

From the Parinirvana Sutra
(The Accounts of Buddha's Death)

The Happy One, the Master, gathered his bikkhus, around him and spoke, saying:

“My years are now full ripe. I was but 29 when I left the good life behind to seek the Truth. Now, 51 years later, I leave you. Remember the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. I tell you now that whoever lives in the Dharma will break free from the round of births and rebirths and will have an end to suffering. I go on alone.”

With these words, he took his last meal. The deadly pains of death were upon him, and he observed them calmly and comprehended them clearly.



He called the Venerable Ananda to him. “I am tired and I wish to lie down. Prepare a place for me between those two *tala* trees.”

Ananda prepared a place for the Tathagatha between the trees and bade him lie down there. And the Blessed One lay down on his right side, in the lion's posture, resting one foot upon the other, and so disposed himself, mindfully and clearly comprehending, with the time for rising held in mind. He noted that the trees were in full bloom, even though it was not the season of their flowering. The Buddha said of this, “Truly, their blooms are not in honor of the One you see before you, but are in honor of any monk who will pursue the Dharma to its end, to the release of all beings from suffering.”



Sometime later, the Happy One, calm in his death pains, called to Ananda. “I thirst. Please bring me water to drink from that stream nearby.”

Distressed for his Lord’s needs, Ananda said, “Master, the stream is clouded with dirt as many wagons have just passed there. Let us bring you to the River Kakhutta nearby – it flows cool and clear.”

The Happy One replied, “Please bring me water to drink from that stream nearby,” and as Ananda approached the stream, the waters settled and were cool and clear. Ananda cried out, “How marvelous the power of the Tathagata!” and he drew a bowl of water and took it to the Happy One. He drank of it.



The Master lay in his death pains, calm and mindful. He called the bhikkhus near and said, “All things must vanish. Strive to live mindfully.” These were the last words of the Buddha.



Lying on his side in deep meditation, the Tathagata then rose through the sphere of infinite space, through the sphere of infinite consciousness, through the sphere of nothingness, through the

sphere of neither perception nor non-perception; and then he attained the cessation of perception and feeling.

A monk nearby said, “The Tathagata has passed away.”

Ananda said, “The Blessed One has not passed away. He has attained the cessation of perception and feeling.”

Rising again through the spheres, the Master rose through the fourth *jhana* (states of meditative consciousness) and immediately passed away.



At the moment of the Blessed One’s Parinirvana, the voice of the god, Brahma, spoke, saying:

All must depart — all beings that have life
Must shed their compound* forms. Yea, even one,
A Master such as he, a peerless being,
Powerful in wisdom, the Enlightened One, has passed
away.

*In Buddhist thought, *everything* is assembled or composed of other things, including time and space. Even those “other things” are composed, to the conclusion that there are no “things” at all but ongoing dance of interdependence.



The world echoed the death of the Enlightened One. A great earthquake struck at that very moment and thunder rolled across

the heavens. Some monks who had not freed themselves from emotions rolled in the dust, weeping and crying out, “Too soon has the Blessed One come to his Parinirvana! Too soon has the Happy One come to his Parinirvana! Too soon has the Eye of the World vanished from sight!”

But the bhikkhus who were freed from passion, mindful and clearly comprehending, reflected in this way: “Impermanent are all compounded things. How could this be otherwise?”



They wrapped the body of the Master in five hundred layers of linen and cotton wool. They placed the body in an iron oil-vessel inside another iron oil-vessel and placed it on a funeral pyre of perfumed wood. Thus the body of the Master was burned while all sang songs and danced dances of honor and veneration. Then the whole place became covered, even the rubbish heaps, in *mandarava* flowers, knee-deep.

The relics of the Buddha were divided into eight parts, so that those worthy of honor might honor them in many places.