

THE BUDDHA'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

When the Blessed One had remained as long as he wished at Ambapali's grove, he went to Beluva, near Vesali. There the Blessed One addressed the brethren, and said: "O mendicants, take up your abode for the rainy season round about Vesali, each one according to the place where his friends and companions may live. I shall enter upon the rainy season here at Beluva".

When the Blessed One had thus entered upon the rainy season there fell upon him a dire sickness, and sharp pains came upon him even unto death. But the Blessed One, mindful and self-possessed, bore his ailments without complaint.

Then this thought occurred to the Blessed One. "It would not be right for me to pass away life without addressing the disciples, without taking leave of the order. Let me now, by strong effort of will, subdue this sickness, and keep my hold on life till the allotted time has come".

And the Blessed One, by a strong effort of the will subdued the sickness, and kept his hold on life till the time he fixed upon should come. And the sickness abated.

Thus the Blessed One began to recover; and when he had quite got rid of the sickness, he went out from the monastery, and sat down on a seat spread out in the open air. And the venerable Ananda, accompanied by many other disciples, approached where the Blessed One was, saluted him, and taking a seat respectfully on one side, said: "I have beheld, Lord, how the Blessed One was in health, and I have beheld how the Blessed One had to suffer. And though at the sight of the sickness of the Blessed One my body became weak as a creeper, and the horizon became dim to me, and my faculties were no longer clear, yet notwithstanding I took some little comfort from the thought that the Blessed One would not pass away from existence until at least he had left instructions as touching the order".

And the Blessed One addressed Ananda on behalf of the order saying: "What, then, Ananda, does the order expect of me? I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truth, Ananda, the Tathagata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher, who keeps some things back".

"Surely, Ananda, should there be any one who harbours the thought, it is I who will lead the brotherhood,' or, 'The order is dependent upon me,' he should lay

down instructions in any matter concerning the order. Now the Tathagata, Ananda, thinks not that it is he who should lead the brotherhood, or that the order is dependent upon him”.

“Why then, should the Tathagata leave instructions in any matter concerning the order?”

“I am grown old, O Ananda, and full of years; my journey is drawing to its close. I have reached the sum of my days; I am turning 80 years of age.”

“Just as a worn-out cart cannot be made to move along without much difficulty, so the body of the Tathagata can only be kept going with much additional care”.

“It is only, Ananda, when the Tathagata ceasing to attend to any outward thing, becomes plunged in that devout meditation of heart which is concerned with no bodily object, it is only then that the body of the Tathagata is at ease”.

“Therefore, O Ananda, be ye lamps unto yourselves. Rely on yourselves and not rely on external help”.

“Hold fast to the truth as a lamp. Seek salvation in the truth. Look not for assistance to any one besides yourselves”.

“And how, Ananda, can a brother be a lamp unto himself, rely on himself only and not on any external help, holding fast to the truth as him lamp and seeking salvation in the truth alone, looking not for assistance to any besides himself”.

“Herein, O Ananda, let a brother, as he dwells in the body, so regard the body that he, being strenuous, thoughtful, and mindful, may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the body’s craving”.

“While subject to sensations let him continues so to regard the sensations that he, being strenuous, thoughtful and mindful, may whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the sensations”.

“And so, also, when he thinks or reasons, or feels, let him so regard his thoughts that being strenuous, thoughtful, and mindful he may, whilst in the world, overcome the grief which arises from the craving due to ideas, or to, reasoning, or to feeling.”

“Those who, either now or after I am dead, shall be lamps unto themselves, relying upon themselves only and not relying upon any external help, but holding fast to the truth as their lamp, and seeking their salvation in the truth alone, and shall not look for assistance to any one besides themselves, it is they, Ananda, among my bhikkhus, who shall reach the very topmost height. But they must be anxious to learn”