

Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion

(Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, Samyutta Nikaya LVI, 11)

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying at Varanasi in the Game Refuge at Isipatana. There he addressed the group of five monks:

'There are these two extremes which are not to be indulged in by one who has gone forth. What two? That which is devoted to sensual pleasure with reference to sensual objects: base, vulgar, common, ignoble, unprofitable; and that which is devoted to self-affliction: painful, ignoble, unprofitable. Avoiding both of these extremes, the middle way realized by the Tathagata--producing vision, producing knowledge--leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding.

'And what is the middle way realized by the Tathagata which--producing vision, producing knowledge--leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding? Precisely this Noble Eightfold Path: right view, right consideration, right speech, right undertaking, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. This is the middle way realized by the Tathagata--producing vision, producing knowledge--leads to calm, to direct knowledge, to self-awakening, to Unbinding.

'Now this, monks, is the absolute truth of stress: Birth is stressful, ageing is stressful, death is stressful; sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief & despair are stressful; association with the unbeloved is stressful, separation from the loved is stressful, not getting what is wanted is stressful. In short, the five substances for sustenance are stressful.

'And this, monks, is the absolute truth of the origination of stress: the craving which makes for further becoming--accompanied by passion & delight, relishing now here & now there--i.e. craving for sensual

pleasure, craving for becoming, craving for non-becoming.

'And this, monks, is the absolute truth of the stopping of stress: the remainderless fading & stopping, renunciation, relinquishment, release & letting go of that very craving.

'And this, monks, is the absolute truth of the way leading to the stopping of stress: precisely this Noble Eightfold Path--right view, right consideration, right speech, right undertaking, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

'Vision arose, insight arose, discernment arose, knowledge arose, illumination arose within me with regard to things never heard before: 'This is the absolute truth of stress'... 'This absolute truth of stress is to be comprehended'... 'This absolute truth of stress has been comprehended'... 'This is the absolute truth of the origination of stress'... 'This absolute truth of the origination of stress is to be abandoned'... 'This absolute truth of the origination of stress has been abandoned'... This is the absolute truth of the stopping of stress'... 'This absolute truth of the stopping of stress is to be directly experienced'... 'This absolute truth of the stopping of stress has been directly experienced'... 'This is the absolute truth of the way leading to the stopping of stress'... 'This absolute truth of the way leading to the stopping of stress is to be developed'... 'This absolute truth of the way leading to the stopping of stress has been developed.'

'And, monks, as long as this knowledge & vision of mine--with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four absolute truths as they actually are--was not pure, I did not claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled in the cosmos with its deities, Maras & Gods, with its contemplatives & priests, its royalty & commonfolk. But as soon as this knowledge & vision of mine--with its three rounds & twelve permutations concerning these four absolute truths as they actually are--was truly pure, then I did claim to have directly awakened to the right self-awakening unexcelled

in the cosmos with its deities, Maras & Gods, with its contemplatives & priests, its royalty & commonfolk. The knowledge & vision arose in me: "Unprovoked is my release. This is the last birth. There is now no further becoming."

That is what the Blessed One said. Glad at heart, the group of five monks delighted at his words. And while this explanation was being given, there arose to Ven. Kondanna the dustless, stainless Dhamma eye: Whatever is subject to origination is all subject to cessation.

And when the Blessed One had set the Wheel of Dhamma in motion, the earth deities cried out: 'At Varanasi, in the Game Refuge at Isipatana, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma which cannot be stopped by priest or contemplative, deity, Mara or God or anyone in the cosmos.' On hearing the earth deities' cry, the deities of the Four Kings' Heaven took up the cry... the deities of the Thirty-three... the Yama deities... the Tusita deities... the Nimmanarati deities... the Paranimmita-vasavatti deities... the deities of Brahma's retinue took up the cry: 'At Varanasi, in the Game Refuge at Isipatana, the Blessed One has set in motion the unexcelled Wheel of Dhamma which cannot be stopped by priest or contemplative, deity, Mara or God or anyone at all in the cosmos.'

So in that moment, that instant, the cry shot right up to the Brahma world. And this ten-thousand fold cosmos shivered & quivered & quaked, while a great, measureless radiance appeared in the cosmos, surpassing the effulgence of the deities.

Then the Blessed One exclaimed: 'So you really know, Kondanna? So you really know?' And that is how Ven. Kondanna acquired the name Anna-Kondanna--Kondanna who knows.