed One had been consumed, water rained down from the skies extinguishing the funeral pyre of The Blessed One, while water was also released from the Sal Trees that came down subduing the fires, as well as by the Mallas of Kusinārā who brought with them water scented with many kinds of fragrances, as they all came to extinguish the pyre that consumed the body of The Blessed One.

Then, the Mallas of Kusinārā respectfully collected the relics of The Blessed One's body and brought them to their council hall, where they surrounded them with a latticework of spears, encircled with a barrier made by their bows. That is where the relics were kept for seven days as they paid homage to the relics of The Blessed One with dance, song, music, flower-garlands, and fragrant oils and incense, while they showed their respect, in veneration to the relics of The Blessed One.

39. Distribution of The Blessed One's Relics

Then, the ruler of Magadha, King Ajātasattu, son of Queen Vedehi, came to know that at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away. And he sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, like me. Therefore, I deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. I will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

When the Licchavis of Vesālī also heard that at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away, they too sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, by saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, like us. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

And the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu heard that at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away. And they also sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was the greatest of our Sons. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

Then, the Bulas of Allakappa too learned that at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away. And they sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, as we are. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

Then, the Koḷiyans of Rāmagāma heard how at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away. And they sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, as we are. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

And then the brahmin Veṭṭhadīpa came to learn that at Kusinārā The Blessed One had passed away. And he sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, and I am a brahmin. Therefore, I also deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. I will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a festival in their honor.”

Then, the Mallas of Pāvā, in learning about The Blessed One’s passing away in Kusinārā, also sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

“The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, as we are. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor.”

However, in being confronted by these demands for their share of The Blessed One’s relics, the Mallas of Kusinārā addressed their assembly, by declaring:

“The Blessed One has passed away in our district. We shall not part with any portion of the relics of The Blessed One.”

But then, the brahmin Doṇa addressed the Mallan assembly, as he tried reasoning with them:

*“If I may have a word for you to hear dear sirs, I beg you!
Our Lord Buddha taught us all to be ever forbearing;
Therefore, it would indeed be unseemly should there arise a squabble
Along with war and bloodshed, over the custody
Of The Supreme Teacher’s remains, who was the Best of men!”*

*So, let us all, dear sirs, be united in our agreement
To divide the relics into eight portions and share them as such - so that
Far and wide stupas may rise, and on witnessing them,
Mankind will gain faith and
Find the brightness of sight in the All-Enlightened One!"*

In listening to the brahmin Doṇa's words, the Mallas exclaimed in agreement:

"In that case, brahmin! Go ahead and divide the relics into eight equal portions."

And the brahmin Doṇa said to the assembly of Mallas:

"So be it, Sirs." And he carefully divided the relics of The Blessed One into eight equal portions. Once this was done, he again addressed the assembly, by saying:

"I ask dear Sirs, that this urn which housed the relics of The Blessed Lord be given to me. For over this urn I will build a stupa and hold a festival in its honor."

His request being granted, the Mallas gave the urn to the brahmin Doṇa.

Then, the Moriyas of Pippalivana learned that at Kusinārā, The Blessed One had passed away. So, they also sent a message to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying:

"The Blessed One was of the Khattiya warrior caste, as we are. Therefore, we deserve a portion of the relics of The Blessed One. We will build a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One and hold a royal festival in their honor."

But the Mallas replied, by saying:

"There are no more portions of the relics of The Blessed One left, for The Blessed One's relics have already been divided and distributed. However, if you would like, you may take from here the remaining embers and ashes from The Blessed One's pyre."

And the Moriyas agreed, as they took the remaining embers along with the ashes from The Blessed One's pyre.

Then, the ruler of Magadha, King Ajātasattu, son of Queen Vedehi, built a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Rājagaha, and held a royal festival in their honor.

The Licchavis of Vesālī, in receiving their portion of the relics, also built a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Vesālī and held a royal festival in their honor.

The Sakyas of Kapilavatthu too built a stupa, housing the relics of The Blessed One at the Sakyan capital of Kapilavatthu, and held a royal festival in their honor.

The Bulas of Allakappa also built a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Allakappa and held a royal festival in their honor.

The Koḷiyans of Rāmagāma, having received their share of the relics, built a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Rāmagāma, and held a royal festival in the relics' honor.

Then, the brahmin Veṭhadīpa also built a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Veṭhadīpa, as he too held a festival in the relics' honor.

Also, the Mallas of Pāvā erected a stupa housing the relics of The Blessed One at Pāvā, as they held a royal festival in their honor.

The Mallas of Kusinārā in their turn built a stupa to house the relics of The Blessed One at Kusinārā and held a festival in their honor.

The brahmin Doṇa too erected a stupa to house the urn where the relics had been kept for seven days, and he also held a festival to honor it.

And the Moriyas of Pipphalivana too built a stupa at Pipphalivana to house the embers and ashes collected from The Blessed One's funeral pyre, and they also held a royal festival in their honor.

So, it came about that there were eight stupas built for the relics, a ninth for the urn, and a tenth to house the embers and ashes.

And thus, it was in the days of old.

*“Eight portions there were,
Relics of the Great Teacher,
The All-Seeing One, the Greatest of men.
Seven in Jambudīpa are honored, and one
Went to Rāmagāma, to be kept by the Kings of the Nāgas.
One tooth is honored in the Tāvātimsa Heaven by the Devas of the Thirty-three,
Another is found in the realm of Kaliṅga,
Yet another is guarded by a Naga king.*

*Through their brightness, this bountiful earth
With its most excellent gifts is adorned.
Thus, the relics of the All-Seeing One are best honored
By those who are worthy of honor - by Devas, Nagas,
And noblest among men, indeed, by the highest of mankind.*

*Pay homage with clasped hands!
For hard indeed it is
Through hundreds of ages to meet with an All-Enlightened One!
With forty teeth altogether,
Along with head and body hairs received,*

*Devas from across the universe rushed and carried them away,
Keeping them close to their hearts, in Veneration.”*

(Here ends the Mahā Parinibbāna Sutta)

Sādhu Sādhu Sādhu

Copyright © Bhikkhu Candana 2022