***Maha-Parinibbana Sutta*** (excerpts)

translated by Vajira & F. Story

**The Buddha's Deadly Sickness**

27. At that time the Buddha spoke to the monks and nuns, saying: "Go now, monks and nuns, and seek shelter anywhere in the neighborhood of Vesali where you are welcome, among acquaintances and friends, and there spend the rainy season. As for me, I shall spend the rainy season in this very place, in the village of Beluva."

"So be it, O Buddha," the monks and nuns said.

28. But when the Buddha had entered upon the rainy season, there arose in him a severe illness, and sharp and deadly pains came upon him. And the Buddha endured them mindfully, clearly comprehending and unperturbed.

29. Then it occurred to the Buddha: "It would not be fitting if I came to my final passing away without addressing those who attended on me, without taking leave of the community of monks and nuns. Then let me suppress this illness by strength of will, resolve to maintain the life process, and live on."

30. And the Buddha suppressed the illness by strength of will, resolved to maintain the life process, and lived on. So it came about that the Buddha's illness was allayed.

31. And the Buddha recovered from that illness; and soon after his recovery he came out from his dwelling place and sat down in the shade of the building, on a seat prepared for him. Then the Venerable Ananda approached the Buddha, respectfully greeted him, and sitting down at one side, he spoke to the Buddha, saying: "Fortunate it is for me, O Buddha, to see the Buddha at ease again! Fortunate it is for me, O Buddha, to see the Buddha recovered! For truly, Buddha, when I saw the Buddha's sickness it was as though my own body became weak as a creeper, every thing around became dim to me, and my senses failed me. Yet, Buddha, I still had some little comfort in the thought that the Buddha would not come to his final passing away until he had given some last instructions respecting the community of monks and nuns."

32. Thus spoke the Venerable Ananda, but the Buddha answered him, saying: "What more does the community of monks and nuns expect from me, Ananda? I have set forth the Dhamma without making any distinction of esoteric and exoteric doctrine; there is nothing, Ananda, with regard to the teachings that the Buddha holds to the last with the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back. Whosoever may think that it is he who should lead the community of monks and nuns, or that the community depends upon him, it is such a one that would have to give last instructions respecting them. But, Ananda, the Buddha has no such idea as that it is he who should lead the community of monks and nuns, or that the community depends upon him. So what instructions should he have to give respecting the community of monks and nuns?

"Now I am frail, Ananda, old, aged, far gone in years. This is my eightieth year, and my life is spent. Even as an old cart, Ananda, is held together with much difficulty, so the body of the Buddha is kept going only with supports. It is, Ananda, only when the Buddha, disregarding external objects, with the cessation of certain feelings, attains to and abides in the signless concentration of mind, [[19]](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html#fn-19) that his body is more comfortable.

33. "Therefore, Ananda, be islands unto yourselves, refuges unto yourselves, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as your island, the Dhamma as your refuge, seeking no other refuge.

"And how, Ananda, is a bhikkhu an island unto himself, a refuge unto himself, seeking no external refuge; with the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, seeking no other refuge?

34. "When he dwells contemplating the body in the body, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome desire and sorrow in regard to the world; when he dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, the mind in the mind, and mental objects in mental objects, earnestly, clearly comprehending, and mindfully, after having overcome desire and sorrow in regard to the world, then, truly, he is an island unto himself, a refuge unto himself, seeking no external refuge; having the Dhamma as his island, the Dhamma as his refuge, seeking no other refuge.

35. "Those monks and nuns of mine, Ananda, who now or after I am gone, abide as an island unto themselves, as a refuge unto themselves, seeking no other refuge; having the Dhamma as their island and refuge, seeking no other refuge: it is they who will become the highest, [[20]](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html#fn-20) if they have the desire to learn."

**Ananda's Appeal**

48. At these words the Venerable Ananda spoke to the Buddha, saying: "May the Buddha remain, O Buddha! May the Happy One remain, O Buddha, throughout the world-period, for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, well being, and happiness of gods and men!"

49. And the Buddha answered, saying: "Enough, Ananda. Do not entreat the Buddha, for the time is past, Ananda, for such an entreaty."

50-51. But for a second and a third time, the Venerable Ananda said to the Buddha: "May the Buddha remain, O Buddha! May the Happy One remain, O Buddha, throughout the world-period, for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of compassion for the world, for the benefit, well being, and happiness of gods and men!"

52. Then the Buddha said: "Do you have faith, Ananda, in the Enlightenment of the Buddha?" And the Venerable Ananda replied: "Yes, O Buddha, I do."

"Then how, Ananda, can you persist against the Buddha even up to the third time?"

53. Then the Venerable Ananda said: "This, O Buddha, I have heard and learned from the Buddha himself when the Buddha said to me: 'Whosoever, Ananda, has developed, practiced, employed, strengthened, maintained, scrutinized, and brought to perfection the four constituents of psychic power could, if he so desired, remain throughout a world-period or until the end of it.'"

54. "And did you believe it, Ananda?"

"Yes, O Buddha, I did."

"Then, Ananda, the fault is yours. Herein have you failed, inasmuch as you were unable to grasp the plain suggestion, the significant prompting given by the Buddha, and you did not then entreat the Buddha to remain. For if you had done so, Ananda, twice the Buddha might have declined, but the third time he would have consented. Therefore, Ananda, the fault is yours; herein have you failed.

"But you, Ananda, were unable to grasp the plain suggestion, the significant prompting given you by the Buddha, and you did not entreat the Buddha to remain. For if you had done so, Ananda, twice the Buddha might have declined, but the third time he would have consented. Therefore, Ananda, the fault is yours; herein you have failed.

57. "So also at Vesali, Ananda, at different times the Buddha has spoken to you, saying: 'Pleasant, Ananda, is Vesali; pleasant are the shrines of Udena, Gotamaka, Sattambaka, Bahuputta, Sarandada, and Capala. Whosoever, Ananda, has developed... Therefore the Buddha could, if he so desired, remain throughout a world-period or until the end of it.'

"But you, Ananda, were unable to grasp the plain suggestion, the significant prompting, given you by the Buddha, and you did not entreat the Buddha to remain. For if you had done so, Ananda, twice the Buddha might have declined, but the third time he would have consented. Therefore, Ananda, the fault is yours; herein you have failed.

58. "Yet, Ananda, have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, is compounded and subject to decay, how can one say: 'May it not come to dissolution!' There can be no such state of things. Three months hence the Buddha will utterly pass away. And that the Buddha should withdraw his words for the sake of living on — this is an impossibility.

**The Last Admonition**

35. Then the Buddha spoke to the Venerable Ananda, saying: "Enough, Ananda! Do not grieve, do not lament! For have I not taught from the very beginning that with all that is dear and beloved there must be change, separation, and severance? Of that which is born, come into being, compounded, and subject to decay, how can one say: 'May it not come to dissolution!'? There can be no such state of things. Now for a long time, Ananda, you have served the Buddha with loving-kindness in deed, word, and thought, graciously, pleasantly, with a whole heart and beyond measure. Great good have you gathered, Ananda! Now you should put forth energy, and soon you too will be free from the taints."

8. And the Buddha addressed the monks and nuns, saying: "Behold now, monks and nuns, I exhort you: All compounded things are subject to vanish. Strive with earnestness!"

This was the last word of the Buddha.