SN 6.15 — SN 6:15 Total Unbinding | Parinibbāna Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

Completeness: ABBREVIATED. Every source-unit character is preserved, including introductions, notes and verse structure. Thanissaro's collection-level note explicitly states that repetitions were cut: https://www.dhammatalks.org/suttas/about.html. This is evidence about the translation method, not an assertion that every individual unit contains an omission; no repetitions reconstructed.

Text

Total Unbinding

Parinibbāna Sutta (SN 6:15)

This discourse reports how the Buddha passed away, giving four verses uttered by those who witnessed the event. It is interesting to note that the verses ascribed to heavenly beings make general comments on how the nature of all beings—even a Buddha—is to pass away, whereas the verses ascribed to the monks comment specifically on the Buddha’s display of mental mastery immediately prior to the moment of his total unbinding. For some reason, the order of the verses here differs slightly from that in DN 16.

* * *

On one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Kusinārā in Upavattana, the Sal Tree Forest of the Mallans, on the occasion of his total unbinding. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks, "I exhort you, monks: All fabrications are subject to decay. Reach consummation through heedfulness." That was the Tathāgata's last statement.

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

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

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

"All beings—all—in the world,

will cast off the bodily heap

in the world

where a Teacher like this

without peer in the world

the Tathāgata, with strength attained,

the Rightly Self-Awakened One,

has totally

unbound."

When the Blessed One totally unbound, simultaneously with the total unbinding, Sakka, ruler of the gods, uttered this verse:

"How inconstant are fabrications!

Their nature: to arise & pass away.

They disband as they are arising.

Their total stilling is bliss."

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

“It was awe-inspiring.

It was hair-raising

when, displaying the foremost

accomplishment in all things,

the Rightly Self-Awakened One

totally unbound.”

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

“He had no in-&-out breathing,

the one who was Such,1 the firm-minded one,

imperturbable

& bent on peace:

the sage completing his span.

With heart unbowed

he endured the pain.

Like a flame’s unbinding

was the liberation

of awareness.”

Note

1. Such (tādin): An adjective applied to the mind of one who has attained the goal. It indicates that the mind “is what it is”—indescribable but not subject to change or alteration.

Publisher references (not part of the sutta)

See also: MN 72; Ud 8:10; Thig 5:10