

The memory and intellect of those who offer a begging bowl to those
like me
Will never become impaired.

He accepted the [four] bowls, blessed them to become one, and ate his food from it. Then Trapusa and Bhallika prepared cream from the milk of one thousand cows, poured it into a jeweled bowl, and offered it [to the Buddha]. When the Buddha finished eating, he cast off the bowl, and Brahma carried it away. Afterward, the Teacher delivered these auspicious wishes to Trapusa and Bhallika,

The gods' auspicious fortune accomplishes all aims
And brings good fortune to every realm.
By its grace may you accomplish your aims
And may everything soon be harmonious.

He foretold that they would become victors known as Source of Honey.

11. Turning the Wheel of the Doctrine

Thereafter, the Teacher dwelt in a state of little activity:

Deep, tranquil, unformulated, noncomposite clear light:
This ambrosia-like reality I have gained
Is unfathomable by anyone I might teach.
Thus, in silence at the forest's edge will I dwell.

Then he reflected,

My compassion for the world is boundless,
[Yet] I will disregard others' requests.
These persons have faith in Brahma:
If he requests it, I will turn the wheel [of the doctrine].

He then shone a light seen by Brahma, the Crested One, Lord of the three-thousandfold-universe. Summoning his companions, Brahma and 6,800,000 other gods joined their palms in respect saying,

You have accomplished supreme wisdom's sacred circle
And shone lights throughout the ten directions;

Your wisdom light causes human beings' lotus to blossom:
O Sun of Speech, why do you remain indifferent?

With these and other such words, they supplicated the Buddha; without saying a word, he gave his assent, and they departed. The Teacher continued to rest in a state of little mental activity, then summoned Shakra, who said to him,

Like the full moon freed from an eclipse,
Your mind has gained complete liberation.
Victor in battle, rise up, I pray!
Shine your light of sublime insight into this world of darkness!

So he supplicated the Buddha, who again said not a word. Brahma then spoke saying,

There are those who earnestly seek [to listen]—
O Sage, teach your doctrine, I pray.

The Teacher then spoke,

Desire binds all living beings;
Its rushing stream carries them away.
My tremendous effort has led me to realization,
Therefore, teaching would be of no use.

Once again the teacher turned his mind to quietude, but various unvirtuous signs appeared, such as fires that would not burn. Brahma the Crested One earnestly begged,

Previously in this country of Magadha, defiled beings appeared
Teaching impure doctrines.
For this reason, O Sage, open the door to nectar, I beseech you!
May the Buddhas' flawless doctrine be heard!

The Transcendent Conqueror looked upon sentient beings of undetermined capabilities and said,

O Brahma, for the beings of Magadha who have ears,
 Possess faith,
 And who always listen to the doctrine without harmful intent,
 For them I will open the doors to nectar.

Then the tree of awakening's god Dharmaruchi and others asked [the Buddha] where he would turn the wheel of the doctrine, to which he replied, "In Varanasi." "There are not many people there and very little shade. Somewhere else would be better," they said. "Fine-faced beings, don't say that," said the Buddha, and then he considered to which disciples easy to guide he should first teach the doctrine. Knowing that Udraka had passed away seven days prior and that Aradakalama had likewise passed away three days earlier, he decided to teach the group of five [disciples who had accompanied him in ascetic practice].

From Magadha he went to the City of Light, Varanasi, and there he met a mendicant.* Having talked at length, the mendicant said to the Buddha, "Your faculties are clear. Your skin is pure. From whom did you receive your vows of pure conduct?" The Buddha replied,

I have no master whatsoever;
 No one compares to me:
 I alone am the perfect Buddha,
 Cool and free of defilement.

"Do you affirm that you are an arhat?" asked the mendicant. To this the Buddha responded,

I am the arhat of this world,
 I am the unsurpassed teacher.
 Including even the gods, demigods, and celestial musicians,
 There is no being who equals me.

"Do you affirm that you are a victor?" he asked. The Buddha answered,

Whoever has gained cessation of all defilements,
 Like myself, can be known as a victor.

*A note in the text states: "Upaka."

I have triumphed over all that is sinful,
Therefore, Upaka, I am a victor.

“Where are you walking?” Upaka asked.

I am going to Varanasi.
After arriving at the City of Light,
I will shine an incomparable light
For the sake of the world, which is as if blind.

The Buddha spoke these and other such words, to which the mendicant replied, “May it be so,” and left, heading south.

The Teacher then went north, passing Mount Gaya, Rohitavastu, Uruvilvakalpa, Anala, and the city of Saratipura. Finally he arrived at the shores of the Ganges. When the ferryman at the Ganges requested the passage fee, the Buddha replied that he had no money and then rose into the sky [and crossed the river]. King Bimbisara heard about this and thereafter forbid that monks be asked for passage fees.

Upon arriving at Varanasi, the Buddha collected alms of food, ate, and then went to Descent of the Sages. The group of five saw the Teacher approaching and said, “The mendicant Gautama who violated his renunciant’s vows approaches, relaxed and well-fed. No one need go to greet him. No one need stand, or take his robes or alms bowl. If he likes, he can sit in this extra seat.” And so, privately, they agreed on a course of action, though within his mind Ajnatakaundinya did not accede. But when the Teacher reached them, the five disciples were overwhelmed [by his presence], abandoned their plan, and rose from their seats. Some welcomed him. Some laid out a seat. Some prepared washing water for his feet. “Welcome, please rest here on this cushion,” they invited. The Teacher, seated on the cushion, exchanged many pleasant words with the group of five.*

The disciples then asked him, “O long-lived Gautama, your faculties are clear, and your skin is perfectly pure. Have you manifested the special qualities of wisdom’s sight?” The Buddha replied, “You mustn’t address a transcendent buddha [with the familiar form] ‘long-lived.’ To do so will definitely result in long-term sorrow. I have obtained nectar. I am enlightened, omniscient. Did you not just make a secret agreement like this?” As

*A note in the text states: “Kaundinya, Ashvajit, Vaspa, Mahanaman, and Bhadraka.”

he spoke these words, they become monks. They touched the Teacher's feet, confessed their mistake, and were filled with respect.

The Teacher washed his body and thought, "Where shall I turn the wheel of the doctrine?" In that place appeared one thousand thrones, decorated with the seven treasures of a universal monarch. The Teacher circumambulated the first three and then, as he seated himself upon the fourth, a light illuminated the entire three-thousandfold-universe, made the earth tremble, and purified all sentient beings. The gods offered him a thousand-spoked wheel of gold and beseeched him to turn the teachings' wheel. The Teacher remained silent for the first part of the day, spoke during the noon session, and addressed the five disciples during the latter part of the day:

O Monks, renunciants do not enter these two extremes—the extremes of indulgence in desire or of exhausting hardship. Having abandoned both extremes, transcendent buddhas teach the doctrine in the middle way in this manner: the noble eightfold path. O Monks, these are the four truths: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path.

Further,

Fully understand suffering. Abandon its sources.

And,

I fully understood suffering. I abandoned its sources.*

And so on he spoke, repeating the four noble truths three times, thus turning the teachings' wheel in twelve aspects. Kaundinya thereby attained the level of arhat: the three jewels came into being.

Thus, with twelve aspects,
He fully turned the teachings' wheel.
Kaundinya achieved omniscience
And the three jewels manifestly came into being.

*A note in the text states: "It is evident that [the circle of five auditors] were monks at this point."

Regarding the wheel of the doctrine, there are five points to be distinguished, namely, the teaching's (1) location, (2) time, (3) gathering, (4) doctrine, and (5) purpose. The first, the location, is [the regions around the place called] Destruction of the Wheel. [Second,] some say that the period [of this first cycle] was six years and six months, while Chimpa claims that it was seven years, and Chak holds it to be two months short of seven years. [Third,] the gathering was of five human beings—Kaundinya, Advajit, Vaspa, Mahanaman, and Bhadrīka—and a circle of many gods.

[Fourth,] the doctrine was that of the four noble truths repeated three times, thus a wheel of twelve aspects. *The Treasury of Observed Phenomena* states:

The wheel of the doctrine is the path of seeing,
[It resembles a wheel] in its swiftness and its spokes.

The path of seeing is called the wheel of the doctrine because its qualities are consistent with a wheel's in its swift movement, rejecting [some places] and entering [others], in conquering what was not conquered, in establishing what is conquered in its natural state, and in ascending and descending. Venerable Ghosaka states:

The eightfold noble path's view, intention, effort, and mindfulness have qualities consistent with the spokes; speech, actions, and livelihood, with the hub; and meditative concentration, with the circumference. Thus, it is a wheel. The path of seeing is the wheel of the doctrine. Its arising in Kaundinya is called "the turning of the wheel."

Its threefold repetition is indicated by "This is suffering" and so on; "It must be truly understood" and so on; and "It has been truly comprehended" and so forth. With each of these three repetitions, the passage "Sight arose; knowledge [arose]; awareness [arose]; and understanding arose" indicates the arising of the path of union, the path without obstacles, the path of perfect freedom, and the special path—the twelve aspects. However, if you ask, "Were there twelve repetitions and sixty-four aspects?" this would not be a mistake because that framework's characteristics correspond to those of the threefold and twelvefold framework.

According to the great exposition school, the three repetitions present

the path of seeing, the path of meditation, and the path beyond learning. If this were the case, the three repetitions of the turning of the wheel of the doctrine could not comprise twelve aspects: the path of seeing alone has no threefold repetition and twelve aspects.

Therefore, this series itself is the wheel of the doctrine: “The three repetitions” refers to the three repetitions of the four noble truths. The twelve aspects consist of: “[the truth of] (1) suffering, (2) the origin of suffering, (3) the cessation of suffering, and (4) the path”; (5) “[suffering] must be fully understood, (6) [its causes] must be abandoned, (7) [its cessation] must be made manifest, (8) [the path] must be meditated upon”—[the four truths’ function]; (9) [suffering] is fully understood, (10) [its causes] are abandoned, (11) [its cessation] is made manifest, and (12) [the path] has been meditated upon”—[the four truths’ effect.] It is called “turning” [the wheel of the doctrine] because it causes understanding or knowledge to arise in another’s mindstream.

[Fifth,] the purpose is as follows: At the first turning [of the wheel], the path of seeing arose in Kaundinya and in many gods. With the second turning, Kaundinya attained the state of an arhat, and the path of seeing arose in the four [other disciples.] At the third turning, the four disciples likewise became arhats. This was the direct aim. The indirect or special aim was to turn disciples from grasping to an individual self, establishing them in the four results [of arhat, nonreturner, returner, and stream-enterer].

The middle cycle of teachings constitutes the wheel of the absence of characteristics. Its location was Vulture Peak. Its period was thirty years according to Tro Lotsawa, twenty-seven years according to Chimpa, thirty-one years according to Chak, and twelve years according to some others. The gathering was 1,000, 250, or 5,000 monks and nuns, as well as male and female lay practitioners, and millions of bodhisattvas. The doctrine was that of the absence of characteristics, which belongs to *The Perfection of Sublime Insight* and the middle cycle of teachings.

According to Dharmamitra, *The Perfection of Sublime Insight* presents two topics, the essential meaning and the meaning of manifest realization. The first, presented in texts such as *The Heart of Sublime Insight Discourse*, deals with ultimate emptiness and the three gateways to freedom [emptiness, absence of characteristics, and aspirationlessness]. The second is presented in texts such as *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses*, the most extensive version; *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Twenty-Five Thousand Verses*, the middle-length extensive version; *The*

Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eighteen Thousand Verses, the middle-length intermediate version; *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Ten Thousand Verses*, the concise intermediate version; *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in Eight Thousand Verses*, the most detailed concise version; and *A Storehouse of Precious Qualities*, the concise abridged version. It is said that these texts' subject—eight topics of manifest realization—is the same; their only difference lies in the length of the discourse. A commentary states:

In their chapters, some are abridged and so forth;
That is the only difference.

The first five of these were spoken simultaneously. The auditors are the same in all these texts; moreover, the sections concerning the Pure Realm Training contain the same prophecy given to the Ganges Goddess. This conclusion is logical, for it is not right that a single buddha would repeatedly foretell the same being's awakening. Is this statement contradicted by the many prophecies given concerning Nagarjuna? [No,] these prophecies were separate: some foretold his elucidation of the doctrine, while others foretold his awakening. The prophecies given to the Ganges Goddess, however, did not vary at all concerning her awakening.

Now [it may likewise be objected:] "Is there a contradiction in an introduction that states that the retinue gathered numbered '1,250,' or elsewhere as, '5,000'?" [The reply is,] "The difference lies in whether the members of the spiritual community are counted, or the number of individuals present."

Four chapters from *The Perfection of Sublime Insight in One Hundred Thousand Verses*—that containing Maitreya's questions, that on eternalism, one containing answers to Dharmodgata, and the concluding summary—are missing since Nagarjuna did not retrieve them from the naga realm. However,

Although [the Buddha] made single statements,
They were understood in many different ways.

Or,

The Buddha's statements, presented separately,
Were understood in different ways:

“This is said for my benefit!” [was thought].
[The Buddha spoke in this way] so that everyone could understand.

Thus, according to their own intellectual faculties—weak, average, or acute—the compilers understood a teaching in an abridged, intermediate, or detailed version, and compiled it accordingly. According to translators Tropu, Chak, and others, [the Indian master] Trilaksha stated, “That a compiler was unable to compile like another is not a fault since it was made possible through the Buddha’s own blessings or miraculous display.” As concerns *The Concise Discourse on the Perfection of Sublime Insight*, its commentary tells us that it was subsequently taught in the dialect of Magadha, to satisfy the four kinds of auditors gathered.

The purpose [of the middle cycle of teachings] was to correct all disciples’ clinging to [other] views and to place them on the sole path, establishing them in the same mode of [viewing] emptiness. *The Vast Enjoyment Discourse* states:

Unformulated, without the ground of all ordinary experience,
Without arising and cessation, without acceptance or rejection,
The wheel of the doctrine of the same mode of emptiness
Was thus fully turned.

These teachings constitute the middle wheel of the doctrine, as *The Perfection of Sublime Insight* states:

The gods said, “The sound of water falling comes from the skies!
Amazing! Witness the second wheel of the doctrine’s being
turned in the Land of Jambu!”

The third [wheel of the doctrine] is that of ascertaining the ultimate. The locations [of the teachings] were Mount Malaya, Vaishali, and other places. The gathering is said to comprise “followers of many ways,” but this should be understood to mean bodhisattvas who had correctly entered all spiritual ways. Its period was ten years according to Chimpa, twelve years according to Tro Lotsawa, seven or nine years according to Chak, and twenty-six or twenty-eight years according to some others. I myself have not seen an authoritative source for these lengths of time.

The doctrine is that which ascertains the ultimate. Previously, the first [turning of the wheel of the doctrine] refuted the view of nonexistence, and, thus, the concept of existence grew predominant. The second turning established the predominance of the view of nonexistence. This [last turning] however, presents the inherent nonexistence of imputed phenomena, the existence from a relative perspective of dependent phenomena, and the existence from an absolute perspective of the two forms of thoroughly established phenomena.* It thereby dislodges the hold of the two extreme views [of nihilism and eternalism] and is the definitive meaning that cannot be disputed. The mind-only school believes that the first two [turnings] present the conditional or provisional meaning and can be disputed. *A Definitive Commentary on the Buddha's Intent* states:

Then Exalted Correct Ultimate addressed the Transcendent Conqueror with these words:

The Transcendent Conqueror first turned the wheel of the doctrine in the region of Varanasi at Descent of the Seers, in Deer Park, teaching the four noble truths to those who had entered the way of the pious attendants. It was an amazing and wondrous teaching, such as had never been taught before by anyone in this world, be they gods or human beings. Nevertheless, the teachings of this wheel of the doctrine, you, Transcendent Conqueror, turned, were not the highest [teachings]. They provide an opportunity [for refutation], constitute the provisional meaning, and serve as a basis for debate.

Thereafter the Transcendent Conqueror, having begun with the lack of essence of all phenomena, that they neither come into being nor cease, that they are primordially peaceful and by nature transcend suffering, turned the second wheel of the doctrine, an even more amazing and wondrous teaching on emptiness, for those who had correctly entered the great way. You, Transcendent Conqueror, turned this [second] wheel of the doctrine, but still, there were teach-

*Correct thoroughly established phenomena and unchangeable thoroughly established phenomena.

ings higher than these. They provide an opportunity [for refutation], constitute the provisional meaning, and serve as a basis for debate.

Finally, the Transcendent Conqueror began with the teaching that all phenomena lack an essence. You taught that there is no arising or cessation and that, from the very beginning, all phenomena by nature transcend suffering and are peace. Thus, for those who had correctly entered all ways, you again turned the amazing and wondrous third wheel of the doctrine that possesses excellent discernment. You, Transcendent Conqueror, turned the wheel of this unsurpassable doctrine. These teachings provide no opportunity [for refutation], constitute the definitive meaning, and do not serve as a basis for debate.

The purpose of this [third cycle of] teachings is to dispel the doubts of the two extreme [views] and to place its auditors on the path of the middle way.

Followers of the middle way believe that the first and last wheels of teachings have an underlying intention, while the middle wheel of teachings contains the definitive meaning. The above passage itself is explained to have underlying intention. Some suggest that [the third teaching] resolves contradictions between the first two [teachings], as *The Journey to Lanka Discourse* states:

From the perspective of relative truth, everything has existence,
But according to ultimate truth, nothing has existence.
Thus, regarding a single substance,
There are conflicting views of existence and nonexistence.

So it is said, but this text expresses the middle way view, not that of the mind-only school, which does not accept the view that there is no single truth in the ultimate. The mind-only school is unable to resolve the discrepancy between the pious attendant view and that of the middle way. Some call the first teaching “the wheel of the four noble truths,” the second “the wheel of the two truths,” and the third “the wheel in which the truth was not established.” Yet logic proves that in the final cycle the four noble truths and the two truths were presented. Some say that the final cycle is the wheel

of various ways since it presents [teachings of the] different ways. *The Vast Enjoyment Discourse* states:

The Lord turned the wheel of the doctrine
 In relation to the myriad modes of phenomena—
 Like a magical display, a mirage,
 A dream, the moon's reflection in water, or an echo.

Pandita Parahitabhadrā states, “[The Buddha] turned the wheel of the doctrine of uplift for those without affinity [for the Buddhist path],” while Sajjana states, “He turned the wheel of the doctrine of the solitary sages for those of that affinity.” Chak [contends that] “this contradicts the presentation of the three wheels since such a collection does not appear separately. Thus we can dispense [with such a view].”

The Joyful Buddha, having given up the habitual propensity that motivates speech, did not teach verbally: he did not utter a single word from his enlightenment until he transcended sorrow, but due to sentient beings' aspirations, he taught in many ways. *The Discourse of the Presentation of the Transcendent Buddhas' Inconceivable Secrets* states:

The dangling tubes of a wind chime
 Produce melodies when stirred by the wind;
 Though nothing has struck them,
 Their songs ring forth.
 Likewise, owing to their previous excellent training,
 Sentient beings' aspirations encourage the Buddha,
 And thus his wisdom speech is produced.
 The Buddha himself, however, is completely free of
 such concepts.

Thus, the Teacher saw sentient beings' suffering—veiled by the cataracts of lack of awareness, bound by knots of belief in self, crushed by mountains of pride, tormented by fires of desire, wounded by weapons of anger, lost in the wheel of life's wilderness, and not having crossed the rivers of birth, aging, sickness, and death. To deliver them from such suffering, he extended his magical tongue from his glorious throat and conchlike teeth, and the wisdom speech of Brahma emerged. Thus he turned every cycle of the doctrine.