

THE TURNING OF THE WHEEL SUTTA

This is how I've heard it: Once, the Blessed One was living at Vāranāsi, at Isipatana in the Deer Park. There he addressed the Group of Five bhikkhus: "There are two extremes, bhikkhus, that are not to be followed by one who has Gone Forth. What two? Getting bound to and following sense-pleasure, which is cheap, coarse, worldly, unworthy, and doesn't take you anywhere useful. Then there's getting bound to self-mortification, which is painful, unworthy, and doesn't take you anywhere useful. Not going along with either of these extremes, a Tathāgata has awakened to the middle way; it conduces to seeing, insight, peace, deep knowledge, gnosis, and nibbāna.

"And what is this middle way that a Tathāgata has awakened to, that conduces to seeing, insight, peace, deep knowledge, gnosis, and nibbāna? It's the noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration. This is the middle way that a Tathāgata has awakened to.

"Bhikkhus, there is a noble truth with regard to suffering. Birth is difficult; aging is hard; dying is painful. Sorrow, grieving, pain, anguish, and despair

are all painful. Being stuck with what you don't like is stressful; being separated from what you do like is stressful; not getting what you want is stressful. In brief the five aggregates that are affected by clinging bring no satisfaction.

“Bhikkhus, there is a noble truth concerning the arising of suffering: it arises with craving, a thirst for more that's bound up with relish and passion and is always running here and there. That is: thirst for sense-input, thirst to be something, thirst to not be something.

“Bhikkhus, there is a noble truth about the cessation of suffering. It is the complete fading away and cessation of this craving; its abandonment and relinquishment; getting free from and being independent of it.

“Bhikkhus, there is a noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. It is the noble eightfold path: namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

“There is this noble truth with regard to suffering: in this way, bhikkhus, vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light arose in me about things not heard before. This noble truth with regard to suffering is to be thoroughly understood: in this way, bhikkhus, vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light arose in me about things not heard before. This noble truth with regard to suffering has been thoroughly understood: in this way, bhikkhus, vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light arose in me about things not heard before.

“There is this noble truth concerning the arising of suffering: in this way, bhikkhus, vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light arose in me about things not heard before. This noble truth of the arising of suffering is that it is to be abandoned. . . . This noble truth of the arising of suffering is that it has been abandoned: such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light that arose in me about things not heard before.

“There is this noble truth about the cessation of suffering: in this way, bhikkhus, vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light arose in me about things not heard before. This noble truth about the cessation of suffering is to be realized. . . . This noble truth about the cessation of suffering has been realized: such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light that arose in me about things not heard before.

“There is this noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering. . . . This noble truth of the path is to be cultivated. . . . This noble truth of the path has been cultivated: such was the vision, insight, wisdom, knowing, and light that arose in me about things not heard before.

“As long, bhikkhus, as these four noble truths in their twelve aspects were not seen by me; not seen with the purest insight as they are, then I didn’t teach the world—with its devas, māras, and brahmas, its samanas and brahmins, its monarchs and ordinary folk—that I had fully realized complete awakening.

“But, bhikkhus, as soon as these four noble truths in their twelve aspects were seen by me; seen with the purest insight as they are, then I taught the world—with its devas, māras, and brahmas, its samanas and brahmins, its monarchs and ordinary folk—that I had fully realized complete awakening. The knowledge and the vision arose in me: ‘My release is assured. This is the last birth. There is no further becoming.’”

This is what the Blessed One said—and the Group of Five bhikkhus were gladdened and approved of his words. And while this exposition was being delivered, the untarnished and clear vision of Dhamma arose in the Venerable Kondañña: “Whatever has the characteristic to arise, all that ceases.”

When the wheel of Dhamma had been set rolling by the Blessed One, the devas of the earth raised the cry: “At Vāranāsi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the incomparable wheel of Dhamma has been set rolling by the Blessed One—and it can’t be stopped by any samana, or brahmin, or deva, or māra, or brahma, or anyone whomsoever in the world.”

When they heard what the earth devas had said, the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings cried out with one voice: “At Vāranāsi” And when they heard the cry of the devas of the realm of the Four Great Kings, then the devas of the realm of the Thirty-Three cried out with one voice. . . . When they heard the cry of the Thirty-Three devas, the Yāma devas cried out with one voice. . . . When they heard the cry of the Yāma devas, the Tusitā devas cried out with one voice. . . . When they heard the cry of the Tusitā devas . . . the Nimmānaratī devas cried out with one voice. . . . When they heard the cry of the Nimmānaratī devas, the Paranimmitavasavattī

devas cried out with one voice. . . . When they heard the cry of the Paranimmitavasavattī devas . . . the devas of the retinue of the Brahma deities took up the cry: “At Vāranāsi, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the incomparable wheel of Dhamma has been set rolling by the Blessed One—and it can’t be stopped by any samana or brahmin or deva or māra or brahma or anyone whomsoever in the world.”

So in that instant, at that very moment, the word traveled up to the realm of the high divinities. This ten-thousandfold world system trembled and shook and resounded, and a great measureless radiance, surpassing the shining glory of the devas, was made manifest in the world. Then the Blessed One uttered the pronouncement: “It is Kondañña who has seen deeply! Kondañña who has seen deeply.” And so it was that the name of Venerable Kondañña became “Kondañña the deep seer.”