

Mahaparínirvana Sutra

(The Great Parínirvana Sutra -Mahayana)

[Redacted from the Chinese of Dharmakshema by Huiyan, Huiguan, and Xie Lingyun and Translated into English by Charles Patton unless otherwise noted--only those chapters shown in bold-face type are included here.]

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Thus have I heard. One time the Buddha was staying at the city of Kusinagara, the birthplace of the great worthy, on the shore of the Ajiravati River between a pair of Sala trees. At that time, the World Honored One was accompanied by a great bhiksu congregation numbering eighty nayutas of kotis [1] of people, encircling him front and back. On the fifteenth day of the second month, the time of his entry into Nirvana was eminent. Using the buddhas' spiritual power, he issued a great voice that universally filled the minds of beings. Conforming to each species of beings, the voice addressed all the sentient beings (sattvas), "Today the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Perfectly Enlightened One, feels compassion for sentient beings, protectively shelters the sentient beings, and regards sentient beings equally as he would his own son, Rahula. For the sake of those who have taken refuge, and for the householders, the greatly awakened World Honored One now wishes to enter Nirvana. If any sentient being has uncertainties, they can now submit the very last questions [to the Tathagata]."

At that time, the World Honored One in the early morning issued from his facial orifices a variety of lights. Their brilliance was of various colors. They were blue, yellow, red, white, rock crystal (sphatika), and agate. The light pervasively lit the trichilocosm of Buddha worlds, reaching out into all ten directions as well. Within those worlds, the sentient beings of the six destinies who encountered this light had their evil defilements and afflictions completely nullified. The minds of the sentient beings who witnessed these

events were greatly distressed (duhkha), and yet at once they were uplifted by the voice of compassion, which was called the Cry of Compassion. Its lament was that of a sympathetic parent, who cries, "O, the suffering! The distress!" They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their breasts, and gave a great cry. These beings, whether or not they had bodily form, were angry and apprehensive. They wept and sobbed.

At that time, the mountains and oceans of the Earth quaked and trembled. Then the sentient beings who shared this experience said to each other, "We now resolve to discipline ourselves, so that none are subject to great anxiety or affliction. Let us go now with haste to Kusinagara, the city of the great worthy's birthplace. And when we arrive we will salute the Tathagata, pay our respects, and beseech him to forgo entry into parinirvana, to remain in the world for another kalpa or more."

They held each other's hands and again exclaimed, "The worldly existence is vacant and the merits of sentient beings are exhausted. The unwholesome deeds of old have brought them into this world. Now, the Sage shall soon leave us! He shall soon leave us! It is not long now before the Tathagata must enter Nirvana."

And again they said, "The worldly existence is vacant! The worldly existence is vacant! From now on we will be without his aid and protection. Having no tradition to look to, we are left impoverished and isolated from the [Dharma] dew. In one morning, we shall be left behind by the unsurpassed World Honored One. Who shall we go to with our questions when there are doubts or misconceptions?"

And then there was a measureless number of great disciples present. The venerable Mahakatyayana, the venerable Vakula, and the venerable Upananda were among those of the great bhiksus who witnessed the Buddha's light and, being unable to maintain themselves, their bodies were tossed about when the ground shook. Their minds were muddled, doubtful, and anguished when the great cry [of compassion] arose. There arose in them such a variety of afflictions (klesas).

And at that time, there were eighty kotis of bhiksus who were arhats. Their minds had attained freedom. Having done what needed to be done, they had departed from the afflictions. Having pacified the roots [of defilement], they were like great Naga kings in their great deportment and virtue. Having consummated the wisdom of emptiness and seized their own reward, they were like a sandalwood forest with sandalwood trees all around, or like the lions who surround a lion king. Having consummated such infinite virtues, they were true disciples of the Buddha.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, when each of them woke and went to brush their teeth, they encountered the Buddha's light and there appeared an image before them that said, "Sage, you must bath and brush your teeth with haste!" This being said, they arose, hands and body, and when they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the palasa blossom. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahayana's supreme practice of emptiness, manifesting the inception of the expediency of the Tathagata's esoteric teachings. In order to prevent the disappearance of the spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings, they made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was present the women of Kusinagara. Bhiksuni Good Worthy, bhiksuni Upananda, and bhiksuni Oceanic Mind were accompanied by sixty nayutas of bhiksunis who were great arhats. Their outflows ended, their minds had attained freedom. Having done what needed to be done, they had departed from the afflictions. Having pacified the roots [of defilement], they were like great Nagas in their great deportment and virtue. They had consummated the wisdom of emptiness.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, they arose, hands and body. When they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the Palasa blossom. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahayana's supreme practice of emptiness, manifesting the inception of the expediency of the Tathagata's esoteric teachings. In order to prevent the disappearance of the spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings,

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

And among the bhiksunis, there were bhiksunis who were like Nagas among the bodhisattvas. They were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten bodhisattva stages. It was in order to transform sentient beings that they manifested female bodies and constantly practiced the four immeasurable minds. Having attained the power of freedom, they could transform themselves into Buddhas [if they so chose].

At that time, there were bodhisattva-mahasattvas whose number were like the sands of the Ganges River. Nagas among men, they were seated and peacefully dwelt at the level of imperturbability among the ten bodhisattva stages, and could expediently manifest their bodies [freely]. Their names were Bodhisattva Oceanic Virtue and Bodhisattva Inexhaustible Mind. They were the foremost leaders among the bodhisattva-mahasattvas. Their thoughts were reverent of the Mahayana, peacefully dwelt in the Mahayana, deeply understood the Mahayana, delighted in the Mahayana, and protected the Mahayana. They were skilled in conforming themselves [to the circumstances of] all worldly beings, making the vow, "I shall lead those who have not yet been liberated to the attainment of liberation." They had in the distant past of infinite kalpas cultivated and kept the precepts purely, skillfully maintained the practice of understanding what is not yet understood, and assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, adorning themselves with the great armor. Consummating thus such infinitely virtuous deeds, they regarded sentient beings equally as they would an only child.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, they encountered the Buddha's light and arose, hands and body. When they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the Palasa blossom. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. They, too, hoping that sentient beings might receive the blessing of peaceful happiness, had consummated the Mahayana's supreme and practice of emptiness, manifesting the inception of the expediency of the Tathagata's esoteric teachings. In order to prevent the disappearance of the spoken Dharmas and bring about the circumstances leading to the pacification of sentient beings, they made haste to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him one hundred thousand times. With their palms together in reverence, they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there were upasakas whose number were like the sands of two Ganges Rivers. They had taken and kept the precepts, perfect was their majestic deportment. They were the upasaka King Majestic Virtue of Undeified Speech and upasaka Good Virtue. They were the foremost leaders. They deeply delighted in the contemplation of the ways of correcting oneself. The subjects of contemplation were suffering and happiness, permanence and impermanence, purity and impurity, self and non-self, the real and the unreal, taking refuge and not taking refuge, sentient beings and what is not sentient beings, the continuous and non-continuous, peace and non-peace, the conditioned and the unconditioned, the ending and the unending, Nirvana and what is not Nirvana, as well as advancement and what is not advancement. They always delighted deeply in the contemplation of ways of correcting themselves. They, too, longed to and delighted in listening to the unsurpassed Mahayana. And having heard it, they could explain it to others. They were skilled in keeping the precepts purely, which quenched their thirst for the Mahayana. When they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They were skilled at accumulating the unsurpassed wisdom. They delighted in the Mahayana and defended it. They were skilled at conforming themselves to [the circumstances] of the all worldly beings, liberating those who were not yet liberated and understanding what was not yet understood. They assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, adorning themselves with the great armor. Their minds were constantly steeped in the flavor of the pure practice of the precepts. Consummating thus such infinitely virtuous deeds, there arose the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings equally as it would with an only child.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, because they wished to be present for the cremation the Tathagata's body, they each took up 10,000 bundles of fragrant woods. These included sandalwood, agura, oxhead sandalwood, and fragrant wood of the Heavens. The lines on the grain of each of these woods were quite compact. They had embedded into them the seven treasures, which glowed with a marvelous light. It was as though they were painted decoratively with various hues. Through the Buddha's power, there were wondrous hues of blue, yellow, red, and white that sentient beings were

delighted to see. These woods had been treated with a variety of perfumes, with saffron, agura, and ambar. They were sprinkled with flowers. These included blue lotuses (utpala), white lotuses (kumuda), red lotuses (padma), and silver lotuses (pundarika). These fragrant woods were covered with pennants of all five colors. These pennants were soft and pliant, marvelous, like heavenly robes, silk robes (Kauseya), linen (ksauma), or silk embroidery.

They carried these fragrant woods with jewel-studded carts. These jewel-studded carts produced a variety of lights that were blue, yellow, red, and white. Their axles and spokes were filled with a mixture of the seven treasures. Each of these carts was yoked with teams of four horses, and each of these horses was as swift as the wind. Each of these carts had standing at its fore fifty-seven marvelous and precious pennants, and a netting woven from real gold covered them. Each of these jewel-studded carts had fifty wondrous and precious canopies. Above each of these carts there were draped blossom vines on which were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses.

The flowers were tempered with gold, had leaves of adamantine, and were set on terraces. In these flower terraces there were numerous bees that buzzed in them happily, enjoying themselves. Also, there were wondrous voices that spoke of impermanence, affliction, emptiness, and selflessness. And these voices spoke of the root of practicing the bodhisattva path. There were, as well, a variety of singers and musicians who played bamboo lutes, harps, flutes, and drums. To this delightful music was a voice saying, "O, the suffering!

The suffering that is in this vacant world!"

Before each of these carts there were four jewel-studded stands carried by upasakas. And upon these stands were piled a variety of flowers. These included blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. There were also saffron fragrances and other perfuming fragrances that were wondrous and supreme. The upasakas furnished a variety of meals and supplies for the Buddha and the sangha. This included fragrant firewood made of sandalwood and agura. The food was sweet and exquisitely cooked in the eight virtuous waters, and had the six flavors. These were 1) bitter, 2) sour, 3) sweet, 4) acrid, 5) salty, and 6) insipid. The food also had three virtues. These were 1) light and soft, 2) pure and clean, and 3) like the Dharma. Assembling such a variety of adornments, they went to the Worthy One's birthplace, where he rested between a pair of Sala trees.

Once there, they spread gold dust throughout the area. With kalavinka clothing, kambala clothing, and embroidered silk clothing they covered up the gold dust, creating a pile all around twelve yojanas high. For the Buddha and the sangha, they prepared lion thrones inlaid with the seven treasures. These thrones were as tall as Mount Sumeru. And above them were precious curtains, from which were hung diamond necklaces. From the Sala trees were hung a variety of marvelous pennants and canopies. The trees were treated with a variety of excellent perfumes. Flowers of various names were scattered among the trees.

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

And then they had this thought, "The Tathagata has today received our food and shall enter into Nirvana." Having had that thought, they arose, hands and body, and when they stood the side of their bodies upon which they had lain was red like the Palasa blossom. Tears filled their eyes, and there arose in them a great anguish. Each of them took up and carried the gift of supplies that were piled into their jewel-studded carts. These included the fragrant woods, pennants, flags, precious canopies, beverages, and food. They went to the Buddha with haste and prostrated themselves at his feet. With what they had carried with them, they made offerings with the desire to support the Tathagata. They then circled him one hundred thousand times, praising his [ten] epithets. Their tearful grief was such that it shook both Heaven and Earth.

They beat their chests and let out a great cry. Tears fell from Heaven like rain.

And they said to one another, "O, Sage, the suffering of this vacant world! How vacant is the world!"

They said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The World Honored One remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. And after three such attempts, he still did not accept them. The upasakas' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful as they silently waited. It was just like the extreme grief and anguish of a loving father whose only child had come to the end of its life and was forced to send its body back home with him for the funeral. The compassionate tears and anguish of these upasakas was also so. With their gifts and supplies, they calmly arranged a place and withdrew to sit quietly at one side.

And at that time, there were upasikas whose number were like the sands of three Ganges Rivers. They had taken and kept the five precepts, perfect was their majestic deportment. Their names were upasika Life of Virtue, upasika Virtuous Hairpin, and upasika Vaisakha. They were the foremost leaders among the myriad number of upasikas. They were able to deeply serve, protect, and uphold the true Dharma. In order to liberate the measureless kotis of sentient beings, they manifested female bodies to enforce the household Dharma.

They regarded their own bodies to be like the four poisonous snakes, like bodies constantly being the meal for an infinite number of insects, like bodies that were foul smelling, polluted, lustful, and a prison of bondages. They regarded their bodies as being capable of evil deeds such as the taking of life, regarded their bodies to be constantly leaking from the nine impure orifices, and also like a construction of blood, flesh, sinew, and bone wrapped in skin. The use of the hands and feet was for repelling enemies, like the tower and shield. The eye was the window. The head was the ceremonial hall. The heart was the Lord's abode. The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, discard and leave behind this bodily fortress. In contrast, when the ordinary man encounters another person, he always has attachments to the feelings he has [about that person's body]. Whether they are covetous, lustful, angry, or hateful, he encounters delusions, as though demons (raksasa) inhabited the other person's body.

The upasikas regarded the body to be infirm like rushes, reeds, the airavana tree, water bubbles, banana plants, and weeds. They regarded the body to be impermanent and that thoughts abided nowhere in it. That it was just like a lightning flash, rushing water, or the shadows cast by a fire. That it was like drawing a line in water, which just as it is drawn is swallowed up again. They regarded the body to be variable and destructible, like a great tree growing on a river shore, or near a sheer cliff. They regarded the body to be unenduring, that it shall be food to foxes, wolves, kites, owls, buzzards, eagles, ravens, magpies, and starving dogs. Who that is a Sage would delight in this body? How can an ox's footprints hold an ocean's waters? It is impossible to say that they can. They regarded the body to be impermanent, impure, foul smelling, and unclean. How can the round Earth be used like a date tree? Its gradual turning is so slight, like seeds being ground into dust grains, it is impossible to say that it can be. The body is given to faults and anxiety. This is why it should be abandoned, like casting aside tears and criticism.

Under these circumstances the upasikas, with the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness constantly cultivated their minds. They deeply delighted in asking to receive the Mahayana Sutras. And having heard them, they could explain them to others. They protected and upheld their personal vows, even while their female bodies were slandered. Deeply could their behavior cause insecurity in those with the dispositions of anxiety and disgust. The upasikas always cultivated their minds, gathering thus the correct contemplation, destroying the endlessly turning wheel of birth and death (samsara). Once they had quenched their thirst for the Mahayana and were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They deeply delighted in the Mahayana and defended it. And although they manifested female bodies, they were really bodhisattvas. They were skilled in conforming themselves [to the circumstances of] all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and understanding what has not yet been understood. They assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel, adorning themselves with the great armor. They kept firmly to the precepts. Consummating thus such virtuous deeds, there arose the great thought of compassion when they regarded sentient beings equally as it would with an only child.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, they said to one another, "Today we ought to go to that pair of Sala trees." The upasikas gathered together supplies twice as great as the last. They took these offerings, went to the Buddha, and prostrated themselves at his feet. They circled him one hundred thousand times and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided for the Buddha and the sangha these offerings of supplies. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings."

The Tathagata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The upasikas' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there were carts carrying the men, women, wives, children, and attendants from the city of Vaisali whose number was like the sands of four Ganges Rivers. And with them also was the King of Jambuvipa and his attendants. They came seeking the Dharma and were skilled in the cultivation of practicing the precepts, perfect was their majestic deportment. The destruction of the Dharma by the various heretics always caused them to say to one another, "We vow use gold, silver, and grain to bring about the sweet dew of the inexhaustible and true Dharma, so that the germ at its very core will abide for a long time in the world. This wish leads us to always cultivate our studies. If there is someone who slanders the Buddhas' true Dharma, we shall cut out his tongue." And, again, they composed the vow, "If there is someone who leaves the household life and then breaks the precepts, then we shall stop him and send him back to the lay life to work as a scribe. If they can take deep delight in protecting and keeping the true Dharma, then we shall respect and honor them as we would our own fathers and mothers. If there is a sangha that can cultivate the true Dharma, then we shall follow them gladly and give them vitality and strength." They always wished and gladly listened to the Mahayana Sutras. And having heard them, they could explain them to others. They had completely consummated such virtuous deeds.

Their names were the Licchavi Pure and Undefined Seed, the Licchavi Pure and Unerring, and the Licchavi Ganges Waters of Undefined and Pure Virtue. They each said to each other, "The Sages now have made haste to the Buddha with offerings of supplies of a variety of excellences." They each departed with their carts that were adorned by 84,000 great elephants, 84,000 great four-horse jeweled carriages, and 84,000 moonlight pearls. They took with them bundles of heavenly wood, sandalwood, and airavana perfumed firewood, the variety of which was of 84,000 kinds. Each of the elephants bore precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smaller canopies were wrapped around them loosely and filled a yojana. The very shortest of the flags measured thirty-two yojanas in length. The shortest of the pennants were as tall as one hundred yojanas. Carrying such offerings, they went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They circled him 100,000 times and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided for the Buddha and the sangha these offerings of supplies. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our offerings." The Tathagata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The Licchavis' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful and grieved. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a grove of seven Tala trees, and there they silently waited.

And at that time, there was a group of great elders whose number was like the sands of five Ganges rivers. They had respect for the Mahayana. If those of the various studies slandered the true Dharma, these men had the ability to defeat them, just as hail and rain breaks and bends the grasses and trees. Their names were the elder Sunlight, the elder Defender of the World, and the elder Defender of the Dharma. They were the foremost leaders. They gathered together supplies five times as great as the last and took their offerings to the pair of Sala trees. They prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet, circled him 100,000 times, and then said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided for the Buddha and the sangha these offerings of supplies. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our offerings." The Tathagata remained silent and did not accept their offerings. The elders' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful and grieved. By the Buddha's spiritual power, they were moved to a grove of seven Tala trees, and there they silently waited.

And at that time, there was the King of Vaisali, his wife, and his palace retinue.

From Jambudvipa there were the Kings who had removed the King Ajatasatru from power. They were together with the common people from the villages, towns, and cities of their kingdoms. Among them was one king named Moon Without Defilement. Each wearing four weapons, they wished to go to the Buddha. Each of these Kings had a retinue of one hundred and eighty ten thousands of nayutas of common

people. Their carts were war chariots pulled by elephants and horses. The elephants had six tusks and the horses were as swift as the wind. The carts were laden with supplies six times as great as the last. The very smallest of the precious canopies had a circumference easily filling eight yojanas. The very shortest of the flags was sixteen yojanas in length. And the lowest of the precious pennants was thirty-six yojanas high. These Kings peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma and detested scornfully the mistaken Dharmas. They respected the Mahayana and deeply delighted in it. They felt compassion for sentient beings as they would an only child.

They carried beverages and food, the aroma of which perfumed the air throughout an area of four yojanas. In the early morning just as the sun was rising, they took up a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies, and went to where the Tathagata was staying between the pair of Saala trees. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we now have provided for the Buddha and the sangha these offerings of supplies. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The Kings' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was a group of God Kings whose number was like the sands of seven Ganges Rivers. These were only those who removed the wife of Ajatasatru. In order to liberate sentient beings, they manifested themselves with female bodies. They constantly contemplated their bodily conduct. And by way of the Dharmas of emptiness, marklessness, and wishlessness, they perfumed and cultivated their minds. They were the wife Wonder of the Three Realms and the wife Commiserate Virtue. They were those among the Kings' wives. They peacefully dwelt in the true Dharma, cultivating their practice of the precepts, perfect was their majestic deportment. They felt compassion for sentient beings as they would an only child.

They said to one another, "We should now make haste to the World Honored One." The Kings' wives gathered offerings seven times as great as the last. They took up aromatic flowers, precious pennants, embroidered silk, flags, canopies, and superior and wondrous beverages and food. The smallest of the precious canopies had a circumference that easily filled sixteen yojanas. The very shortest of the flags was thirty-six yojanas in length. The lowest of the precious flags was sixty-eight yojanas high. The aroma of the beverages and foods perfumed the air throughout an area of eight yojanas. Carrying these offerings of supplies, they went to the Tathagata and prostrated themselves at his feet. They then circled him 100,000 times and said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we have provided for the Buddha and the sangha these offerings of supplies. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. Then, the wives' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were sorrowful and anguished. They pulled the hair out of their heads, beat their chests, and let out a great wail, like compassionate mothers who had recently buried a beloved child. They withdrew to sit quietly to one side.

And at that time, there was a group of goddesses whose number was like the sands of eight Ganges Rivers. There was the Goddess Extensive Eye who was foremost leader among them. She made the statement, "O, sisters! Look closely, look closely! These various assemblies have gathered together a variety of superior and wondrous offerings of supplies with the wish to offer them to the Tathagata and the bhiksu sangha. We should also gather together such marvelous offerings of supplies to give to the Tathagata. Once the Tathagata has accepted them, he will then enter Nirvana. Sisters, the appearance in the world of the Buddhas, the Tathagatas, is most difficult. To make the very last offerings they accept is twice as difficult to do. If the Buddha enters Nirvana, the world will be left vacant."

The goddesses cherished and delighted in the Mahayana and wished to listen to it. And having heard it, they could explain it to others. When their thirst was quenched for the Mahayana and they were completely satisfied, they could, again, drink up what remained. They defended the Mahayana. If there was someone from the sanghas of the heretical sects who was envious of the Mahayana, the goddesses were strong enough to knock down their arguments, like a storm knocking down grass. They protected and kept the precepts, perfect was their majestic deportment. They were skilled in conforming themselves [to the circumstances of] all worldly beings, liberating those not yet liberated and saving those not yet saved. And in future lives they would turn the Dharma wheel. They assisted the three jewels, being certain that they did not perish, and cultivated the study of the Mahayana. They adorned themselves with the great armor. Having consummated such infinitely virtuous deeds, they felt compassion for sentient

beings as they would an only child.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, they each took up a variety of heavenly wood and fragrances, twice that possessed by the human assemblies. The scent of their firewood perfuming the air could suppress the variety of foul odors among mortals. They had white carts with white canopies drawn by teams of white horses. Atop each cart was spread a white sheet. From all four sides of the sheets dangled gold and silver, a variety of fragrant flowers, precious pennants, flags, and canopies. Atop them were piled wondrously sweet delicacies and a variety of delightful dancers. The goddesses prepared their lion thrones. The four feet of their thrones were made of pure blue agate. On the backsides of these thrones the seven treasures were sown into the back and floor. On the front side of each throne was also a golden desk. And the trees were lit by the seven treasures, a variety of pearls being used for lamp light. Marvelous were the heavenly flowers scattered everywhere on their properties. Once the goddesses had gathered these gifts, their minds became grieved, tears flowed freely, and there arose in them a great anguish. In order to bless sentient beings with peaceful happiness, they had consummated the Mahayana's supreme practice of emptiness, manifesting the inception of the expediency of the Tathagata's esoteric teachings. And to prevent the disappearance of the spoken Dharmas, they went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They circled him one 100,000 times and then said to Buddha, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings."

The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The goddesses' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished. They withdrew to one side quietly and seated themselves.

And at that time, there were naga kings residing in the four direction whose number was like the sands of nine Ganges Rivers. They were the naga king Peaceful Cultivation of Fortune, the naga king Nanda, and the naaga king Bhananda. They were the foremost leaders.

In the early morning just as the sun was rising, these naga kings gathered offerings of supplies twice as great as that of the men and gods. They brought them to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They circled him 100,000 times and then said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The naga kings' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

And at that time, there were preta kings whose number was like the sands of ten Ganges Rivers. The king Vaisravana was the foremost leader. They said to one another, "The Sages are now making haste to the Buddha!" They gathered offerings of supplies twice that of the nagas. They brought them to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. They circled him 100,000 times and then said to the Buddha, "Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The preta kings' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit to one side.

...

And at that time, there was Sakro-devanamindra and the four god kings. They said to one another, "You should contemplate the gods', humans', and asuras' great collections of offerings, and their wish to make the very last offerings to the Tathagata. We, too, should make such offerings. If we were to make the very last offerings, the complete consummation of the perfection of giving (dana-paramita) would not be difficult."

At that time, the four god kings gathered together offerings twice as great as the last. They brought mandarava flowers, great mandarava flowers, manjusaka flowers, great manjusaka flowers, sandanika flowers, great sandanika flowers, lovely flowers, great lovely flowers, flowers of universal virtue, great flowers of universal virtue, timely flowers, great timely flowers, city perfuming flowers, great city perfuming flowers, delightful flowers, great delightful flowers, flowers that stir up desire, great flowers that stir up desire, flowers of intoxicating fragrance, great flowers of intoxicating fragrance, flowers of pervasive fragrance, great flowers of pervasive fragrance, heavenly golden-pedaled flowers, naga flowers, parijata

tree flowers, and kovidara tree flowers. And they brought a variety of superior and wondrous sweet delicacies. They went to the Buddha and prostrated themselves at his feet. These gods glowed with a brilliance that outshone the sun and moon. With these supplies, they wished to make offerings to the Buddha. The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. At that time, the gods' wish going unfulfilled, they were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to wait at one side.

And at that time, there was Sakro-devanamindra and the thirty-three gods of the Trayas-trimsa heaven. They gathered together offerings of supplies twice as great as the last. And they brought flowers as before, which perfumed the air in a marvelous and most lovely way. They also brought excellent shrines and smaller shrines with them. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "World Honored One, we deeply delight in, cherish, and defend the Mahayana. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. And so, the Indra gods' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

Up to the sixth heaven, the gods gathered together offerings, each greater than the last. They gathered precious pennants, flags, and canopies. The smallest of the canopies covered the four heavens. The shortest of the flags enwrapped the four oceans. The lowest of the pennants reached up to the Paranirmita-vasa-vartin heaven. And the flags and pennants fluttering in the wind produced a wondrous sound. The gods also brought the sweetest delicacies. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The gods' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

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

And at that time, there was the great Brahma and his congregation of Brahma gods. Their bodies emitted a brilliance that pervaded everything under the four heavens, so much so that the light of the sun and moon in the desire realm were outshone. The Brahma gods brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The very shortest of the flags were hung from Brahma's palace and extended down to the Sala trees below. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "World Honored One, our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept the offerings. The Brahmas' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the Asura king Vimalacitra, who was accompanied by an infinite number of Asuras is a great retinue. Their bodies emitted lights that surpassed that of the Brahma gods. The Asuras brought precious pennants, silk embroideries, flags, and canopies. The smallest of their canopies could cover a chiliocosm. With the sweetest delicacies, they went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings." The Tathagata remained silent when he saw this and did not accept their offerings. The Asuras' wish going unfulfilled, their minds were grieved and anguished as they withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was the Mara king of the desire realm, Papiyan. He was accompanied by his retinue of gods and gorgeous women, a congregation of infinite and limitless Asankhyas. He opened the gates to Hell and gave [the demons there] pure ice water. This caused him to say, "Now, there is nothing that you can do but turn your thoughts to the Tathagata, the Arhat, the perfectly enlightened one. Let us put together the very last offerings to bring him happiness. This will lead you old demons to find peace." Then the Mara Papiyan went into the Hell where all were put to death with blades coated with an infinite variety of excruciating poisons. He poured into that Hell a rain to extinguish the raging flames there. And with the Buddha's spiritual power, he engendered the [bodhi]citta, leading those of his retinue to put down their blades, bows, crossbows, armor, halberds, spears, lances, long hooks, metal mallets, battle axes, hatchets, quarreling, arguing, entrapping, and hunting.

They gathered together offerings twice as great as that gathered by all of the gods and humans. The smallest of their canopies could cover a medium chiliocosm. They went to the Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and said to him, "We now cherish and delight in the Mahayana as well as defend it. World Honored One, suppose there are good sons [609c] and good daughters who in giving offerings

become fearful, reside in Hell, are materially blessed, or follow others in order to receive the Mahayana, whether it is true or false. We then at that time will eliminate that person's fears when they speak this dharani:

...

This dharani can keep mistaken thoughts, fears, and spoken Dharmas from cutting off the true Dharma. This is because it subjugates the heretical paths, protects one's own body, protects the true Dharma, and protects the Mahayana when one enunciates this dharani. If there is one who can maintain this dharani, there are no evil apparitions that can frighten him. If he should go into desolate lands, empty wetlands, or onto mountain peaks, he will not be afraid. And there are no waters, fires, lions, tigers, wolves, bandits, rebels, or kings who will give him difficulties. World Honored One, if one is able to maintain this dharani, then he will be able to eliminate these sorts of fear. World Honored One, we shall be the protection of those who maintain this dharani, like the six-peice shell of the tortoise. World Honored One, this is not flattery, what we now say. We shall sincerely bless them with strength those who maintain this dharani. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to mercifully receive our very last offerings."

At that time, the Buddha addressed the mara Papiyan, "I do not accept your offerings of drink and food. I have accepted your enunciation of this dharani for the sake of the peace and happiness of all the sentient beings in the fourfold assemblies here." The Buddha having said this fell silent and did not accept their offerings. And so, the mara Papiyan's wish going unfulfilled, his mind was grieved and anguished as he withdrew to sit at one side.

And at that time, there was Mahesvara, the king of the Paranirmita-vasa-vartin Heaven, accompanied by his retinue of an infinite and limitless number of gods. They gathered together offerings of supplies such that it buried the offerings gathered by all of the brahmas, indras, the four heavenly protectors, humans, and gods of the eightfold assemblies, as well as the non-humans. The offerings gathered by the brahmas were like a heap of charcoal where white agate and seashells once shined. The smallest of their precious canopies could cover an entire trichiliocosm. They took such offerings of supplies and went to Buddha, prostrated themselves at his feet, and circled him an innumerable number of times. They said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, we are here to hand over our very last offerings of supplies, which are like that of a mosquito or a gnat. Our giving of offerings is like that of a person who throws a handful of water into the ocean. It is like a single small lamp aiding [the brilliance] of 100,000 suns, like adding a single flower to all the myriad flowers that grow and bloom in the Spring and Summer months, or like adding a single grain of dust to Mount Sumeru. How can that person adding to the ocean [match] the sunlight on the myriad flowers of Sumeru? World Honored One, our handing over these final offerings of supplies is like this. If the trichiliocosm were filled with fragrant flowers, dancers, flags, and canopies, it could not be said that it is sufficient enough an offering to honor the Tathagata. And why? The Tathagata acts on behalf of the sentient beings who are constantly undergoing afflictions in the evil destinies of the hells, hungry ghosts, and animals. This is why, World Honored One, that you should look upon us mercifully and accept our offerings."

At that time, there was a Buddha land to the East, beyond worlds whose number was like the infinite and innumerable sand grains of an asankhya of Ganges rivers. It was called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness and its Buddha was called Emptiness, a Tathagata, an Arhat, a completely and perfectly Enlightened One, who is perfect in wisdom and conduct, well gone, a knower of the world, unsurpassed, a tamer of men, a teacher of men and gods, and a World Honored One.

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

At that time, the Bodhisattva-mahasattva Limitless Body accepted that Buddha's instruction and rose

from his seat. He prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet, circled him clockwise three times, and, with an assembly of infinite asankhyas of bodhisattvas, he left his land and came to this Saha world.

In response, the grounds in the trichilocosm all trembled and quaked in six ways. The grounds beneath the great assemblies of the brahmas, indras, the four [protector] god kings, the mara king Papiyan, and Mahesvara also shook. The hair on their bodies stood on end and their throats and tongues became parched. They were frightened and outraged. They wished to scatter in all directions. They saw that their bodies no longer glowed and that their majestic virtue was completely eliminated, without exception.

At that moment, the Dharma prince Manjusri got up from his seat and called out to the great assemblies, saying, "Good sons! Do not be afraid! Why should you not be afraid? To the East, beyond worlds whose number is like the infinite and innumerable sand grains of an asankhya of Ganges rivers, there is a Buddha land that is called the Beautiful Voice with the Intent of Happiness.

It's Buddha is called Emptiness, a Tathagata, an Arhat, a completely and perfectly Enlightened One. He has fulfilled all ten of the epithets [of a Buddha]. And in that land there is a bodhisattva whose name is Limitless Body who is accompanied by an infinite number of bodhisattvas who wish to come and make offerings to the Tathagata. It is the majestic virtue of those bodhisattvas that has caused the glow of your bodies to completely cease to shine. This is why you should be elated and not alarmed or afraid."

At that time, those in the great assembly all saw the other Buddha's great congregation, which was like looking into a bright mirror and seeing themselves.

At that time, Manjusri again address the great assembly, "You are now seeing that other Buddha's great assembly, which is like seeing this Buddha [and his great assembly]. With the Buddha's spiritual power, you again shall see the infinite Buddhas in the other nine directions."

At that time, those in the great assembly said to one another, "The suffering, the suffering! The world is vacant! It will not be long now that the Tathagata will enter parinirvana." Then the great assembly all saw Bodhisattva Limitless Body and his retinue. From each hair on the bodhisattva's body was produced a great lotus flower. Each one of these lotus flowers had 78,000 cities on them that sprawled out like the city Vaisali. The cities' walls and moats were embedded and filled with a variety of mixtures of the seven treasures. There were jeweled Tala trees and the seven kinds of path railings. The common people were prosperous, peaceful, wealthy, and happy. The Jambu river, whose sands were gold, had tributaries, each of which had forests of seven-treasured trees on their banks. These trees flowered and bore fruit abundantly. A fine wind whistled and moved in the trees, producing a marvelous sound. The sound was harmonious and graceful like heavenly music.

Inside the cities, the people heard this music and, when they did, partook of a most wondrously resolute happiness. There were depressions filled with wondrous waters that were pure and clean smelling, like true agate. In these waters there were boats made of the seven treasures that carried people who played sports and bathed on the decks. They enjoyed each other's company and theirs was a firm and unchanging happiness. And there was an infinite number of variously hued lotus flowers. There were blue lotuses, white lotuses, red lotuses, and silver lotuses. These flowers had diameters measuring like cartwheels.

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

Those parks had palaces and households. Each of these palaces and households had a diameter and height filling four yojanas. They possessed property walls made completely of four precious materials. Those were gold, silver, agate, and rock crystal. Windows of real gold were set in the encircling wall. The floors were made of ruby and coated with gold dust. Inside of the palaces and households were bathing pools made of the seven treasures. Around the border of each of these bathing pools there are eighteen

golden staircases and ladders. And on the shores of the Jambu rivers were plantain trees. These parks were comparable to the elation of the Trayas-trimsa heaven.

Each of these cities had 84,000 human kings. Each of these kings had an infinite number of wives and concubines. They enjoyed one another's company, happily frolicking. The remaining people of the cities were also so. In each home they happily frolicked. In these places sentient beings do not hear the names of the heretics. Purely, they hear the voice of the unsurpassed Mahayana.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

At that time, the Tathagata emitted from his facial orifices a light of five colors and that light lit brilliantly the entire assembly. It outshone the bodily glow of those in the assembly. It then returned again and

entered his mouth. At that moment, the gods and their assemblies, the asuras, etc. who saw the Buddha's brilliant light enter his mouth were all greatly alarmed and the hair on their bodies stood on end. And then they said, "This light that has left the Tathagata and returned again is not without causes and conditions. It must be a portent to all in the ten directions that his parinirvana is at hand. How he suffers! How he suffers! And what about the World Honored One on this morning leaving aside the four immeasurable minds and refusing to accept the offerings brought to him by men and gods? The sunlight of noble wisdom shall from now to eternity be extinguished. The unsurpassed ship of the Dharma shall sink and be destroyed. Alas, the affliction of this world's great suffering!"

They lifted their hands to their heads, beat their breasts, and gave a great cry.

Their behavior was outrageous, for they were unable to maintain their composure. From the pores of their bodies blood flowed and bathed the Earth.

Here ends fascicle one of the Great Parinirvana Sutra

Chapter 2: Cunda

Here begins fascicle two of the Great Parinirvana Sutra

At that time there was in the assembly an upasaka, a worker from Kusinagara, whose name was Cunda. He was accompanied by fifteen other such workers. In order to cause the world to attain a good effect, they discarded their majestic deportment and rose from their seats, adjusted their robes, and kneeled upon their right knees. With their palms pressed together, they felt empathy for the Buddha. Their tears flowing, they prostrated themselves at his feet and said, "Our only wish is for the World Honored One and the bhiksu sangha to mercifully accept our very last offerings in order to save the infinite number of sentient beings. World Honored One, from now on we shall be without a master, without a companion, without succor, without refuge, and without advancement. Poor, impoverished, hungry, and distressed shall we be. We hope that the Tathagata will seek another meal. Our only wish is for him to mercifully accept our fine gifts before his Nirvana.

"World Honored One, it is just like those of the ksatriya, brahmana, vaisya, and the sudra castes. When they are impoverished, they go to other countries to become laborers and farmers, obtaining good and tame oxen as well as excellent farmland that is flat and devoid of sand, salt, bad weeds, or deserted rubbish. Their only concern is about the rains from heaven. The aforementioned tame oxen are a metaphor for the seven commandments [dealing with] bodily and verbal actions. The excellent farmland that is flat is a metaphor for wisdom. The absence of sand, salt, bad weeds, and deserted rubbish is a metaphor for the removal of affliction.

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

At that time, the World Honored One, with the knowledge of all modes, the unsurpassed tamer, addressed Cunda, "Excellent, excellent! I will now root out this poverty for you and rain down the unsurpassed Dharma rain upon your fields, causing the Dharma to sprout and grow there. You now wish to seek my life span, form, powers, peace, joy, unobstruction, and talent in discourse. I shall give you that eternal life span, form, powers, peace, unobstruction, and discourse ability. And why? Good son, the giving of alms has two rewards, which are not distinguished. What are the two? One, once accepted, one attains the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. Two, once accepted, one enters into Nirvana. I now accept your very last offerings in order to lead you to the consummation of the perfection of giving (dana-paramita).

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "The Buddha has said that these two rewards of giving are undistinguished. The meaning of this is unclear. Why? Prior to the acceptance of the charity, the afflictions have not yet ended and the knowledge of all modes has not yet been brought to fruition. And one is not yet able to lead sentient beings to consummate the perfection of giving. After the acceptance of the charity, the afflictions are then ended and the knowledge of all modes is brought to fruition. And one is able to lead sentient beings to the consummation of the perfection of giving. Prior to the acceptance of the charity, one is like a sentient being; while after the acceptance of the charity, one is a god in heaven. Prior to the acceptance of the charity, the body is a body of component parts, a body of afflictions, a body with boundaries, and an impermanent body. Yet, after the acceptance of the charity, the body is devoid of afflictions, a body of adamantite (vajra-kaya), the essential body (dharma-kaya), the eternal body, and a limitless body. Why do you say that the two rewards of charity are undistinguished?"

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

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

The Buddha replied, "Good son, for infinite and limitless asankhyas of kalpas the Tathagata has not had a food body or a body of afflictions. His body is limitless, an eternal body, the essential body, and a body of adamantite. Good son, it is the body of one who has not yet seen this nature of the Buddha that is called an afflicted body or a body of component parts and food. This is a bodhisattva with a limited body. At the time that this food and drink has been accepted, he then enters the adamantite samadhi. Once the meal is digested, he sees the nature of the Buddha and attains the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished. The bodhisattva at that time obliterates the four maras. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished. That bodhisattva at that time, while he could not thoroughly explain the twelve-section scriptural canon before, he could penetrate through it [afterward]. Now that he has entered Nirvana, he can discern and thoroughly explain it for the expanse of sentient beings. This is why I have said that the two rewards of giving are undistinguished."

"Good son, for infinite asankhyas of kalpas, the body of the Tathagata has not accepted any drink or food. It is for voice-hearers (sravaka) that it is said that first he accepted from Nanda and Nandapara [?] a pasture with two cows which gave him milk and gruel and then afterward he attained the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. In reality, I did not eat them. I now shall demonstrate it to all of the great assembly of congregations. This is why I have taken your very last offerings. In reality, I will not eat them."

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

"Excellent is this Cunda! He is a rarity in the world like that of the udumbara flower. The appearance of the Buddha in the world is also very rare. To meet with the birth of a Buddha and have faith in the Dharma one hears [from him] is again difficult. Being able to provide the very last offerings when the Buddha nears parinirvana is also the rarest of events. Namó Cunda, namó Cunda! You have now fulfilled the perfection of giving. Just as the Autumn moon is pure for a period of fifteen days and nights, it is completely full without any clouds to obstruct the view. Just as none of the sentient beings can avoid look at

it with reverence, you are also so. And we do look reverently upon the Buddha who has accepted your very last offerings and lead you to consummate the perfection of giving. Namo Cunda! This is why we say that you are like the moon at its peak fullness, which none of the sentient beings can avoid look at with reverence. Namo Cunda! Although you have received a human body, your mind is like the Buddha's mind. You, Cunda, are truly a Buddhist disciple, no different than Rahula.

At that time, the great congregation proclaimed gathas, saying,

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

Who now shall soon enter Nirvana,

You should commiserate with us.

Our only wish is to make haste to and beseech the Buddha

To remain in the world for a long time

And bless the infinite sentient beings

With the thorough praises for the wisdom

Of the unsurpassed sweet Dharma dew.

If you do not beseech the Buddha [to do this],

Our lives will not be full.

This is why it should be seen that

We prostrate ourselves to the lion tamer."

At that time, Cunda was elated and danced joyfully. He was like someone whose father and mother's dead corpses had suddenly returned to life.

Cunda's elation was also so. He again rose to pay his respects to the Buddha

and proclaimed gathas, saying,
"How delightful it is to obtain one's own benefit!

Skillfully attaining it in a human body

By abolishing greed and anger,

One forever parts with the three evil paths.

How delightful it is to obtain one's own benefit!

Coming to attain piles of gold and gems

And encountering the Lion Tamer,

One does not fear falling into [the path] of animals.

The Buddha is like the udumbara flower.

Encountering his birth faithfully is difficult. Having encountered him, one sows the good roots, Forever extinguishing the distress of the hungry ghosts.

And, again, one is able to censure and extinguish The species of asuras.

Like mustard seeds landing on a needle point

The Buddha's appearance is as rare as this.
By perfecting charity (dana)

I shall liberate both men and gods from birth and death.

The Buddha is not defiled by worldly dharmas

Like the lotus flower in a pond.

Skillfully ending existence, the top of its shoot is Forever liberated from the flow of birth and death [beneath]. Birth in the world as a human is difficult.

And meeting the Buddha in the world is as difficult
As a blind turtle in the great ocean

Meeting a floating log with an opening.

Now I will hand over these alms,

Vowing to attain the unsurpassed reward

Of destroying and breaking up

all of the bonds of afflictions

I, here and now,

No longer seek the body of a god.

For the minds of those who attempt to obtain that [goal]

Will not be sweetly delighted.

The Tathagata having accepted my offerings

There is no measure for my elation.

It is like the airavana flower

That produces a fragrance of sandalwood.

My body is like that airavana flower.

The Tathagata having accepted my offerings

It is as if it now produces that fragrance of sandalwood.

This is why I am elated.

Now I have attained the manifest reward

Of this most excellent and marvelous place

Where the indra and brahma gods are present

All of whom have come bearing offerings. In myself

And all those of the world

There has arisen a great anguish

Because they know that the Buddha, the World Honored One, Now wishes to enter Nirvana.
In a high voice they cry out, saying,

'The world will be devoid of the [Lion] Tamer!

You should not abandon the sentient beings

You should instead regard each of them like an only child.

Tathagata, remain here with the sangha

And thoroughly expound the unsurpassed Dharma!

Like the jewel mountain of Sumeru,

Or a peaceful spot on the ocean,

Is the Buddha's knowledge that is able to skillfully end Our ignorance (avidya) and clarify [our minds].
Just as the clouds that arise in the empty sky

Bring a pure refreshment [of rain],

The Tathagata is able to skillfully remove

All of the afflictions.

It is like when the sun rises

And removes the clouds. Its light illuminates everything.

The sentient beings'

Passionate yearning increases and they empathetically wail.
They all are subject to birth and death,

Drifting on its waters of distress.

This is why, World Honored One,

You should remain in the world for a long time

In order to end the suffering of birth and death Of these old and faithful sentient beings."

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "So it is, so it is. As you have said, the Buddha's appearance in the world is rare like that of the udumbara flower.

Meeting the Buddha and giving rise to faith is also most difficult. Giving the very last offerings as the Buddha's Nirvana nears and so being able to consummate the perfection of giving is, again, very difficult. Now, Cunda, you should not be greatly anguished or distressed. You should instead be elated by your profound fortune to have the opportunity to give the very last offerings to the Tathagata and bringing to fruition the consummation of the perfection of giving. Do not ask the Buddha to remain any longer in the world. Instead, you should regard the Buddha sphere of elements as being impermanent. The nature of his actions are also so." Then the Buddha proclaimed gathas for Cunda, saying,
"All that is born in the world

Will return to death.

While their life spans may be measureless

It is necessary that they have an end.

The sage, too, must have his waning.

What comes together and assembles must break apart And so the healthy years eventually come to a end.

The prosperous form is transgressed by disease

And life is swallowed up by death.

There is nothing (no dharma) that lasts forever.

The power of the Kings who have attained sovereignty,

Who have no comparison,
They all pass on and perish.

[My] life span is also so.

The myriad sufferings turn without end

Flowing round without cease or respite.

The three realms are all impermanent

And all existences are unhappy.

What has paths, roots, natures, and signs

All these are empty and non-existent.

Such destructible things (dharmas) flow round

Always having sorrow, anxiety,

Fear, and advancing evils.

Old age, disease, and death are the decline into distress.

These are without bounds

That are transgressed by change, destruction, and bitterness.

The afflictions that are the bondages

Are just like the silkworm's cocoon.

Why would anyone with wisdom

Be happy in this place?

This body is a collection of sorrows

All of which are impure.

Stopping the bonds and tumors

The roots of which are without righteousness or blessing.

Going up to the heavenly body

Is also so.

The desires are all impermanent

And that is why I do not covet attachments.

Departing from desires, skillfully contemplating [things], And realizing the true Dharma:
This is the ultimate cutting off of existence.

Today I shall go into Nirvana,

Crossing over to that other shore

And leaving behind all of the suffering.

This is why on this day

You should only feel a marvelous happiness."

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "So it is, World Honored One, so it is. Sincerely, the sage says, 'I am now in possession of the wisdom that is fine and straightforward.' Being like the mosquitoes, how can we conceive of the meaning of the Tathagata's Nirvana at its very core? World Honored One, I have now been with the great nagas, these bodhisattva-mahasattvas, who have cut away the bonds of defilement, who are the likes of Manjusri. World Honored One, I am like a youth who first leaves the household, but who has not yet fulfilled the precepts. Because of the spiritual power of the Buddha and bodhisattvas and because of being with such a number of bodhisattvas, I now wish to cause the Tathagata to remain in the world and not enter Nirvana. Like a starved person who can no longer produce saliva, my only wish for the World Honored One is also so. Remain forever in the world and do not enter Nirvana!"

At that time, the Dharma prince Manjusri addressed Cunda, "Cunda, you should not say that you wish the Tathagata to remain in the world forever and forgo Nirvana, being like a starved person who can no longer produce saliva. You should, instead, regard the nature and signs of his actions. Thus regarding his actions, you should fulfill the samadhi of emptiness. Wishing to seek the true Dharma, thus you should train."

Cunda asked, "Manjusri, the Tathagata is the most honored and most excellent among the beings in the heavens above. How can such a Tathagata's actions be so? If the person acting is something (a dharma) subject to birth and death, then he would be like water bubbles, arising quickly and quickly perishing, coming and going, spinning round like a cart wheel. And all of his actions would also be so. I have heard that the life span of gods is extremely long. How could the life span of the World Honored One, who is a god among gods, be hurried and not even fill the span of a hundred years? Like a chief of a village whose power has reached sovereignty. And so with that sovereign power, he is able to govern other people. After this person's merit is exhausted, he will become an impoverished person who is taken lightly by other foremen. And why is that? It is because he has lost his power. The World Honored One would also be so. The same would be his actions and the person acting. And then he would not be called a god among gods. And why? Because then his actions would be things (dharma) subject to birth and death. This is why, Manjusri, that I do not regard the Tathagata as the same as his actions.

"Furthermore, Manjusri, knowing [him] and speaking, not knowing [him] and speaking [10], and the words of the Tathagata would also be the same as his actions. Supposing that the Tathagata is the same as the person who acts, he would not then be said to be the sovereign Dharma king, a god among the gods in the three realms. He is just like a human king who has great champions, and so his power will be a thousand times again [a single man's] and cannot be defeated. Therefore it is held that these champions cause this single person to have the power of a thousand [men]. Thus, the king of the champions is fondly mindful of them. He is inclined to bestow noble titles and award fiefs to them, and so the champions themselves come to be held as the equals of a thousand [men]. The Tathagata is also so. He has defeated the mara of afflictions, the mara of skandhas, the heavenly maras, and the mara of death. This is why the Tathagata is called the Honored One of the three realms. Like that one warrior, who is equal to a thousand, he has become so through the causes and conditions of bringing to fruition the consummation of a variety of infinite and real virtues. This is why he is proclaimed the Tathagata, the Arhat, the perfectly enlightened.

"Manjusri, you should not consider and discern the Tathagata to be something (a dharma) the same as its actions. It is like when a wealthy elder has a son and a fortuneteller divines that the child will have a short life. Upon hearing this the mother and father know not to give up on continuing the family lineage or to never again cherish, esteem, or teach the child. Those of short life span do not become shramanas or brahmanas to whom men and women, young and old, are respectful. If it is that the Tathagata is the same as the person who acts, then is it also so that he would not become a sentient being among gods and men who give him respect. The Tathagata has said that the unchanging and unvarying Dharma of reality also is without a receiver. This is why, Manjusri, that you should not say that the Tathagata is the same as all of his actions.

"Furthermore, Manjusri, it is like an impoverished woman who has no household in which to have shelter.

She is subjected to repeated diseases, distress, hunger, and thirst. She goes about begging and stops at a guest house where she stays and gives birth to a child. The landlord of this guest house chases her out and, embracing the child, she wishes to go to another country. On the way she encounters the distress of wickedness, winds, rains, and cold as she went. Many were the hungry noises of the biting mosquitoes, horseflies, and venomous snakes. Passing through the Ganges River, she embraces her child and begins to cross it. Its waters are tumultuous and swift, but she would not let go [of her child]. Both mother and child are drowned. Thus, having been compassionately mindful and virtuous, after the woman's death she is reborn in the brahma heavens.

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

"Manjusri, it is like a person who travels a far distance and on the way grows tired and stops at a guest house. In it he lays down to sleep. And then suddenly a large fire breaks out in the building. He awakens in a fright and attempts to [regain] his concentration, thinking, "I have no doubt that today I shall die." Because he was full of repentance, his body was ensnared by his clothing.

Thereupon, at the end of his life, he was reborn into the Trayas-trimsa heaven. And from there, after fully eighty rebirths, he became a great Brahma king. And after fully 100,000 rebirths, he was born among humans as a wheel turning king. This man was not reborn amidst the three evil destinies, but was always reborn in consecutive places of peaceful happiness because of these causes and conditions. Manjusri, [614a] if a good son is one who repentant, then he should not contemplate the Buddha as being the same as his actions.

"Manjusri, the heretical paths of those with mistaken views may say that the Tathagata is the same as the conditioned. A precept-holding bhiksu, however, should not give rise to such conditioned thinking about the Tathagata. If he were to say that the Tathagata is something conditioned, then that is a deluded statement. It should be known that upon death this person will enter the hells as though his own home. Manjusri, in reality the Tathagata is an unconditioned dharma and should not be said to be conditioned. From this day all in samsara should abandon this deficient understanding and seek the correct knowledge. Then, you will know that the Tathagata is unconditioned. If you can thus regard the Tathagata, then on perfection [of that knowledge] you will attain the thirty-two marks and swiftly realize the anuttara-samyak-sambodhi."

At that time, the Dharma prince Manjusri praised Cunda, saying, "Excellent, good son, excellent! You have now created the causes and conditions for a long life span, for you are able to understand that the Tathagata is eternally abiding, an unchanging dharma, and a dharma of the unconditioned. You have now well overturned the appearance of the Tathagata being conditioned. You are like that person who burned and because of his good thought of repentance at his clothed body was born in the Trayas-trimsa heaven, and again as a brahma king, and a wheel-turning king, never returning to the evil destinies, and always experiencing peaceful happiness. You are also so, since you have skillfully overturned the Tathagata's appearance of being conditioned. In a future life, it must be that you will attain the thirty-two marks, the eighty excellencies, the eighteen special qualities, an infinite life span, not existing in samsara, and always experiencing peaceful happiness. It is not long now before you will realize the Arhat's perfect

enlightenment.

"Cunda, those who follow after the Tathagata [is gone], they will say, 'Company of ours, together you also must overturn [the view] that the Tathagata is conditioned or conditioned to be unconditioned, and moreover all of you must stop having such a view yourselves. You may, following this day, make haste to give food and drink. The giving of such gifts is the best. Whether it is bhiksus, bhiksunis, upasakas, or upasikas, when they go on distant travels and grow weary for the need of things, should they not bath the following day and be furnished with them? Thus, quickly giving it to them is the consummation of the root seed of the perfection of charity (dana-paramita).' Cunda, so it is if someone makes the very last offerings to the Buddha and the sangha, whether the offerings are many or few, whether sufficient or not, fitting or timely. The Tathagata is truly so and shall enter parinirvana."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cunda replied, "You should not say that the Tathagata brings bliss. The blissful person is a mistaken idea. If there are mistaken ideas then there is birth and death. When there is birth and death, then there are conditioned things (dharmas). This is why, Manjusri, that one is not to state that the Tathagata is conditioned. If it is said that the Tathagata is conditioned, I and the sages together would be practicing in delusion. Manjusri, the Tathagata does not have the idea of being compassionately mindful. Compassionate mindfulness is like the cow being compassionately mindful of its calf. Although it may be hungry or thirsty, the cow goes in search of water and grass, whether it is sufficient or not, and then immediately returns [once obtaining it]. The Buddhas, the World Honored Ones, have no such mindfulness, seeing clearly all [beings] to be like Rahula. Such mindfulness, then, is the perspective of the Buddhas' wisdom.

"Manjusri, it is just like a country's king who tames a team of four horses, wishing to have draft horses to pull his chariot, and then orders them to go nowhere. The sages and I are also so. We wish to go to the deepest core of the Tathagata's subtle esoterica, which has no location. Manjusri, he is like a golden winged bird that flies up into empty space and looks down at the ocean from an infinite number of yojanas . It sees all the beings contained in the waters; including the fish, fresh-water turtles, sea turtles, and nagas. And seeing their shapes is like looking into a bright mirror and seeing the images of their forms. Ordinary men of little knowledge are unable to comprehend such a perspective. The sages and I are also so, unable to comprehend the wisdom of the Tathagata.

Manjusri said to Cunda, "So it is, so it is. It is as you have said. In this case I am doing no evil. Instead, my desire is only to test you [against] the bodhisattva work."

At that time, the World Honored One emitted a variety of lights from his facial orifices. Those lights brilliantly lit Manjusri's body. Encountering these lights, Manjusri then knew that the time was at hand and addressed Cunda, saying, "The Tathagata now has manifested this auspicious sign. It will not be long

before he must enter into parinirvana. Now is the time to present the very last offerings you have prepared to the Buddha and the great congregation. Cunda, you should know, the Tathagata's emission of this variety of lights is not without causes and conditions."

Cunda heard this and sadly moved away quietly.

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "Now is the time for you to present your gifts to the Buddha and the great congregation. It is true that the Tathagata shall enter parinirvana, and the second and third [statements by Manjusri?] are also so."

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

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

From this, Cunda addressed the Buddha, "The Tathagata does not wish to remain long in the world. How can I not cry aloud, 'The suffering, the suffering!'"

The world is vacant!?' My only wish of the World Honored One is for him to have mercy on us and the sentient beings. Remain long in the world and do not enter parinirvana!"

The Buddha addressed Cunda, "You should not say, 'Have mercy on me and remain long in the world.' I do have mercy for you and all the rest. This is why today I wish to enter Nirvana. And why? The Buddha's Dharma is that and the

conditions is also so. This is why the Buddhas proclaim this gatha, 'Conditioned things (dharma) Are by nature impermanent.

Once born, they do not remain.

The peaceful extinction is happiness.'

"Cunda, you should regard all types of actions to be things (dharma) devoid of self, devoid of permanence, and not remaining. These bodies are numerous and have infinite errors and anxieties. They are just like water bubbles. This is why you should not cry aloud."

At that time, Cunda said to the Buddha, "So it is, so it is. Sincere is the honored teaching. Although I know that the Tathagata expediently manifests the entry into Nirvana, still I am incapable of not being greatly grieved about it. It upsets my concentration [needed] to again give rise to consolation and happiness."

The Buddha praised Cunda, "It is excellent! It is excellent that you are able to understand that the Tathagata manifests the expedient of Nirvana for sentient beings. Now, Cunda, you should listen closely. Like the Sarasa birds in the months of Spring, when they flock together at Lake Anavatapta, the Buddhas are also so. Their appearance is like a conjured image. The Tathagata while remaining [in the world] uses the power of expedients to remove the taints of attachment. And why? The Buddha's Dharma is so.

"Cunda, I will now accept your presentation of offerings in order to lead you to the liberation from the flows of birth and death. If men and gods make the very last offerings to me, they all will attain the unmoving reward of always experiencing a peaceful happiness. And why? It is because I am the sentient beings' excellent field of blessings. If you wish for the sentient beings to create a blessed field, then you should

quickly prepare your gifts. It would not be proper to wait any longer."

At that time, in order for sentient beings to attain liberation, Cunda bowed his head, choked on his tears, and said to the Buddha, "Excellent, World Honored One! If I were to deeply serve [the beings] for their blessed fields, then I would be able to comprehend and know the Tathagata's Nirvana and non-Nirvana. As it is now, our wisdom along with that of the voice hearers and pratyeka-buddhas is like that of mosquitos. We are, indeed, unable to fathom the Tathagata's Nirvana and non-Nirvana."

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

Chapter 3: Lamentations

For a moment not long after Cunda had gone, the ground then shook and quaked in six ways. And on up to the Brahma realms it was also again so. There were two earthquakes. One was an earthquake, and the other was a great earthquake. The smaller quake was called an earthquake. The greater quake was called a great earthquake. There was a smaller sound called an earthquake and there was a greater sound called a great earthquake. Where only the ground shook, that was called the earthquake. Where the mountains, trees, and the waters of the sea all shook, that was called the great earthquake. Where it shook to one side, that was called an earthquake. Where it shook everywhere and all around, that was called a great earthquake. When it shook and could lead the minds of sentient beings to shake, that was called a great earthquake. When the bodhisattvas from the Tusita heavens down to Jampudvipa first took notice, it was called a great earthquake. And when the first born left the households life to achieve the supremely unexcelled bodhi, to turn the dharma-wheel, and to enter parinirvana, it was called a great earthquake.

On that day, the Tathagata was about to enter Nirvana. It was for this reason that the Earth thus shook greatly. At that moment, the Gods, nagas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, and mahoragas, as well as non-humans, heard this proclaimed, and the hairs of their bodies stood on end, and with the same voice they wept aloud. Then they proclaimed gathas, saying, "Prostrating ourselves before the tamer and teacher, We now beseech him. Far removed from men and recluses And eternally devoid of aid or protection,
We now shall see the Buddha's Nirvana.

We who have destroyed the ocean of miseries

Are now saddened and grieved

As though losing our own mothers.

Poverty-stricken and without aid or protection are we,

Just like a weary and ill person who,

Without a healer, follows his own mind

And eats what he should not eat.

The sentient beings are afflicted with diseases, Constantly are they looking after injuries.

Far removed are they from the Dharma and medicine king,

They imbibe and consume incorrect and harmful medicines.

This is why the Buddha, the World Honored One,
Should not leave us behind.
Like a country without a lord,
The people of which are stricken with famine,
We are also so.
Losing your aid and the flavor of the Dharma.
Now we hear of the Buddha's Nirvana.
Our minds are perplexed and disordered.
Like that great earthquake,
Confused and mistaken are we in the our ways.
When the great Sage enters Nirvana
The Buddha-sun shall set upon the land.
The Dharma waters will all dry up
And we shall surely die.
The Tathagata's parinirvana
Is to the sentient beings who are most distressed
Just like an elder's son
Who recently attended his mother and father's funeral.
How can we on this day
Not be apprehensive?
The Tathagata going and leaving us
Is just like casting away tears.
The Tathagata entering Nirvana
Is like one who will not return.
We and the sentient beings
All will be without any aid or protection.

With the Tathagata entering Nirvana,

Even the animals

Are all anxious and fearful.

Distressed and pained are their thoughts.

Just like when the sun when it first rises

It's light is a brilliant ray blazing

And when it is about to return its radiance

Again dies and all is darkened,

The Tathagata's spiritual power is a light

That can remove our distress.

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

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

"World Honored One, it is just as someone who well studies and debates, and who again in these debates is apprehensive. The Tathagata is also so. Penetrating through the Dharmas, [a person] who then is among these Dharmas is apprehensive. If he can cause the Tathagata to remain a long time in the world and speak the sweet dew, its flavor fully complete in everyone, then sentient beings will not again be fearful of descending into the Hells.

"World Honored One, it is just as when there is someone who is just beginning to study and make effort. And an official arrests him, putting him into a prison.

Another person [in the prison] asks him, 'How do you feel?' and he replies, 'Now, I feel most sorrowful.' If he is later released, then he would be made peaceful and happy. The World Honored one is also so. It is for our sake that he has cultivated the ascetic practices. We now are like that person who had yet to be freed from the distress of birth and death (samsara). How can the Tathagata feel peaceful and happy?

"World Honored One, it is just as when a healer king who skillfully understood the methods of medicine and imparted it to his children, transforming them by means of esoteric means of teaching, and who did not teach them any other outside fields of study. The Tathagata is also so. He alone with a treasury of the most profound esoterica transforms and teaches Manjusri. To leave us behind and not look back or care, the Tathagata should not have any secret to give to us. Just like that medicine king who transformed and taught his children, who were not taught by any outside teachers who might come along, that healer could not teach everyone. Because he was overcome by emotional beliefs, he was reluctant to impart his secret to them. But the mind of the Tathagata is never overcome. Why does he thus not look to impart his teachings? We only wish that he would remain a long time and not enter parinirvana.

"World Honored One, it is just as when a person who was old, small, and suffering illnesses set off on a

common dirt road, travelling a dangerous path. This dangerous path had many difficulties and he experienced a myriad hardships. Moreover, there was another person who saw him and sympathized. Thereupon that person showed him a flat, even, and excellent way. World Honored One, we are also so. The word 'small' is a metaphor for the person who has yet to advance far enough to be a person of the essential body (dharmakaya). The word 'old' is a metaphor for grave afflictions. The words 'suffering illness' is a metaphor for having not yet been freed from birth and death (samsara). The words 'dangerous path' is a metaphor for the twenty-five existences. Our only wish is for the Tathagata to show us the true path of sweet dew, to remain in the world a long time, and not to entire Nirvana."

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

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

At that time, the World Honored One proclaimed gathas for the great assemblies, saying,
"You must open your thoughts

And should not be greatly disturbed.

The Dharma of the Buddhas are all so.

This is why you must be silent.

Be happy, do not let loose such wild behavior.

Guard your minds with the right mindfulness

And leave behind non-Dharmas.

Thus one is consoled and elated.

"Furthermore, bhiksus, if you have doubts, you must ask about them now. Whether it is about the empty or non-empty, the eternal or non-eternal, suffering or non-suffering, dependent or non-dependent, going or not going, coming or not coming, ever-lasting or not ever-lasting, temporary or permanent, sentient being or not sentient beings, existent or non-existent, substantial or insubstantial, true or untrue, extinct or inextinct, esoteric or not esoteric, dual or non-dual: any such Dharmas as these about which there may be doubts should now be asked about. I will accordingly put them to rest for you and I will also preach as before the sweet dew for you. Afterwards I will then enter Nirvana.

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

"You, bhiksus! How is the treasure city of the true Dharma adorned? It's precious jewels are the perfection of a variety of virtues. Discipline (sila), concentration, and wisdom are its walls and moat. Now you have encountered this treasure city of the Buddha's Dharma. You should not grasp at the things that are vacuous and mistaken. That is just like a merchant king who encounters a real treasure city, picks up

tiles and stones, and goes back to his home. You are also so. Having directly encountered the treasure city, you are grasping at vacuous and mistaken things.

"You, bhiksus! Do not be content with a lower mind. Although you have now left the household life for the Mahayana, do not give rise to cravings and attachments. You, bhiksus! Although your bodies are clothed with the kasaya, the dyed robes, your minds should resemble the unstained and pure Dharma of the Mahayana. You, bhiksus! Although you go and beg for alms, passing successively from place to place, you have yet to first seek the Dharma-alms of the Mahayana. You, bhiksus! Although you have shaved off your hair, you have yet to cut the bonds [of existence] with the true Dharma.

"You, bhiksus! Now I shall truly teach and admonish you. Now, I, with this present body of great assemblies, am a Tathagata whose dharma-nature is true and not contrary. This is why you must progress, collect your minds, and courageously destroy the bonds using the ten powers. For once the wisdom sun has set, you will be veiled by ignorance (avidya).

"Bhiksus, just as the Earth has hills, herbs, and grasses for sentient beings to use, my Dharma is also so. It produces the wondrously good and sweet Dharma flavor and is the healer's medicine for the various ailments of sentient beings. I shall now lead all the sentient beings and fourfold assemblies of my disciples to peacefully abide within this esoteric treasury. And I also shall peacefully abide without this and enter Nirvana. What is called the treasury of esoterica? It is just like the character ii of three parts. When [the parts] are combined, it is not a complete character and when they are separated it is still not complete. As Mahesvara has above his face three eyes, therefore so can ii be complete. But if the three parts are separated, it cannot be complete. I am also so. The Dharma of liberation is not Nirvana. The body of the Tathagata is not Nirvana. And the Great Wisdom (Mahaprajna) is not Nirvana. These three Dharmas, each being different, are also not Nirvana. Since I now peacefully abide thus in these three Dharmas for sentient beings, it is called entering Nirvana like that mundane character ii [is complete]."

At that time, the bhiksus hearing that the Buddha, the World Honored One, will definitely be entering Nirvana, all of them grieved and the hairs of their bodies stood on end. Weeping, their tears flowed, and they prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet, circled him an immeasurable number of times, and said, "World Honored One, pleasures are said to be impermanent, painful, empty, and selfless. World Honored One, it is just as among the footprints of all the sentient beings, the elephant's prints are the greatest. The idea of impermanence is also again so. Among ideas, it is the very best. If there is one who progressively cultivates it, he is able to remove all the desire realm's cravings, the attachments to form and non-form, ignorance, pride, and impermanent ideas. World Honored One, were the Tathagata to abandon the idea of impermanence, he would not now be entering into Nirvana. If he does not abandon it, how can it be said that cultivating the idea of impermanence abandons the attachments, ignorance, pride, and impermanent ideas of the three realms?

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

"World Honored One, it is just as when tilling the fields in Autumn, the tilling is unsurpassed; and also like how among footsteps the elephants' prints are greater: so among ideas the idea of impermanence is the most excellent.

"World Honored One, it is just as when the Emperor knows when his life's end is at hand, he is compassionate and forgiving of those in the world, setting free all the prisoners in the jails who are chained and locked up. And then afterwards, he abandons his life. The Tathagata now also should thus free the sentient beings who are all chained and locked up by the lack of knowledge and wisdom, so that they will be led to liberation after your Nirvana. We now ourselves have yet to be freed. How can the Tathagata so easily wish to go and leave us to enter into Nirvana?

"World Honored One, it is just as a person who is possessed by a spirit meets up with a skilled dharani master, who by using the power of a dharani thereupon exorcises him. The Tathagata is also so. He rids the sravakas of the spirit of ignorance, so that they may rest peacefully in the Dharmas of the Great

Wisdom and liberation, like that worldly character ii.

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

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

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

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

"World Honored One, it is just as a person who admires the plantain tree with the solid trunk, but has no place for it. World Honored One, sentient beings are also so. If they admire us humans, the sentient beings' throughout their lifespans nurture the perception of the actor, the giver, and real one, but they have no place for them. We thus cultivate the idea of selflessness.

"World Honored One, it is just like a thick mud that hasn't any use anywhere. This body is also so. It is selfless and masterless. World Honored One, like a seven-petalled flower lacking any perfume is this body. It is selfless and masterless. With this thought, we always cultivate this idea of selflessness, as the Buddha has said, 'All things (dharma) are without self or constituents. You monks should practice thus, and having cultivated it then, you will remove any self-conceit. Having parted with self-conceit, thereupon is the entry into Nirvana.'

"World Honored One, it is just as the space within the footprints of a bird seem not to have any room at all, so one who can practice the idea of selflessness will have views that likewise take up no space either."

At that time, the World Honored One praised the bhiksus, "Excellent, excellent!

You are well able to cultivate the idea of selflessness."

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

"World Honored One, it is just as someone whose drunken mind is dizzy and confused, seeing hills, rivers, cities, large palace halls, as well as the sun, moon, stars, and the North Star; all these turning and spinning about. World Honored One, suppose someone does not cultivate the ideas of suffering,

impermanence, and selflessness. Such a person is not called noble (arya). Numerously will they go forth and wander the cycle of birth and death. World Honored One, it is because of these circumstances that we well cultivate thus these ideas."

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

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

"You, bhiksus! From painful things, there arises the perception of pleasure; from the impermanent, there arises the perception of permanence; from the selfless, there arises the perception of a self; and from the impure, there arises the perception of purity: the worldly thus also have permanence, pleasure, self, and purity. The world renouncer also has permanence, pleasure, self, and purity. The worldly Dharmas have these words but not their meanings, while the world renouncer has both words and meaning. And why? Because the Dharmas of the worldly possess these four inversions, the meaning is not known. And why is that? They have ideas that are inverted, mentalities that are inverted, and views that are inverted. Because of these three inversions, the people of the world see in the pleasant pain, see in the eternal impermanence, see in the self selflessness, and see in the pure impurity. This is called inversion. Because of these inversions, the worldly know the words but do not know their meanings. And what are the meanings? The selfless is [subject to] birth and death. The self is the Tathagata. The impermanent is the sravaka and pratyeka-buddha. The permanent is the essential body. The painful is all the outside paths. The pleasant is Nirvana. The impure is the existence of conditioned things. The pure is the Buddha and bodhisattvas' true Dharma. These are called the uninverted [views]. Because of these non-inversions, one perceives both the words and their meanings. If one wishes to depart from the four inversions, he should know thus the permanent, pleasant, self, and pure."

Then the bhiksus said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said, that parting with the four inversions is the attainment of understanding and knowing the permanent, pleasant, self, and pure. The Tathagata now is forever devoid of the four inversions. He, therefore, has understood and known the permanent, pleasant, self, and pure. If he has understood and known the permanent, pleasant, self, and pure, why does he not remain for a kalpa or part of a kalpa to teach and point us towards parting with the four inversions? Why does he leave us behind, wishing to enter Nirvana? If the Tathagata sees, looks after, remembers, teaches, and admonishes us, we will receive and practice it to our mind's utmost [ability]. If the Tathagata will enter into Nirvana, then how can we, with these poisoned bodies, together stop and abide in the cultivation of the ascetic practice so that we also may follow the Buddha into Nirvana?"

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

"It is just as if when a great king goes out travelling with several of his generals and all of his governmental duties are handed over to his greatest minister. The Tathagata is also so. The possession of the true Dharma is also handed over to Mahakasyapa. You should know that the earlier practice of the ideas of impermanence and suffering are not genuine.

"It is just like a group of people who bath or ride about in boats at play on a great lake in the Spring, and an emerald jewel is lost, falling into the water's depths. Thereupon, the people dive into the water, looking and searching for the jewel. Frenzied, they pull up tiles, stones, weeds, sand, and pebbles [from the lake], each of them saying that they can find that emerald gem, [at first] elated at bringing it out, then noticing that [what they had] was not actually [the gem]. And so, the precious gem remained in the water. Because of the gem's power, the water was completely clarified. Those in the great crowd of people thereupon saw that the precious gem was resting beneath the waters. It was like looking up into the sky at the appearance of the moon. Then there was in the crowd a wise person who peacefully and calmly went into the water with the power of expedient means and easily got the gem.

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

At that time, the bhiksus said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, according to the Dharmas the Buddha has spoken in the past, selflessness is what you must cultivate and study. Having cultivated and studied it, you then will depart from the idea of a self. Departing from an idea of a self, you then will depart from conceit. Departing from conceit, you will attain entry into Nirvana. What is the meaning of this?"

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

"It is just as a country's king whose wisdom was dim, dull, and little. He had a doctor whose nature was also foolish and boisterous. And so the king did not distinguish sincerity when bestowing such a salaried position. This doctor was dull about medicine when healing and curing the myriad illnesses and also again did not know the root sources from which the illnesses arose. While he knew the medicines, he was not skillful in understanding the breath, chills, and fevers of illness, and so all the illnesses were treated with a dose of medicine.

Yet, the king did not discern this doctor's knowledge of medicine as being excellent or detestable, good or bad. Now, there was also a bright doctor who understood the eight methods [of medicine]. He skillfully cured the myriad illnesses and knew the means of medicine. He came from a distant place. Thereupon the former doctor did not know to greet him. Instead, there arose in him thoughts of superiority and trifling conceitedness. The bright doctor thereupon sent a letter to him requesting for his teacher to greet and receive the Dharma that is the core of his method. He said to the former doctor, 'I now request that the virtuous one instruct me in the rules [of medicine]. My only wish is for you to proclaim and lay it out for me, explaining it thoroughly.'

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

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

"Thereupon, the former doctor then went with the visiting doctor to see the king.

The visiting doctor discussed for the king a variety of healing methods and other such techniques, saying, 'Great king, you should know, should well discern, that these Dharmas thus can be used to govern the

kingdom. These Dharmas thus can be used to heal illness.'

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

"And then the visiting doctor thought to himself, 'Today I wish to instruct the king correctly.' Thereupon, he said to the king, 'Great king, in my genuine feeling and thought, I must seek a hope.'

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

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

"Then the king replied, 'That search of yours is, indeed, insufficiently voiced.

I shall quickly promulgate the decree to all within the kingdom that people with common illnesses shall not be treated with those medicines. If any use the medicines, they shall be beheaded.'

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

"Thereupon, the king said to the doctor, 'Are you crazy? For this feverish illness you now say that drinking an elixir can remove this illness? Before, you said that it was poisonous. How can you now tell me to drink? Do you wish to deceive me? You said that [the medicine] of that former doctor who had been praised was poisonous and lead me to chase him away. Now you say that it is excellent, verily able to remove illness. I myself established his defeat by you.'

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

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

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

"At that time, the great king, having heard this, gave praise, saying, 'Excellent, great doctor, excellent!

From this day, I have begun to know the medicinal elixirs that are good and bad, excellent and detestable.' Thereupon he drank it willingly and removed his illness.

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

"The King told them, 'You should not feel bitterness towards me. Just as with [the order] not to drink medicinal elixirs is [the order] to drink them. All this is the doctor's instructions and not my fault.'

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

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

"Bhiksus, you should know that the heretics have said that the self is like the insect who eats wood, mates, and makes offspring merely. This is why the Tathagata proclaims that in the Buddha-dharma there is no self. It is for the sake of taming sentient beings, knowing the time, and that such selflessness has been the cause and condition that he also says that there is a self. He is like that physician who well knew the elixirs that were medicinal and not medicinal. It is not like that self the ordinary man reckons to be his own or the ordinary man who meets someone and reckons that they have a self. Some have said that it is as large as the thumb and finger, some that it is like the mustard seed, some that it is like a grain a dust. The Tathagata says that the self is not like any of these. This is why he says that things (dharma) are selfless. Really it is not that there is no self. What is the self? If something is the true, the real, the constant, the master, the foundation with a nature that is unchanging, this is called the self. Just as that great doctor well understand the medicinal elixir, the Tathagata is also so. For the sake of sentient beings, in the Dharmas that he speaks there really is a self. You and the four assemblies must thus cultivate the Dharma."

Here ends fascicle three of the Great Parinirvana Sutra

Chapter 6: The Merit of the Title

At that time, the Tathagata again addressed Kasyapa, "Good son, you now should well uphold this Sutra's contents, as they possess merit. If there are good sons and good daughters who hear this Sutra's title, none of them will be born in any of the the four [lower] destinies. And why? It is thus that this scripture leads them to the cultivation of the infinite and limitless Buddhas. I shall now discuss this attainment of merit."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, what shall be the title of this Sutra? How should the bodhisattva-mahasattva receive and uphold it?"

The Buddha told Kasyapa, "This Sutra's title is the Great Parinirvana, which in the beginning is good, in the middle is good, and in the end is also good. Its meaning's flavor is very profound and its text is also good. It is pure, the complete consummation of the pure ascetic practice, and the adamant treasure chest filled up without lacking anything. If you skillfully listen closely, I now shall discuss it.

"Good son, the word 'great' of the title is for eternity. As the eight great rivers all return to the ocean, this Sutra thus pacifies all the bonds of affliction and dispositions of Mara. Afterwards, [those who hear it] long to enter parinirvana and exit from the bodily life. This is why it is called the Great Parinirvana.

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

"Good son, it is just as when the farmer in the Spring sowing months has constant hopes and once he has harvested his crop then truly his myriad hopes are all put to rest. Good son, all of the sentient beings are also so. They cultivate and study the other Sutras, [expecting] always a expecting a rich flavor. If they hear this Great Parinirvana, their expectations of the other Sutras to have a rich flavor will be forever ended. This Great Parinirvana is capable of leading sentient beings to be liberated from having outflows. Good son, just as among footprints the elephant's footprints are supreme, this Sutra is thus among Sutras a samadhi that is the very best.

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

"Kasyapa, if good sons and good daughters wish to be in this Great Parinirvana and then Nirvana, they should thus study. The Tathagata eternally abides, as do the Dharma and sangha as well."

Kasyapa again said to the Buddha, "Most extraordinary, World Honored One, is the Tathagata's merit so inconceivable! The Dharma and sangha are also so inconceivable. This Great Parinirvana is also inconceivable. If someone cultivates the study of this scripture, they will discover the true Dharma-eye and be able to act as a physician. If someone has yet to study it, it should be known that this person will lack the wisdom eye, it being veiled by ignorance (avidya)."

Here ends fascicle six of the Great Parinirvana Sutra

Chapter 10: The Four Truths

The Buddha again addressed Kasyapa, "That which is called suffering is not called the noble truth of suffering. And why? If it is said that suffering is the noble truth of suffering, all the animal and hell dwelling sentient beings would consequently possess that noble truth.

"Good son, if again there is someone who is unaware of the Tathagata's most profound perspective of the eternally abiding, unchanging, fine and mysterious essential body (dharma-kaya), that it is said that the body that eats is not the essential body, and who is unaware of the Tathagata's path to the power of virtue and majesty; then, this is called suffering. And why? Because of this unawareness, the Dharma is seen to be not the Dharma and the what is not the Dharma is seen to be the Dharma. You should know that this person necessarily shall fall into the evil destinies and circulate through birth and death (samsara). Increasing greatly, the bonds will become numerous, and he will undergo discomfort and anxiety.

"If there is someone who is able to know that the Tathagata is eternally abiding without any change, or hears that he is eternally abiding, or if this Sutra meets his ear, then he shall be born into the Heavens above. And after his liberation, he will be able to realize and know that the Tathagata eternally abides without any change. Once he has realized this, he would then say, 'Formerly, I had heard this truth, but now I have attained liberation through realizing and knowing it. Because I have been entirely unaware of this since the beginning, I have cycled through birth and death, going round and round endlessly. Now on this day I have for the first time arrived at the true knowledge.' If one knows thusly the true, the cultivation of suffering [becomes] a manifold blessing. If one is unaware, although again they may be moved to cultivate it, there will be no blessing. This is called knowing the suffering known as the noble truth of

suffering. If a person is unable to thusly practice, this is called the suffering that is not of the noble truth of suffering.

"[Now, regarding] the truth of suffering's origin. Regarding the true Dharma, the unborn is the true knowledge. Undergoing impure things, then, is said to be a punishment. It is possible by way of what is not the Dharma to say that the true Dharma ends in cessation (nirvana), that the true Dharma does not lead one to remain long [in the world]. Because of these causes and conditions, one is unaware of the Dharma's nature. Because one is unaware of it, one circulates through birth and death, undergoing numerous discomforts and worries, not attaining birth in the Heavens or any true liberation.

"If there is someone who deeply knows and does not destroy the true Dharma, then because of these causes and conditions they would be born in the heavens and attain true liberation. If someone is unaware of this place of the truth of suffering's origin, who says that the true Dharma is that there is nothing eternally abiding, all [things] being extinct dharmas, then because of these causes and conditions that person will for measureless kalpas circulate through birth and death (samsara), undergoing discomfort and worry. If one is able to know that the Dharma eternally abides unchanging, this then is called knowing the origin that is known as the noble truth of [suffering's] origin. If a person is unable to thusly practice, this is called the accumulation that is not the noble truth of accumulation.

"[Now regarding] the truth of suffering's cessation. If there are many who cultivate the study of the Dharma of emptiness, this is not good. And why? Because the cessation of all Dharmas and the harming of Tathagata's genuine Dharma treasury is done by cultivating the training that is called the cultivation of emptiness. To cultivate the cessation of suffering is contrary to all of the other paths. If it is said that the cultivation of emptiness is the truth of cessation, then all the other paths which also cultivate the emptiness of dharmas should also possess the truth of cessation.

"If someone claims, 'There is a tathagata-garbha, although is cannot be seen.

If one is able to destroy all of the afflictions, then one can enter it.' If one generates in the mind this single thought, then these causes and conditions would bring mastery of the Dharma. If one practices the Tathagata's esoteric garbha as selfless, empty, and peaceful, that person will remain in samsara for a measureless number of lives, circulating and undergoing discomfort. If there is someone who does not perform such cultivation, although he may be afflicted and diseased, he would be able to destroy [that affliction and disease]. And why? It is because he knows the Tathagata's esoteric garbha. This is called the noble truth of suffering's cessation. If one is able to thusly cultivate that cessation, this is a disciple of mine. If there is someone who is unable to thusly practice, this is called the cultivation of emptiness that is not the noble truth of cessation.

"[Now regarding] the noble truth of the Path. It refers to the jewels of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha, as well as the true liberation. There are sentient beings of deluded minds who say that there is no Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, or any true liberation, that the circulation through birth and death is like a mirage. They cultivate this view. Because of these causes and conditions, they will circulate through the three existances for a long time, undergoing great discomfort. If one is able to generate in the mind the view that the Tathagata is eternally abiding and unchanging, the Dharma, Sangha, and liberation are also again so. Carried by this one thought for a measureless number of lives, self-mastery is the reward of following this idea, and so it will be attained. And why? In the distant past, because of the four inverted views, I mistook what is not the Dharma for the Dharma, and so I underwent the rewards of a measureless number of evil actions (karma). Now, because I have extinguished such views, I have become a Buddha of perfect awakening. This is called the noble truth of the Path. If someone says the three jewels (triratna) are impermanent, who cultivates this view, then vacant and delusive is this cultivation. It is not the noble truth of the Path. If they cultivate the Dharma, that it is eternally abiding, this disciple of mine truly seeing practices the Dharma of the four noble truths. This is called the four noble truths."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, now for the first time I know and practice this most profound Dharma of the four noble truths."

Chapter 11: The Four Inverted Views

The Buddha again addressed Kasyapa, "What are the four inverted views?"

"Giving rise to afflicting ideas about what is not afflicted, that is called an inverted view. The unafflicted is called the Tathagata. [If he] gives rise to afflicted ideas, that would mean the Tathagatas are impermanent, change, and vary. If it is said that the Tathagata is impermanent, he would be called a great and wicked affliction. Or if it is stated that the Tathagata abandons his afflicted body to enter Nirvana, just as when the fuel is gone the flame ceases, this is called being unafflicted and then giving rise to afflicted ideas. And so that is also called an inverted view.

"Suppose I were to say, 'If the Tathagata were eternal, then this would be a view of self. Because of that view of self, this is immeasurably wicked. This is why it should be said that the Tathagata is impermanent.' And having thus spoken, I am made happy. But the Tathagata's impermanence would then be an affliction. If it is an affliction, how can there arise happiness from it?"

Because this is an idea of happiness arising out of affliction, it is called an inverted view. Happiness arising from afflicted ideas is also called an inverted view. The happy one is the Tathagata. The afflicted one is the Tathagata who is impermanent. If it is said that the Tathagata is impermanent, that is called giving rise to afflicted ideas about of happy. The Tathagata who eternally abides is called happy.

"Suppose I were to say, 'If the Tathagata is eternal, how then could he enter into Nirvana? If it is said that the Tathagata is not the afflicted one, how could he abandon the body and seize the freedom of cessation (nirvana)?' Because this is giving rise to afflicted ideas about the happy, this is called an inverted view. That is the first of the inverted views.

"Thinking that the impermanent is permanent or thinking that the permanent is impermanent is called having inverted views. The impermanent is called not cultivating emptiness. Because one does not cultivate emptiness, his lifespan is brief. Suppose someone says, 'Not cultivating emptiness and tranquility, one attains a long lifespan'. This is called an inverted view. This is called the second inverted view.

"Thinking that the self is the selfless or thinking that the selfless is the self, this is called having inverted views. The worldly person surely says that there is a self. And those in the Buddha Dharma also say that there is a self. Although worldly person says there is a self, there is no the Buddha-nature [in that]. This then is called being in the selfless and giving rise to the idea of a self. This is called an inverted view. Those of the Buddha Dharma have a self that is the Buddha-nature. The worldly person says that the Buddha Dharma has no self. This called from within the self giving rise to the idea of the selfless. If it is said that the Buddha Dharma necessarily is established to be selfless, then this is the reason the Tathagata admonishes the disciples who cultivate the selfless. This is called an inverted view. This is called the third inverted view.

"Thinking that the pure is impure or thinking that the impure is pure, these are called inverted views. The pure then is the Tathagata who eternally abides. It is not the body of various components, not the afflicted body, nor the body of flesh. It is not a body of muscle, bone, tendons, or connective tissues. If

there is someone says, 'The Tathagata is impermanent, the body of various components ... a body of muscle, bone, tendons, and connective tissues. The Dharma and Sangha's liberation is complete cessation.' This is called an inverted view.

Thinking that the impure is pure is called an inverted view. If there is someone who says, 'In this body of mine, there is not a single dharma that is impure. It is by there being no impurities that one will be able to enter the abode of purity. The Tathagata has thus explained the practice of meditation on the impure.' Such words are empty and delusive talk. This is called an inverted view. This then is called the fourth inverted view."

Kasyapa said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, on this day, I have for the first time attained the right

view. World Honored One, prior to this, we all were called people of wrong views."

Chapter 15: The Moon Parable

The Buddha told Kasyapa, "It is just like when people see the moon not appear and say 'The moon has disappeared!' and think that it has disappeared. Yet, the moon's nature really has not disappeared. It cyclically appears in places in other directions, and the sentient beings there say 'The moon has appeared'. Yet, the moon's nature really has not appeared. And why? It is because it is blocked from view by Mount Sumeru that it disappears. The moon's nature of constantly arising has not appeared or disappeared. The Tathaagata, the Arhat, the one of perfect knowledge, is also again so. He appears in the trichiliocosm, or manifests in Jambudvipa having a father and mother. Sentient beings say that he is born in Jambudvipa, or in Jambudvipa he displays Nirvana. But, the nature of the Tathaagata really has no Nirvana. Yet, the sentient beings all say the Tathaagata really enters Parinirvana.

"Take the example of the moon disappearing. Good son, the nature of the Tathaagata is really without any birth or death. It is for the sake of transforming sentient beings that he makes a show of being born or dying. Good son, it is just as the full moon is seen in another direction as half, and the half moon in other directions is seen as full by people in Jambudvipa, or other people see the moon as new. They all say that on the first day the moon rises anew. And when they see the moon completely full they say on the fifteenth day it rises completely full. Yet, the moon's nature is without waning or waxing. The cause is Mount Sumeru, then, [657b] that it increases or decreases. Good son, the Tathagata is also so in Jambudvipa, whether appearing to be newly born or displaying Nirvana. When he appears as a newborn, he is just like the new moon. Everyone says that the infant child at birth walked seven paces. As on the second day of the moon, again he appears to enter the academy. Like the third day of the moon, he appears to renounce the household life. Like the eighth day of the moon, he emits the great wisdom's fine and wonderful light which is capable of destroying the infinite maras of sentient beings. Like the fifteenth day of the completely full moon, he displays the thirty-two signs and eighty kinds of excellencies that adorn him. And his show of Parinirvana is just like the lunar eclipse. Thus, sentient beings see him unequally, as they see the half moon, or the full moon, or the lunar eclipse. Yet, the moon's nature really is without increase or decrease, there is no loss or eclipse of it. Always it is a full moon. The body of the Tathaagata is also so. This is why it is said to be constantly abiding and unchanging.

"Furthermore, good son, take for example the full moon appearing in its entirety. In every place among the cities, villages, and hamlets; the mountains, in the rivers, or wells, or ponds, and in containers of water; in all these its reflection appears. There are sentient beings who walk a hundred yojanas or a hundred thousand yojanas, and they see the moon always following them. An ordinary foolish person might mistakenly give rise to a regretful thought, saying, 'In the past I was in cities, villages, and homes and there saw the moon. Now, again, in these empty pools of water I see it again. Is this that past moon or it is a different moon than the one in the past?' Each think to themselves, 'The moon's image is larger or smaller' or they say, 'it is like a silver mouth', or they say 'it is like a cart wheel', or they say 'it is like forty nine yojanas in size'. All of them see the light of the moon, or they see it perfectly round just like the golden disc of the sun. The moon's nature is singular, but the variety of sentient beings each see differing aspects of it.

"Good son, the Tathaagata is also so. He appears in the world and there are some humans or Gods who think, 'The Tathaagata now abides before me', or there animals who also think, 'The Tathaagata now abides before me'. Or there are some who are deaf and mute who also see the Tathaagata as having the characteristic of being deaf and mute. The sentient beings in their various species and languages each differ, but all say the Tathaagata speaks the same language as they. And, also, each gives rise to the thought, 'He stays in my household and receives my offerings'. Some sentient beings see the Tathaagata's body as vast, huge, and infinite and some see it as minutely small. Some see the Buddha with the appearance of a shravaka, some see him with the appearance of the pratyeka-buddha, and those of other paths again each think, 'The Tathaagata now rests in my Dharma and leaves the household to studies the way.' There are some sentient beings who again think, 'The Tathaagata appears in the world in order to come into contact with me.' The Tathaagata's real nature is like that of the moon. And so the essential body (dharma-kaaya) is an unarisen body. The body of skillful means conforms to the world, displaying of infinite roots of karmic circumstances. In every place, he makes a show of being birth, just as does the moon. What is the meaning of this? The Tathaagata constantly abides, devoid of

any change or difference.

"Furthermore, Good son, it is just as when Ruhula the Asura king blocks the moon with his hand and the people of the world all claim that the moon has been eaten. The Asura king, however, in reality cannot eat the moon. It is simply that the Asura king has obstructed its light. The moon is perfectly round and full and does not wane and become smaller. It is only because of the obstructing hand that it does not appear so. And when he retracts his hand, the worldly people all claim that the moon is again reborn. Their claims that the moon has suffered numerous injuries is a convention. One hundred thousand Asura kings could not harm it.

"The Tathaagata is also so. Appearing to be a sentient being, the beings of coarse and wicked minds regard the Tathaagata as a produced Buddha body, their blood rising to the five wicked deeds and becoming icchantikas. Because of these sentient beings' future lives, there thus will be displayed the destruction of the sangha and end of the Dharma, and putting a stop to this will be difficult. It the case, however, that the infinite hundreds of thousands of kotis of maras are unable to harm the production of body or blood of the Tathaagata. And why is that? The Tathaagata's body has no blood, flesh, muscle, veins, bone, or marrow. The Tathaagata in reality really is invulnerable.

Sentient beings who say that the Dharma and Sangha is harmed or destroyed and the Tathaagata dead. However, the Tathaagata's nature in reality is changeless and indestructible. It is in conformance to the worldly that he thus is displayed.

"Furthermore, Good son, it is like two people fight. Suppose one uses a blade to defend himself wounds the other, causing him to bleed. Although the other may die, he did not give rise to a murderous thought. Thus, the mark of his karma would be light and not heavy. If it were the Tathaagata, he himself has no murderous thoughts. Although he might cause [the Tathaagata's] body to bleed, the karma also would be so; light and not heavy. The Tathaagata thusly in a future life would transform into a sentient being, appearing as a karmic reward.

"Furthermore, Good son, it is just like a physician who endeavours to teach his son the medical uses of roots, saying, 'These are the medicinal roots, the medicinal stalks, and other medicinal materials. The variety of characteristics

and appearances of them you should be well know.' His son respectfully recieved his father's admonition to endeavour and constantly studied the skillful understanding of the medicines. And after the physician's lifespan was done and his life ended, his son fondly remembered him and said, 'Father himself taught me, "Thus are the medicinal roots, thus the medicinal stalks, thus the medicinal flowers, and thus the form and characteristics of them.'" "The Tathaagata is also so. In order to transform the sentient beings, he shows them the commandments and precepts which they must thusly recieve, uphold, and not transgress, nor commit the five wicked deeds or slander the true Dharma and be an icchantika. It is so that in future lives there arises these matters that he appears. He wishes to lead the bhiksus so that after the Buddha has passed on they might thus know the recorded Suutras' deep and profound meaning, the marks of the vinaya precepts slight and grave, and the abhidharma's which discernment of the Dharma words, so they will be just like that physician's son.

"Furthermore, good son, it is as when someone watches the moon for six months and sees it eaten once, yet above in the heavens it is watched for but a moment and the moon is eclipsed. And why? Because a day in heaven to ancient beings is brief. Good son, the Tathaagata is also so. Gods and men all say that the Tathaagata's lifespan is brief, like that God who for a moment watches and the moon is eclipsed. The Tathaagata also is among them for but a moment, showing Nirvana to the hundreds of thousands of nayutas of kotis [of beings]. He ends the mara of affliction, the mara of skandhas, and the mara of death. This is why the hundreds of thousands of nayutas of kotis of heavenly maras all know that the Tathaagata has entered Parinirvana. And also that he appears due to hundreds of thousands of former karmic causes and conditions. Because he conforms to the various dispositions of the worldly, he displays thusly the infinite, limitless, and inconceivable. This is why the Tathaagata is eternally abiding and unchanging.

"Furthermore, good son, it is just as the moonlight is enjoyable for sentient beings to see. This why they commend the moon, calling it enjoyable to see. If the sentient beings are greedy, angry, foolish, or

deluded; then, they would not be able to commend it as being enjoyable to see. The Tathaagata thus has a nature which is harmonious, good, pure, and undefiled. This is quite commendable and enjoyable to see. Enjoying the Dharma, the sentient beings look upon him without repulsion. People of wicked minds, however, are not gladdened when they look upon him. What does that mean? This is why it is said that the Tathaagata is like the light of the moon.

"Furthermore, good son, it is just as how the day has three periods that are different [in length]. The winter days are brief, the spring days are average, and the summer days are the very longest. The Tathaagata is also so. In this trichiliocosm his lifespan is brief, and the voice hearer's display also a brief lifespan. These having been seen, all say that the Tathagata's lifespan is brief, like the winter day. The bodhisattvas show average-length lifespans, whether for a kalpa or a partial kalpa, like the spring day. Only the Buddha sees the Buddha's own lifespan to be infinite, just like the summer day. Good son, the Tathaagata has said that the methods of the Mahayana teaching are subtle and esoteric. It appears in the world, raining the great Dharma rain. In future lives, if a person is able to protect and uphold the canon, to them will be revealed and discerned the blessing to sentient beings. It should be known that this comrade is a true bodhisattva. Just like the abundance of the summer, the heavens give up the sweet rain. If there are shravakas or pratyeka-buddhas who hear the Buddha's, the Tathaagata's, subtle and esoteric teaching, then it would be just as during the winter days are numerous encountered ice and illnesses. If a bodhisattva hears thus the subtle and esoteric teaching and is instructed that the Tathaagata is of a constantly abiding nature and unchanging, it would be as during the spring days that antlers [658b] sprout and spread out. Yet the Tathaagata's nature is really neither long nor short. It is for the worldly that it appears thus. This then is Buddhas' true underlying reality (dharmata).

"Furthermore, good son, it is just as when the myriad stars at noontime do not appear. And so people say that at noontime the stars perish and disappear. But really, though, they do not disappear. It is because the sunlight conceals them that they do not appear. The Tathaagata is also so. The shravaka and pratyeka-buddha are unable to see him, just as the worldly person cannot see the stars at noon.

"Furthermore, good son, it is just like when the overcast sky causes the moon and sun to not appear and the foolish person says that the sun and moon are lost and have disappeared. Yet the sun and moon really have not been lost or have disappeared. When the Tathagata's true Dharma has past away, the three jewels will appear to disappear and also again will not be forever ceased. This is why it should be known that the Tathaagata is eternally abiding and without any change. And why? Because the real nature of the three jewels is does not become stained by defilements.

"Furthermore, good son, it is just as when the moon is dark and the night sky is swept with stars. Their light shines and blazes for a time and then disappear again. Sentient beings seeing this think it an ill omen. The pratyeka-buddhas are also so when they appear in a world without a Buddha. The sentient beings who see this say that the Tathaagata really has perished and there arises in them sorrow and grief. However, the Tathaagata's body really is indestructible, like the sun and moon are without any cessation or disappearance.

"Furthermore, good son, it is just as when the sun goes behind a mist and becomes completely hidden. This great Nirvana that is a subtle and wondrous Sutra is also again so, being produced in the world. If there are sentient beings who have an ear for the Sutra, they would be capable of putting to rest all evils and not longer be amidst wicked karma. This great Nirvana is profound and deep, its perspective inconceivable. Skillfully speaking of the nature of the Tathaagata is subtle and esoteric. What does this mean? Good sons and good daughters should regarding the Tathagata bring forth the thought of his being constantly abiding, devoid of any change, the true Dharma that is unending, and the sangha imperishable. This is why one should cultivate numerous skillful means and endeavour to study this text. It would not be long for such a person to attain the supremely unexcelled enlightenment. This is why this Sutra is called the completion of infinite virtue. It is also called the enlightenment that is invulnerable. Because it is invulnerable is the reason that it has obtained the title 'Great Parinirvana'. Because it possesses the good light, is it like the summer days. Because the body is limitless, it is called the Great Nirvana."

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