

CHAPTER XV.

DURATION OF LIFE OF THE TATHĀGATA.

Thereupon the Lord addressed the entire host of Bodhisattvas : Trust me, young men of good family, believe in the Tathāgata speaking a veracious word. A second time the Lord addressed the Bodhisattvas : Trust me, young gentlemen of good family, believe in the Tathāgata speaking a veracious word. A third and last time the Lord addressed the Bodhisattvas : Trust me, young men of good family, believe in the Tathāgata speaking a veracious word. Then the entire host of Bodhisattvas with Maitreya, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva at their head, stretched out the joined hands and said to the Lord : Expound this matter, O Lord ; expound it, O Sugata ; we will believe in the word of the Tathāgata. A second time the entire host, &c. &c. A third time the entire host, &c. &c.

The Lord, considering that the Bodhisattvas repeated their prayer up to three times, addressed them thus : Listen then, young men of good family. The force of a strong resolve which I assumed¹ is such, young men of good family, that this world, including gods, men, and demons, acknowledges : Now has the Lord Śākyamuni, after going out from the home of the Śākyas, arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment, on the summit of the terrace of

¹ Or, the power of supremacy which forms my attribute, mamādhishānabalādhānam.

enlightenment at the town of Gayā. But, young men of good family, the truth is that many hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of *Æons* ago I have arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment. By way of example, young men of good family, let there be the atoms of earth of fifty hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of worlds; let there exist some man who takes one of those atoms of dust and then goes in an eastern direction fifty hundred thousand myriads of *koṭis* of worlds further on, there to deposit that atom of dust; let in this manner the man carry away from all those worlds the whole mass of earth, and in the same manner, and by the same act as supposed, deposit all those atoms in an eastern direction¹. Now, would you think, young men of good family, that any one should be able to imagine, weigh, count, or determine (the number of) those worlds? The Lord having thus spoken, the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Maitreya and the entire host of Bodhisattvas replied: They are incalculable, O Lord, those worlds, countless, beyond the range of thought. Not even all the disciples and Pratyekabuddhas, O Lord, with their *Ārya*-knowledge, will be able to imagine, weigh, count, or determine them. For us also, O Lord, who are Bodhisattvas standing on the place from whence there is no turning back, this point lies beyond the sphere of our comprehension; so innumerable, O Lord, are those worlds.

This said, the Lord spoke to those Bodhisattvas Mahāsattvas as follows: I announce to you, young men of good family, I declare to you: However numerous

¹ This passage is a repetition, in shorter form, of what is found in chapter VII; see p. 153.

be those worlds where that man deposits those atoms of dust and where he does not, there are not, young men of good family, in all those hundred thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of worlds so many dust atoms as there are hundred thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of Æons since I have arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment¹. From the moment, young men of good family, when I began preaching the law to creatures in this Saha-world and in hundred thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of other worlds, and (when) the other Tathâgatas, Arhats, &c., such as the Tathâgata Dîpaṅkara and the rest whom I have mentioned in the lapse of time (preached), (from that moment) have I, young men of good family, for the complete Nirvâna of those Tathâgatas, &c., created all that with the express view to skilfully preach the law². Again, young men of good family, the Tathâgata, considering the different degrees of faculty and strength of succeeding generations,

¹ Sâkyamuni here declares, in the most emphatic manner, not only that he has existed from eternity, but that he is the All-wise, the Buddha from the beginning. The world thinks that he has become all-wise at Gayâ, a short time before, but in reality he has been the All-wise from eternity. In other words, the meaning of his being a common man who had reached enlightenment under the Bodhi-tree near Gayâ, is declared by himself to be a delusion. Further, it will be remarked that Sâkyamuni and the Tathâgata Mahâbhigñâḡñânâbhibhû in chapter VII are identical, though apparently diversified.

² *Teshâm ka Tathâgatânâm Arhatâm samyaksambuddhânâm parinirvânâya mayaiva tâni, kulaputrâ, upâyakausalyadharmadesanâyâ (abhi) nirhâranirmitâni.* Burnouf translates as if he read *te—^onirmitâh*, so that 'those Tathâgatas—have been created.' Both readings come essentially to the same; in either case Sâkyamuni is the creator, the really existing being; the other Tathâgatas are emanations from him or apparent beings.

reveals at each (generation) his own name, reveals a state in which Nirvāna has not yet been reached¹, and in different ways he satisfies the wants of (different) creatures through various Dharmaparyāyas². This being the case, young men of good family, the Tathāgata declares to the creatures, whose dispositions are so various and who possess so few roots of goodness, so many evil propensities : I am young of age, monks ; having left my father's home, monks, I have lately arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment³. When, however, the Tathāgata, who so long ago arrived at perfect enlightenment, declares himself to have but lately arrived at perfect enlightenment, he does so in order to lead creatures to full ripeness and make them go in. Therefore have these Dharmaparyāyas been revealed ; and it is for the education of creatures, young men of good family, that the Tathāgata has revealed all Dharmaparyāyas. And, young men of good family, the word that the Tathāgata delivers on behalf of the education of creatures, either under his own appearance or under another's, either on his own authority⁴ or under the mask⁵ of another, all that the Tathā-

¹ Instead of the last clause we find in the margin, 'reveals (or declares) at each his own Nirvāna.' The material difference is slight, for the temporal appearances of the everlasting being are final and multifarious, but the being itself is one and everlasting. Sākyamuni is, in reality, the one and everlasting brahma.

² The Tathāgata, in his proper being well understood, is not only the Devātideva, the supreme god of gods, of Buddhism, but of all religions in the world ; from him are all scriptures.

³ In various periods mankind wants renewed revelation ; hence Vishṇu, for Dharma's sake, descends on earth.

⁴ *Ātmārambanena* (sic), properly, on his own base.

⁵ *Aparāvaraṇena*. One may also render it by 'under the cloak of another.'

gata declares, all those Dharmaparyâyas spoken by the Tathâgata are true. There can be no question of untruth from the part of the Tathâgata in this respect. For the Tathâgata sees the triple world as it really is: it is not born, it dies not; it is not conceived, it springs not into existence; it moves not in a whirl, it becomes not extinct; it is not real, nor unreal; it is not existing, nor non-existing; it is not such, nor otherwise¹, nor false. The Tathâgata sees the triple world, not as the ignorant, common people, he seeing things always present to him; indeed, to the Tathâgata, in his position, no laws are concealed. In that respect any word that the Tathâgata speaks is true, not false. But in order to produce the roots of goodness in the creatures, who follow different pursuits and behave according to different notions, he reveals various Dharmaparyâyas with various fundamental principles. The Tathâgata then, young men of good family, does what he has to do. The Tathâgata who so long ago was perfectly enlightened is unlimited in the duration of his life, he is everlasting. Without being extinct, the Tathâgata makes a show of extinction, on behalf of those who have to be educated. And even now, young gentlemen of good family, I have not accomplished my ancient Bodhisattva-course, and the measure of my lifetime is not full. Nay, young men of good family, I shall yet have twice as many hundred thousand myriads of koṭis of Æons before the measure of my lifetime be full².

¹ Or, it is not as it ought to be, nor wrong.

² Virtually he has existed from the very beginning, from an infinite period; infinity multiplied by two remains infinity.

I announce final extinction, young men of good family, though myself I do not become finally extinct¹. For in this way, young men of good family, I bring (all) creatures to maturity, lest creatures in whom goodness is not firmly rooted, who are unholy, miserable, eager of sensual pleasures, blind and obscured by the film of wrong views, should, by too often seeing me, take to thinking: 'The Tathāgata is staying²,' and fancy that all is a child's play³; (lest they) by thinking 'we are near that Tathāgata' should fail to exert themselves in order to escape the triple world and not conceive how precious⁴ the Tathāgata is. Hence, young men of good family, the Tathāgata skilfully utters these words: The apparition of the Tathāgatas, monks, is precious (and rare). For in the course of many hundred thousand myriads of kośis of Æons creatures may happen to see a Tathāgata or not to see him⁵. Therefore and upon that ground, young men of good family, I say: The apparition of the Tathāgatas, monks, is precious (and rare).

¹ All this is perfectly true in the mouth of a personification of the sun, of time, of eternity, or of *λόγος*, but quite unintelligible in the mouth of some individual of the human race. Moments of time expire, time never ceases. The termination of every day, month, year, &c. must remind us of our being mortal, and is a call from the Buddha to us, an inducement to lead a virtuous and holy life.

² I. e. time stands still; we shall never die.

³ In the margin added, not realise the idea of his (i. e. time's) preciousness.

⁴ Durlabha.

⁵ Nobody is certain whether the present day is his last or not; in other words, whether he has seen the Tathāgata for the last time, or shall see him again to-morrow, &c. Therefore the Tathāgata is so precious.

By being more and more convinced of the apparition of the Tathâgatas being precious (or rare) they will feel surprised and sorry, and whilst not seeing the Tathâgata they will get a longing to see him. The good roots developing from their earnest thought relating to the Tathâgata¹ will lastingly tend to their weal, benefit, and happiness; in consideration of which the Tathâgata announces final extinction, though he himself does not become finally extinct, on behalf of the creatures who have to be educated. Such, young men of good family, is the Tathâgata's manner of teaching²; when the Tathâgata speaks in this way, there is from his part no falsehood.

Let us suppose an analogous case, young men of good family. There is some physician, learned, intelligent, prudent, clever in allaying all sorts of diseases. That man has many sons, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or a hundred³. The physician once being abroad, all his children incur a disease from poison or venom. Overcome with the grievous pains⁴ caused by that poison or venom which burns them they lie rolling on the ground. Their father, the physician, comes home from his journey at the time when his sons are suffering from that poison or venom. Some of them have perverted notions, others have right notions, but all suffer the same pain. On seeing their father they cheerfully greet

¹ I.e. the good designs germinating in man when he is thinking of the shortness of life, the transitoriness of time.

² *Desanâparyâya*.

³ A marginal reading improves upon the more ancient text by adding, or a thousand.

⁴ *Duḥkhâbhir vedanâbhiḥ*.

him and say : Hail, dear father, that thou art come back in safety and welfare ! Now deliver us from our evil, be it poison or venom ; let us live, dear father. And the physician, seeing his sons befallen with disease, overcome with pain and rolling on the ground, prepares a great remedy, having the required colour, smell, and taste, pounds it on a stone and gives it as a potion to his sons, with these words : Take this great remedy, my sons, which has the required colour, smell, and taste. For by taking this great remedy, my sons, you shall soon be rid of this poison or venom ; you shall recover and be healthy. Those amongst the children of the physician that have right notions, after seeing the colour of the remedy, after smelling the smell and tasting the flavour, quickly take it, and in consequence of it are soon totally delivered from their disease. But the sons who have perverted notions cheerfully greet their father and say : Hail, dear father, that thou art come back in safety and welfare ; do heal us. So they speak, but they do not take the remedy offered, and that because, owing to the perverseness of their notions, that remedy does not please them, in colour, smell, nor taste. Then the physician reflects thus : These sons of mine must have become perverted in their notions owing to this poison or venom, as they do not take the remedy nor hail me¹. Therefore will I by some able device induce these sons to take this remedy. Prompted by this desire he speaks to those sons as follows : I am old, young men of good family, decrepit, advanced in years, and my term of life is near at hand ; but be not sorry, young men

¹ One would rather have expected, joyfully accept my injunction.

of good family, do not feel dejected; here have I prepared a great remedy for you; if you want it, you may take it. Having thus admonished them, he skilfully betakes himself to another part of the country and lets his sick sons know that he has departed life. They are extremely sorry and bewail him extremely: So then he is dead, our father and protector; he who begat us; he, so full of bounty! now are we left without a protector. Fully aware of their being orphans and of having no refuge, they are continually plunged in sorrow, by which their perverted notions make room for right notions. They acknowledge that remedy possessed of the required colour, smell, and taste to have the required colour, smell, and taste, so that they instantly take it, and by taking it are delivered from their evil. Then, on knowing that these sons are delivered from evil, the physician shows himself again. Now, young men of good family, what is your opinion? Would any one charge¹ that physician with falsehood on account of his using that device? No, certainly not, Lord; certainly not, Sugata. He proceeded: In the same manner, young men of good family, I have arrived at supreme, perfect enlightenment since an immense, incalculable number of hundred thousands of myriads of *koṭis* of *Æons*, but from time to time I display such able devices to the creatures, with the view of educating them, without there being in that respect any falsehood on my part.

In order to set forth this subject more extensively the Lord on that occasion uttered the following stanzas:

¹ *Kodayet*; a would-be correction by a later hand has *saṃva det*.

1. An inconceivable number of thousands of *koṭis* of Æons, never to be measured, is it since I reached superior (or first) enlightenment and never ceased to teach the law.

2. I roused many Bodhisattvas and established them in Buddha-knowledge. I brought myriads of *koṭis* of beings, endless, to full ripeness in many *koṭis* of Æons.

3. I show the place of extinction, I reveal to (all) beings a device¹ to educate them, albeit I do not become extinct at the time, and in this very place continue preaching the law.

4. There I rule myself as well as all beings, I². But men of perverted minds, in their delusion, do not see me standing there³.

5. In the opinion that my body is completely extinct, they pay worship, in many ways, to the relics, but me they see not. They feel (however) a certain aspiration by which their mind becomes right⁴.

6. When such upright (or pious), mild, and gentle creatures leave off their bodies, then I assemble the crowd of disciples and show myself here⁵ on the *Gridhrakūṭa*.

7. And then I speak thus to them, in this very

¹ Upâyām. It has been remarked above that upâya likewise denotes the world, the energy of nature (*pragñā*).

² Tatrāham ātmānam adhiṣṭhāmi, sarvāna satvāna tathaiiva kāmam. Adhiṣṭhā is constructed both with the accusative case and the genitive.

³ Tatraiva.

⁴ I. e. comes into the right disposition, or becomes pious.

⁵ This important word has been omitted by Burnouf. The Tathāgata represents himself to be Dharmarāga, the judge of the departed, the god rewarding the pious and brave after their death.

place : I was not completely extinct at that time ; it was but a device of mine, monks ; repeatedly am I born in the world of the living.

8. Honoured by other beings, I show them my superior enlightenment, but you would not obey my word, unless the Lord of the world enter Nirvâṇa.

9. I see how the creatures are afflicted, but I do not show them my proper being. Let them first have an aspiration to see me ; then I will reveal to them the true law.

10. Such has always been my firm resolve during an inconceivable number of thousands of *koṭis* of *Æons*, and I have not left this *Grīdhra-kūṭa* for other abodes¹.

11. And when creatures behold this world and imagine that it is burning, even then my Buddha-field is teeming with gods and men.

12. They dispose of manifold amusements, *koṭis* of pleasure gardens, palaces, and aerial cars ; (this field) is embellished by hills of gems and by trees abounding with blossoms and fruits.

13. And aloft gods are striking musical instruments and pouring a rain of *Mandâras*² by which they are covering me, the disciples and other sages who are striving after enlightenment.

14. So is my field here, everlastingly ; but others fancy that it is burning ; in their view this world is most terrific, wretched, replete with number of woes³.

¹ *Sayyâsana*.

² The form constantly used in Buddhist writings, both in Pâli and Sanskrit, is *Mandârava*. The whole description of Heaven, or Paradise, bears the stamp of being taken, with more or less modification, from a non-Buddhistic source.

³ There are different beliefs about the realm of the dead ; the

15. Ay, many *kōfis* of years they may pass without ever having mentioned my name, the law, or my congregation¹. That is the fruit of sinful deeds.

16. But when mild and gentle beings are born in this world of men, they immediately see me revealing the law, owing to their good works.

17. I never speak to them of the infinitude of my action. Therefore, I am, properly, existing since long², and yet declare: The *Ginas* are rare (or precious).

18. Such is the glorious power of my wisdom that knows no limit, and the duration of my life is as long as an endless period; I have acquired it after previously following a due course.

19. Feel no doubt concerning it, O sages, and leave off all uncertainty: the word I here pronounce is really true; my word is never false.

20. For even as that physician skilled in devices, for the sake of his sons whose notions were perverted, said that he had died although he was still alive, and even as no sensible man would charge that physician with falsehood;

21. So am I the father of the world, the Self-

Brahma-world and Paradise are usually depicted as places of bliss, but Yama's kingdom is often represented as a kind of hell, though at other times the same King of righteousness is said to have gathered round him the blessed company of the pious departed.

¹ Elsewhere we find *Visvanātha*, the Universal Lord, called *Saṅgamaśvara*, the Lord of the gathering. Yama is *Vaivasvata Saṅgamana ganānam*, he of solar race, the gatherer of men, *Rig-veda X, 14, 1*.

² *Tenāha sush/hû ha kirasya bhomi*. The phrase admits of being translated, 'therefore, truly, I am (repeatedly) born after a long time.'

born¹, the Healer², the Protector of all creatures. Knowing them to be perverted, infatuated, and ignorant I teach final rest, myself not being at rest.

22. What reason should I have to continually manifest myself? When men become unbelieving, unwise, ignorant, careless, fond of sensual pleasures, and from thoughtlessness run into misfortune,

23. Then I, who know the course of the world, declare: I am so and so³, (and consider): How can I incline them to enlightenment? how can they become partakers of the Buddha-laws⁴?

¹ Lokapitā Svayambhūḥ. The juxtaposition of these two words shows to an evidence that Śākyamuni is represented as Brahma, the uncreated Being, existing from eternity, the Father of the world, All-father.

² In a moral sense the Saviour, mythologically Apollo.

³ I.e. I am so in reality, tathā tathāham. Burnouf's rendering, 'I am the Tathāgata,' points to a reading tathāgato 'ham, which comes to the same.

⁴ Katham nu bodhāya sanāmayeya (Sansk. sannāmayeya) katha buddhadharmāṇa bhavye lābhinaḥ.