

Chapter 4: Long Life Span

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Thereupon, before the Buddha, he asked with verses,

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

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

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

How does one recognize the heavenly māras

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"No, World Honored One."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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