Setting in Motion the Wheel of the Dhamma

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 56, no. 11)

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

The Middle Way

“Monks, 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; puthujjana

Without veering towards either of these extremes, the Tathāgata has discovered (*abhisambuddhā*) the middle way, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, and leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

“And what, monks, is that middle way discovered by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision which gives rise to knowledge, and leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna? 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, monks, is that middle way discovered by the Tathāgata, which gives rise to vision, which gives rise to knowledge, and leads to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

The Four Noble Truths

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of suffering: birth is suffering, old age 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, monks, is the noble truth of the origin of suffering: it is this craving which leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for non-existence.

“Now this, monks, 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, nonreliance on it.

“Now this, monks, is the noble truth of the way (*paṭipadā*) leading to the cessation of suffering: it is this Noble Eightfold Path (magga, mārga), that is, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

The Three Turnings and Twelve Aspects

“‘This is the noble truth of suffering’: thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision (lit. “the eye”), knowledge, wisdom, clear knowledge, and light.

“‘This noble truth of suffering is *to be fully understood’*: thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision … and light.

“‘This noble truth of suffering *has been fully understood’*: thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision … and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering’ (= *taṇhā*, craving): thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision … and light.

“‘This noble truth of the origin of suffering is *to be abandoned*’: thus, monks, 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, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision … and light.

“‘This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering’ (= nibbāna): thus, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision … and light.

“‘This noble truth of the cessation of suffering is *to be realized’*: thus, monks, 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, monks, 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’ (= the noble 8fold path): thus, monks, 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 is *to be developed*’: thus, monks, 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, monks, in regard to things unheard before, there arose in me vision, knowledge, wisdom, clear knowledge, and light.

The Proclamation of Enlightenment

“So long, monks, as my knowledge and vision of these Four Noble Truths as they really are in their three phases and twelve aspects (*ākāra*) was not thoroughly purified in this way, I did not claim that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics 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 that I had attained the unsurpassed perfect enlightenment in this world with its devas, Māra, and Brahmā, in this generation with its ascetics and brahmins, its devas and humans. The knowledge and vision arose in me: ‘Unshakable is the liberation of my mind. This is my last birth. Now there is no more renewed existence.’”

Kondañña Gains the Eye

This is what the Blessed One said. Elated, the monks of the group of five delighted in the Blessed One’s statement. And while this discourse was being spoken, there arose in the Venerable Kondañña the dust-free, stainless eye of Dhamma: “Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.”

The Devas Rejoice

And when the Wheel of the Dhamma had been set in motion by the Blessed One, the earth-dwelling devas raised a cry: “At Bārāṇasī, 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 ascetic or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or by anyone in the world.” Having heard the cry of the earth-dwelling devas, the devas of the Four Great Kings raised a cry: “At Bārāṇasī … 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 Four Great Kings, the Tāvatiṃsa devas … the Yāma devas … the Tusita devas … the Nimmānaratī devas … the Paranimmitavasavattī devas … the devas of Brahmā’s company raised a cry: “At Bārāṇasī, 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 ascetic or brahmin or deva or Māra or Brahmā or by anyone in the world.”

Thus at that moment, at that instant, at that second, the cry spread as far as the brahmā 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. Upanissaya-paccaya

Koṇḍañña Has Understood

Then the Blessed One uttered this inspired utterance: “Koṇḍañña has indeed understood! Koṇḍañña has indeed understood!” In this way the Venerable Koṇḍañña acquired the name “Aññā Koṇḍañña—Koṇḍañña Who Has Understood.”