

## Setting the Wheel of the Dhamma in Motion The *Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta*

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*Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta* 'Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma'

Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Bodhi

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Baranasi in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Blessed One addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five thus:

"Bhikkhus, these two extremes should not be followed by one who has gone-forth into homelessness. What two? The pursuit of sensual happiness in sensual pleasures, which is low, vulgar, the way of worldlings, ignoble, unbeneficial; and the pursuit of self-mortification, which is painful, ignoble, unbeneficial. Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathagata has awakened to the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana. "

And what, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision ... which leads to Nibbana?

It is this noble eightfold path; that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This, bhikkhus, is that middle way awakened to by the Tathagata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, which leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbana.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, aging is suffering, illness is suffering, death is suffering; union with what is displeasing is suffering; separation from what is pleasing is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering; in brief, the five aggregates subject to clinging are suffering.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to re-becoming, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for becoming, craving for disbecoming.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: it is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it.

"Now this, bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this noble eightfold path; that is, right view ... right concentration.

"This is the noble truth of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

"This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

"This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"This noble truth of the origin of suffering is to be abandoned': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light. "This noble truth of the origin of suffering has been abandoned': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

"This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is to be realized': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

"This noble truth of the cessation of suffering has been realized': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light. "

'This is the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering is to be developed': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision ... and light.

"This noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed': thus, bhikkhus, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, true knowledge, and light.

"So long, bhikkhus, as my knowledge and vision of these four noble truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was not thoroughly purified in this way [\*], I did not claim to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans. But when my knowledge and vision of these four noble truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects was thoroughly purified in this way, then I claimed to have awakened to the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Mara, and Brahma, in this generation with its recluses and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge

and the vision arose in me: 'Unshakeable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more re-becoming.'

This is what the Blessed One said. Being pleased, the bhikkhus of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One's statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondanna the dust-free, stainless vision of the Dhamma: "Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation." And when the Wheel of the Dhamma had been set in motion by the Blessed One, the earth devas raised a cry:

"At Baranasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or deva or Mara or Brahma or by anyone in the world." Having heard the cry of the earth devas [and] the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings raised a cry: "At Baranasi ... this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped ... by anyone in the world." Having heard the cry of the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings, the Tavatimsa devas ... the Yama devas ... the Tusita devas ... the Nimmanarati devas ... the Paranimitavasavatti devas ... the devas of Brahma's company raised a cry:

"At Baranasi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, this unsurpassed Wheel of the Dhamma has been set in motion by the Blessed One, which cannot be stopped by any recluse or brahmin or deva or Mara or Brahma or by anyone in the world." Thus at that moment, at that instant, at that second, the cry spread as far as the Brahma-world, and this ten thousandfold world-system shook, quaked, and trembled, and an immeasurable glorious radiance appeared in the world surpassing the divine majesty of the devas. Then the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance: "Kondanna has indeed understood! Kondanna has indeed understood!" In this way the Venerable Kondanna acquired the name "Anna Kondanna-Kondanna Who Has Understood."

Note: [\*] The three phases (tiparivāa) are: (i) the knowledge of each truth (sacca-nana), e.g., "This is the noble truth of suffering"; (ii) the knowledge of the task to be accomplished regarding each truth (kicca-nana), e.g., "This noble truth of suffering is to be fully understood"; and (iii) the knowledge of accomplishment regarding each truth (kata-nana), e.g., "This noble truth of suffering has been fully understood." The twelve modes (dvadasakara) are obtained by applying the three phases to the four truths.

From Gethin, R. 2008. *Sayings of the Buddha: A Selection of Suttas from the Pali Nikayas*, 216-220. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

#### *KHANDHA-VAGGA (Samyutta-Nikaya)*

This is what I have heard. Once the Blessed One was staying in the Bhagga country at Sumsumāragira, in the Bhesakalā grove in the animal park. Now the householder Nakulapitar approached the Blessed One. Having approached, he sat down to one side.

Once seated, he said to the Blessed One: 'Sir, I am old, getting on,

of a venerable age and experienced in life. Having reached a great age, I am sick in body and frequently ill. So I cannot always get to see the Blessed One or revered monks. Sir, could the Blessed One please direct me, please instruct me, as this would contribute to my welfare and happiness for a long time to come?’

‘This is the way it is, householder. This is the way it is. Your body is sick, oppressed,\* and afflicted. For how could anyone carrying around this body claim freedom from disease for even a second, unless, that is, he was being childish? Therefore you should practise so that although your body is sick your mind will not be sick. This is how you should practise.’

When the householder Nakulapitar had enjoyed and expressed his appreciation of what the Blessed One said, he got up from his seat, respectfully saluted the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, and then approached the venerable Sāriputta. Having approached, he saluted the venerable Sāriputta respectfully and sat down to one side.

Once seated, the venerable Sāriputta said to him: ‘How serene your senses are, householder! How pure and clear the colour of your face! Surely today you got to hear a talk on the teaching directly from the Blessed One.’

‘And why should it not be so? Just now, sir, I was blessed with the nectar of the Blessed One’s talk on the Truth.’

‘So how then were you blessed with the nectar of the Blessed One’s talk on Truth?’

‘Well, sir, I approached the Blessed One . . . I said to the Blessed One: “Sir, I am old . . . I am sick in body and frequently ill . . . Sir, could the Blessed One please direct me . . . ?” At this the Blessed One said to me: “This is the way it is, householder . . . Therefore you should practise so that although your body is sick your mind will not be sick. This is how you should practise.” This, sir, is how I was blessed with the nectar of the Blessed One’s talk on Truth.’

‘But, householder, did it not occur to you to question the Blessed One further, to ask him how it is that one is both sick in body and sick in mind, how it is that one is sick in body yet not sick in mind?’

‘I would come from afar to learn the significance of what has been said directly from the venerable Sāriputta. Certainly it would be good if the significance of what has been said might be clear to the venerable Sāriputta.’

‘Then listen, householder. Pay careful attention to what I shall say.’

‘Yes, sir,’ replied the householder Nakulapitar to the venerable Sāriputta.

This is what the venerable Sāriputta said: ‘How is it, then, that one is both sick in body and sick in mind? Here the uninformed, ordinary person, who takes no notice of the noble ones, who has no experience of and no acquaintance with their practice, who takes no notice of wise people, who has no experience of and no acquaintance with their practice, looks on physical form as the self, or the self as something that possesses physical form, or physical form as in the self, or the self as in physical form. He becomes fixated on the idea that he is physical form, that physical form is his. And then the physical form of this person who is fixated on the idea that he is physical form, the idea that physical form is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in physical form grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair come into being for him.

‘He looks on feeling as the self, or the self as something that possesses feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He becomes fixated on the idea that he is feeling, that feeling is his. And then the feeling of this person who is fixated on the idea that he is feeling, the idea that feeling is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in feeling grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair come into being for him.

‘He looks on conceiving as the self, or the self as something that possesses conceiving, or conceiving as in the self, or the self as in conceiving. He becomes fixated on the idea that he is conceiving, that conceiving is his. And then the conceiving of this person who is fixated on the idea that he is conceiving, the idea that conceiving is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in conceiving grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair come into being for him.

‘He looks on volitional forces as the self, or the self as something that possesses volitional forces, or volitional forces as in the self, or the self as in volitional forces. He becomes fixated on the idea that he is volitional forces, that volitional forces are his. And then the volitional forces of this person who is fixated on the idea that he is volitional forces, the idea that volitional forces are his, change and alter; as a result of that change and alteration in volitional forces grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair come into being for him.

‘He looks on consciousness as the self, or the self as something that possesses consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He becomes fixated on the idea that he is consciousness, that consciousness is his. And then the consciousness of this person who is fixated on the idea that he is consciousness, the idea that consciousness is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in consciousness grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow,

and despair come into being for him. It is in this way that one is both sick in body and sick in mind.

'How is it, then, that one is sick in body and yet not sick in mind? Here the informed, ordinary person, who takes notice of the noble ones, who has experience of and acquaintance with their practice, who takes notice of wise people, who has experience of and acquaintance with their practice, does not look on physical form as the self, or the self as something that possesses physical form, or physical form as in the self, or the self as in physical form. He does not become fixated on the idea that he is physical form, that physical form is his. And then the physical form of this person who is not fixated on the idea that he is physical form, the idea that physical form is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in physical form grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair do not come into being for him.

'He does not look on feeling as the self, or the self as something that possesses feeling, or feeling as in the self, or the self as in feeling. He does not become fixated on the idea that he is feeling, that feeling is his. And then the feeling of this person who is not fixated on the idea that he is feeling, the idea that feeling is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in feeling grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair do not come into being for him.

'He does not look on conceiving as the self, or the self as something that possesses conceiving, or conceiving as in the self, or the self as in conceiving. He does not become fixated on the idea that he is conceiving, that conceiving is his. And then the conceiving of this person who is not fixated on the idea that he is conceiving, the idea that conceiving is his, changes and alters; as a result of that change and alteration in conceiving grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair do not come into being for him.

'He does not look on volitional forces as the self, or the self as something that possesses volitional forces, or volitional forces as in the self, or the self as in volitional forces. He does not become fixated on the idea that he is volitional forces, that volitional forces are his. And then the volitional forces of this person who is not fixated on the idea that he is volitional forces, the idea that volitional forces are his, change and alter; as a result of that change and alteration in volitional forces grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair do not come into being for him.

'He does not look on consciousness as the self, or the self as something that possesses consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness. He does not become fixated on the idea that he is consciousness, that consciousness is his. And then the consciousness of this person who is not fixated on the idea that he is consciousness, the idea that consciousness is his, changes and alters;

as a result of that change and alteration in consciousness grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow and despair *do not* come into being for him. It is in this way that one is sick in body and yet not sick in mind'

This is what the venerable Sariputta said. Gladdened the householder Nakulapitar felt joy at the venerable Sariputta's words.