



## CANTO 96

### HOW THE TEACHING OF THE BUDDHA WILL GROW AND DECLINE

Here, King Trisong Detsen  
asked again of the Great Guru Padma:  
“In what manner will the Doctrine decline?”  
And the Great Guru Padma said,  
“In the Perfect Age, in the Age of the Triad, in the Binary Age,  
in the first phase of the Age of Discord, the Buddhas have come one  
by one.  
The Teaching of the Muni must last five thousand five hundred years.  
Now, since the entry of Prajāpatī into religion,  
the lesser merits of women have taken five hundred years.  
For the remaining five thousand years,  
each century the centenarians become rarer,  
and finally the human life reaches the term of ten years.  
When from a hundred years life declines to ninety years,  
the Teaching of the Master remains for a thousand years.  
At that time, there will exist only a reflection of the Teaching.  
For the men who live eighty-five years the Sūtras come forth.  
For those who live seventy years there is the Basket of the Discipline.  
For those who live sixty years the Abhidharma comes forth.  
When in the visible world gods and genies struggle, this bad omen  
indicates

that the teaching will be devastated from top to bottom.  
 A minor period and numerous persecutors will appear.  
 And when thirty-five centuries have passed, and the lifespan is seven  
     years,  
 people will wear hoods like monks, taking on the outer signs.  
 Abundance of calf meat will produce the countenance of the stupid  
     mobs.  
 There being a lucuna in the Dharma, the Two Doctrines will war.  
 And for fifteen centuries there will be the epoch of adherence to  
     merely the grammar.  
 For men who will live fifty years, the United Precepts will come forth.  
 Men will see, in the male fire tiger, two black impurities of the years,  
 in the female earth rabbit, seven red impurities of the months;  
 in the male iron dragon, six white impurities of the days;  
 in the iron male dog, three blue impurities of time;  
 and finally, with the men of the sword, fifty impurities of men.  
 Frontiers and center will be at war, mothers and children will  
     believe no longer.  
 Statues, paintings, books and stūpas will be destroyed.  
 Rains being irregular, fruits will not ripen; fatal contagions will arise.  
 With famine, the number of the barren widows and widowers will  
     increase.  
 Each will find scepticism in his own heart,  
 and neighbors fighting each other, mouth and teeth will betray each  
     other.  
 The male grahas and the māras will end by invading everything.  
 The females of the goblins, coming to the males, will bring deadly  
     fever.  
 One will see the ways of meanness multiply,  
 and hypocritical monks will be wolves with yellow backs;  
 obeying the demon, they will serve the three aspects.  
 Next, the reflection of the Teaching will change.  
 Upon those who live forty years the Age of Enemies will come to pass,  
 and people will die of sudden death in the spasms caused by the dons.

Demonic maladies will rage—plague and the disease of the nāgas and  
 genies of the earth.  
 The women, their feminine bodies hot with fever, will be carried  
 away alive by the goblins.  
 Lightning, disasters, famine and war will come to pass.  
 But an incarnation of Padma will come from the east.  
 Famine will come upon the men who live thirty years.  
 Impartial actions will be of the past, the good will adulate the wicked.  
 Dissension will come from within, nāgas, demons, bhūtas, and  
 gnomes will proliferate.  
 Like genies, the Te'urang will harm the children.  
 Laws abolished, the country will go astray; earth and heaven will go  
 wrong.  
 But an incarnation of Padma will appear from the southwest borders.  
 For those who live twenty years the Unhealthy Age will come to pass.  
 Men and gods will hide themselves in the sands where women will  
 come to them.  
 For a year rain will be lacking and there will be no reserve—  
 famine will be prolonged nine times nine months.  
 There will be illnesses, deadly evils, plagues, cancers, angina, and  
 painful colics.  
 Like grahas, the four sorts of erroneous sacrileges will be propagated.  
 The sun being darkened by a planet, its path will no longer be seen.  
 Like genies, the ills of night, fainting, and madness will be rampant.  
 But an incarnation of Padma will come from the north.  
 At the time when people live for ten years, the Age of Weapons will  
 appear.  
 Up to the limits of the Impure Age this will be a terrible time:  
 The sons who reach ten years will make their vows  
 and the daughters at five years will be given in marriage.  
 The measure of the body will be the span and the width of the fist.  
 Oleander and millet, which have become the best foods, will be eaten.  
 Not one goat, sheep, or yak will be seen.  
 People will dress in buckram, which has become the best clothing;

weapons, which have become the best ornaments, will be  
manufactured.  
Simultaneously, the five best tastes will decline:  
there will be bees without honey; from the milk which is churned,  
butter will not come;  
mustard and sesame seeds will be pressed without obtaining oil;  
sugar cane will not give sugar; and salt will dry up altogether.  
In those times the good will be stigmatized, the wicked exalted.  
Parents, begging monks, and brahmans will be shamed with every  
impertinence.  
Three scourges—weapons, epidemics, and famines—will reduce life  
to ten years.  
At first the idea of doing harm to men will arise;  
then beings will kill one another at sight.  
The spirit of murder once born, people, like hunters, will look in  
solitary places,  
and taking up no matter what, rocks, wood, projectiles,  
sharp weapons, they will kill each other.  
All those who die will roll into hell.  
Numerous in these times will be the beings in hell.  
And this period of weapons will end with desolation.  
Now the Teaching of the Holy Dharma having declined,  
the religion of Tibet will be restored in Turkestan.  
At the time when the Doctrine will be violated by its followers who  
will have only the signs of it,  
a king, the Parsimonious One, a defender of the Dharma, will reign  
at Khotan.  
He will have five hundred oblaters and masters of ceremony,  
who, in the warm season, will do combat for the Dharma and will  
cut doubts short.  
Leaving aside the armor of patience, people will fight  
among themselves—  
the five poisons will stir up the waves of hate.

Roused to anger, those from high stations as well as those from low,  
all will lose control of their mouths and hands,  
and will draw swords from their belts.  
The five hundred priestly persons of rank will strike and kill each  
other.  
They will use knives; blood will be spilled, and they will go to prison.  
When the king, saddened, withdraws into his lodgings,  
ministers of the exterior, ministers of the interior, and wise men  
will dress in the skins of red cows and red bulls.  
In the cold, with covered heads, they will take up the sticks of beggars.  
And the king's glance will wander over the oppressed land.  
For Queens, ministers, and others—there is indeed only one master;  
but the land is full of oblaters and masters of ceremony.  
In the ravines with porches of rock, those who have left their  
positions make the great meditation;  
and places are not lacking in which to contain the mountain  
hermitages.  
This view will appease the king's sorrow.  
But in his view they will be revealed under a double aspect:  
those dressed as red bulls he will see as respectable, and the rites of  
Shākyā as hypocrisies.  
The sap of the earth will escape; madder and tinctorial water-plants  
will rot;  
it will no longer be possible to change the color of clothes.  
There will no longer be shaved heads, renunciation, ordination,  
abbots, or masters.  
From all the books, the letters will be lost—  
the most ancient by erasure, the most recent by mutilation.  
Hearing and commentary of the Dharma will fade away like fog.  
Meditation and Achievement will be like the morning star.  
Without exception, all will devote themselves to the ten  
non-virtues.  
In the second place the Age of Epidemics will come.

Because men will do not good, but evil,  
 gods and genies in struggle will send them a number of plagues  
 without possible treatment, from which many will die.  
 They will lie down on the ground in the morning, rigid forms  
     which cannot be counted.  
 The survivors with haggard eyes will have exhausted their sorrow.  
 In the third place the Age of Famine will come,  
 when avarice will incite to evil.  
 Gods and nāgas fighting, rain will be lacking  
 and there will be eighteen years of dryness,  
 insects, grain-mold, pale beards of wheat, frost, hail.  
 The beautiful green fields will yield a miserable harvest of black ears  
     of corn.  
 Similar calamities will lead to three kinds of famines:  
 the one of the soothsayers, the one of the white bones,  
 the one of the quest of the spoon.  
 First, the one of the soothsayers will be like this:  
 a scarcity of rice, barley, peas, and all other foods.  
 Whoever has found grain will put it in a basket  
 and will watch over it night and day.  
 The forces undermined by hunger will roll to earth,  
 without being able to get up or to be lifted up by others; whoever  
     they are, they will weep and die.  
 In the second place, the famine of the old white bones will become  
     manifest:  
 People will gather in great number the bones of the ancient  
     dead,  
 and they will be eaten as food.  
 They will be boiled in water and the juice will be drunk.  
 In the third place, the famine of the search for a spoon will appear:  
 When grain has been emptied from the granary,  
 water will be poured there, and this juice will be drunk.  
 The grain will be eaten by whoever will be able to take it with the  
     spoon.

In the anguish of their hunger people will kill their sons in order  
to eat them,  
and in order to eat them, the lords will carry away the poor.  
Odor-bearing plants will be eaten, from the woods, from the earth,  
and from the rocks.  
The bloodshed with weapons will last seven years,  
the killing by diseases, seven months and seven days,  
the murderous famines, seven years and seven months.  
The survivors, one by one, will cower  
on islands in the rivers, in the heart of the mountains, in the hollows  
of trees.  
For seven days they will be nourished by water—  
then they will come back into the towns and the districts.  
Seeing each other, they will stretch out to each other in sympathy.  
Marveling to themselves, they will say: ‘I see a living person and not  
a dead one.’  
In great joy they will kiss each other on the mouth and will put their  
arms around each other’s necks.  
And it is then that Maitreya the Conqueror will be incarnated.  
He will appear in his full height of two hundred cubits.  
At such a marvel, people will make inquiries and he will say these  
words:  
‘I have adopted the ten virtues and cast off the ten non-virtues.  
I do not know desire which buzzes like a bee.  
Hate is like the hot tempered lion,  
ignorance is like the snuffing of a dog.  
Giving up all three of these—this is how the Doctrine grows.’  
And he will make many minds apply themselves to virtue.”

*Of the History, unabridged, of the Lives  
of the Guru of Uḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava,  
this is the ninety-sixth canto,  
How the Teaching of the Buddha Will Grow and Decline  
Sealed Oaths*