

The princes, prostrate at his feet, with tears, replied, "The work which marked the crowning act of your perfected merit, and which we hoped would be handed down to future ages, has in a moment (*a dawn*) been reduced to ashes. How can we bear to think of it? But how much more when the heretics are rejoicing thereat, and interchanging their congratulations!"

The king answered, "By this, at least, we see the truth of what Buddha said; the heretics and others insist on the permanency³⁷ of things, but our great teacher's doctrine is that all things are impermanent. As for me, my work of charity was finished, according to my purpose; and this destructive calamity (*change*) does but strengthen my knowledge of the truth of Tathâgata's doctrine. This is a great happiness (*good fortune*), and not a subject for lamentation."

On this, in company with the kings, he went to the east, and mounted the great *stûpa*. Having reached the top, he looked around on the scene, and then descending the steps, suddenly a heretic (*or, a strange man*), knife in hand, rushed on the king. The king, startled at the sudden attack, stepped back a few steps up the stairs, and then bending himself down he seized the man, in order to deliver him to the magistrates. The officers were so bewildered with fright that they did not know how to move for the purpose of assisting him.

The kings all demanded that the culprit should be instantly killed, but Śilâditya-râja, without the least show of fear and with unchanged countenance, commanded them not to kill him; and then he himself questioned him thus:

"What harm have I done you, that you have attempted such a deed?"

The culprit replied, "Great king! your virtues shine without partiality; both at home and abroad they bring

³⁷ The heretics hold the view of endurance (*shang*, the opposite of *anitya*).