

# THE EARLIEST RECORDED DISCOURSES OF THE BUDDHA



*TRANSLATED FROM*

**LALITAVISTARA, MAHĀKHANDHAKA & MAHĀVASTU**

**ĀNANDAJOTI BHIKKHU**

**The Earliest Recorded  
Discourses of the Buddha**

*(from Lalitavistara, Mahākhanda & Mahāvastu)*

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(1<sup>st</sup> revision, January 2010)

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*this compilation has been abstracted  
from the following documents:*

**FIRST DISCOURSE:**

[http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/  
Short-Pieces-in-Sanskrit/Turning-the-Dharma-Wheel.htm](http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/Short-Pieces-in-Sanskrit/Turning-the-Dharma-Wheel.htm)

**SECOND & THIRD DISCOURSE:**

[http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/  
Great-Chapter/Great-Chapter.htm](http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/Great-Chapter/Great-Chapter.htm)

**FOURTH DISCOURSE:**

[http:// www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/  
Short-Pieces-in-Sanskrit/Fourth-Discourse.htm](http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/English-Texts/Short-Pieces-in-Sanskrit/Fourth-Discourse.htm)

## Introduction

The earliest recorded discourses of the Buddha are found in narratives detailing his early career, not long after the Awakening. We have three main sources for a record of this period, they are the **Lalitavistara**, which originally seems to have belonged to the Sarvāstivāda sect;<sup>1</sup> the **Mahākhandaka**, which is part of the Theravāda Vinayaṭṭaka, and the **Mahāvastu**, which apparently formed the substance of the Vinaya of the Lokottaravāda sect.<sup>2</sup>

The three works cover somewhat different time spans, the first of them, the Lalitavistara (*An Elaboration of the Play [of the Buddha]*), ends after the first discourse has been delivered. The Mahākhandaka (*The Great Chapter*) continues up and till the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna. The Mahāvastu (*The Great Story*), on the other hand, ends somewhat earlier, with the donation of the Bamboo Wood by King Bimbisāra.

Embedded into these narratives there are certain teachings, which now form the earliest recorded discourses of the Buddha, and it is those that are presented here. That there were many other teachings

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<sup>1</sup> See The Lalitavistara and Sarvastivada by E. J. Thomas in the Indian Historical Quarterly, 16:2 1940.06 p. 239-245.

<sup>2</sup> See Senart, Vol I, p. 2.

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is beyond doubt as we are told so in the narratives,<sup>3</sup> but their contents have not been preserved.

Not all of the teachings exist in all three records: the Lalitavistara, for instance, breaks off after the first discourse and so there is no record of any teachings after that.<sup>4</sup> The Mahāvastu does not know of The Instruction About Burning (*Ādittapariyāya*), which is recorded in the Pāḷi text, and on the other hand where the latter has only a summary of the discourse given to King Bimbisāra, the Mahāvastu records the full discourse.

There are other variations, and though on the whole the Mahāvastu, which is much longer, has more detail than the Mahākhandaka, it records the second discourse as though it followed straight on after the first. However, we can see from the Pāḷi text that this is not so, but must have come about a week later; and what is recorded as the first miracle performed before Uruvelakassapa by the Pāḷi text is said to have been the last one by the Mahāvastu.

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<sup>3</sup> See the section entitled *Further Attainments* below for clear examples. It is for this reason the book is entitled *The Earliest Recorded Discourses of the Buddha*.

<sup>4</sup> Except for a set of 44 verses, which do not form so much a discourse as a summary of some of the main points in the teaching. They are included in this collection because of their intrinsic interest.

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I have not made a detailed comparison of the texts, though such an examination would be well worthwhile and needs to be undertaken. Here however I have only occasionally pointed out some major differences and have been more concerned with providing a clear and readable rescension of the teachings, which were so important to the establishment of the new doctrine, and in spite of the variations there remains a core of teachings at the heart of these discourses which is common to all the Buddhist traditions.

The first discourse deals with the *Four Noble Truths*; the second with the *constituent parts* and the doctrine of *non-self*; the third with the *sense-spheres* and the three main *pollutants*; and the fourth with insight into the phenomena of *rising and ceasing* and *conditional origination*. As can be seen in this short collection are found some of the most foundational and distinctive teachings of the Buddha.

I have retained the narrative framework, albeit in a somewhat abbreviated form,<sup>5</sup> because it seems to me important that these teachings were not given in abstraction, but were taught to meet and convince real individuals who were questing for the Truth. It is not an accident that the middle way was taught to the group-of-five

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<sup>5</sup> When passages have been omitted from the original texts they have been clearly marked in the text.

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former ascetics, as that answered their most important doubt, which they expressed when they first met the Buddha at R̥ṣipatana.

Similarly, that the third discourse was addressed to fire-worshippers and showed what a real fire was is not coincidental, but was meeting them on common ground, and was intended to show how their fire-imagery can still lead them to the truth if correctly applied. The discourse on Causation to the self-made men of Rājagṛha is also right on target, appealing to their sense of dynamism.

## Texts

In compiling this collection I have made use of all three records and the table below summarises the source for the sections and their parallels where they exist:

<b>Section Title</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Parallel</b>
The Meeting at R̥ṣipatana	Lalitavistara	Mahākhandhaka, Mahāvastu
The Discourse that Set the Dharma-Wheel Rolling	Lalitavistara	Mahākhandhaka, Mahāvastu
Verses on Setting Rolling the Dharma-Wheel	Lalitavistara	-



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Further Attainments	Mahākhandhaka	-
The Discourse on the Characteristic of Non-Self	Mahākhandhaka	Mahāvastu
The First Miracle (The Dragon-king)	Mahākhandhaka	Mahāvastu (last miracle)
The Ordination of Kassapa and his Followers	Mahākhandhaka	Mahāvastu (shorter)
The Instruction About Burning	Mahākhandhaka	-
King Bimbisāra goes to meet the Buddha	Mahāvastu	Mahākhandhaka
The Discourse on Arising and Ceasing	Mahāvastu	-

All three texts are written in forms of more or less Sankritised Prākṛt. The Pāḷi text is the one which is least influenced by Sanskrit, the Mahāvastu is more heavily Sanskritised, especially in the prose passages, and the Lalitavistara, which in its present form probably dates from the 1st century A.D. shows the influence of the

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then dominant language even more clearly. All three, however, have a kind of Prākṛt as their basis.

The proper names in the Lalitavistara and Mahāvastu are nearly always given in their Sanskrit form. In order to remain true to the source texts when making the translations I have retained the forms that are found in each of them. This leads to some slight discrepancy which the table below should help rectify, it gives the more familiar Pāli form of the name first and then the Sanskrit, and as can be seen the differences are minimal and readily identifiable:

Pāli	Sanskrit
Isipatana	Ṛṣipatana
Bārāṇasī	Vārāṇasī
Gotama	Gautama
Siddhattha	Siddhārtha
Āññā Koṇḍañña	Ājñāna Kauṇḍinya
Vappa	Vāṣpa

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Bhaddiya	Bhadraka
Assaji	Aśvakī
Uruvelakassapa	Uruvilvākāśyapa
Nadīkassapa	Nadīkāśyapa
Gayākassapa	Gayākāśyapa
Rājagaha	Rājagṛha
Seṇiya Bimbisāra	Śreṇya Bimbisāra

These translations were originally published in full on my website [www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net](http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net), and longer versions of the same material, together with the original text, can be found there.

I am very grateful indeed to Rod Bucknell who selflessly went through all of the texts and translations for me and made many corrections and suggestions for improvement that has greatly improved both accuracy and presentation. He has been a true *kalyāṇamitra*.

## The First Discourse<sup>6</sup>

### The Meeting at R̥ṣipatana<sup>7</sup>

...the Realised One while walking on walking tour through the (various) States approached the great city of Vārāṇasī, and after approaching, dressing at the right time, picking up his bowl and robe, he entered the great city of Vārāṇasī for alms,<sup>8</sup> after walking for alms there, when he was returning from the alms-round after the meal, he approached the Deer Park in R̥ṣipatana and the auspicious group-of-five.

The auspicious group-of-five saw the Realised One coming from afar and after seeing (him) they stopped what they were doing, (and said): “That ascetic Gautama who is coming, friends, is loose, given to luxury, has forsaken the striving. Even when formerly living an austere life he was not able to experience for himself a state beyond (ordinary) human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble

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<sup>6</sup> Lalitavistara, Chapter 26, pp. 407-409, 416-421 & 436-438 vv.31-75 in Lefman's edition.

<sup>7</sup> The section titles have been given by the present editor based on the contents.

<sup>8</sup> This detail about first going for alms is absent from the Pāḷi account in the Mahākhandhaka.

## The First Discourse - 9

knowledge and insight, so how now, when he lives with devotion and clinging to bringing in food for the gross material body?

It is unsuitable, he is loose and given to luxury. No one should go out to meet him, or rise up for him, or take his bowl and robes, or give him a seat, or give him a drink, or set up a footstool, (but) after putting out extra seats he should be told: ‘Know that these are extra seats friend Gautama, if you wish you can sit down.’ ”

Venerable Ājñāna Kauṇḍinya could not endure it in his mind, but nor could he oppose it. As, monks, the Realised One was approaching the auspicious group-of-five they took no delight on being on their seats, and had a desire to rise.

Just as a bird inside a cage when the bottom of the cage is consumed by fire wishes to rise up quickly and wishes to escape the heat of the fire, just so, monks, as the Realised One was approaching near to the auspicious group-of-five so they took no delight on being on their seats, and had a desire to rise. Why is that? There is no being in the (various) classes of beings who, having seen the Realised One, does not rise from their seat.

Just as the Realised One was approaching the auspicious group-of-five so the auspicious group-of-five were unable to bear the glory and majesty of the Realised One, trembling they rose from their seats, having broken their agreement, and rising someone went out to meet him, someone rose up for him and took his bowl and robes,

## The First Discourse - 10

someone offered him a seat, someone set up a footstool, someone set up water for washing his feet, and they said: “Welcome to you friend Gautama, welcome to you friend Gautama, please sit down on the prepared seat, then the Realised One, monks, sat down on the prepared seat.

The auspicious group-of-five exchanged with the Realised One some polite and pleasing talk while seated, and while sitting on one side the auspicious group-of-five said this to the Realised One: “Your faculties, friend Gautama, are very clear, purified is your skin and bright, the complexion of your face is pure, have you, friend Gautama, experienced for yourself a state beyond (ordinary) human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight?”

After that was said, monks, the Realised One said this to the auspicious group-of-five: “Do not, monks, address the Realised One by the word ‘friend’, that will not be for your welfare, benefit and happiness for a long time, the Deathless has been experienced by me, monks, and the Path to the Deathless, I am an Awakened One, monks, all-knowing, all-seeing, one who has cooled off, without pollutants, I have power over all things, and I teach the Doctrine, monks, you should come, listen, undertake and give an ear, I am advising and instructing. Having been properly instructed by me, properly trained, you will be free from the pollutants, freed in

## The First Discourse - 11

mind, freed through wisdom, and in this very life, having seen directly, having attained, you will be able to say:

‘Destroyed is (re)birth for us,  
accomplished is the spiritual life,  
done is what ought to be done,  
there is no more of this mundane state - this we know’.

Now didn't this occur to you: ‘This ascetic Gautama who is coming, friends, is loose, given to luxury, has forsaken the striving. Even when formerly living an austere life he was not able to experience for himself a state beyond (ordinary) human beings, a distinction of what is truly noble knowledge and insight, so how now, when he lives with devotion and clinging to bringing in food for the gross material body?

It is unsuitable, he is loose and given to luxury. No one should go out to meet him, or rise up for him, or take his bowl and robes, or give him a seat, or give him a drink, or set up a footstool, (but) after putting out extra seats he should be told: “Know that these are extra seats friend Gautama, if you wish you can sit down.” ’

[passage omitted]

## **The Discourse that Set the Dharma-Wheel Rolling**

Then the Realised One, monks, in the first watch of the night agreed (to teach) by keeping silent, in the middle watch of the night he took delight in what was to be said, in the last watch of the night he addressed the auspicious group-of-five, (saying): “There are these two extremes, monks, that one who has gone forth ought not to descend to, which is this:

being joined and clinging to the pleasure in sense pleasures, which is low, vulgar, worldly, not very noble, not connected with the goal, not (helpful) for the spiritual life in the future, not leading to world-weariness, dispassion, cessation, deep knowledge, Complete Awakening, and Emancipation; and this, which is not the middle practice: devotion to self-mortification, which is painful, not connected with the goal, painful in this very life and in the future where it results in pain.

Not having approached either of these two extremes, monks, the Doctrine of the middle practice is being taught by the Realised One, which is this:

right view

right thought

right speech



## **The First Discourse - 13**

right action  
right livelihood  
right endeavour  
right mindfulness  
right concentration.

## **The Four Noble Truths**

There are these Four Noble Truths, monks. Which four? Suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the practice leading to the cessation of suffering.

Herein, what is suffering?

birth is suffering  
also old age is suffering  
also sickness is suffering  
also death, being joined to what is not dear, being separated from what is dear, is suffering  
also not to obtain what one seeks for is suffering  
in brief, the five constituent parts (of mind and body) that provide fuel for attachment are suffering.

This is said to be suffering.

## The First Discourse - 14

Herein, what is the arising of suffering?

it is that craving which leads to continuation in existence,  
which is connected with enjoyment and passion.

This is said to be the arising of suffering.

Herein, what is the cessation of suffering?

It is the complete fading away and cessation without  
remainder of the birth of that craving, which greatly enjoys  
this and that, and is connected with enjoyment and passion.

This is [said to be] the cessation of suffering.

Herein, what is the practice leading to the cessation of suffering?

It is the noble eightfold path, which is this:

right view  
right thought  
right speech  
right action  
right livelihood  
right endeavour  
right mindfulness  
right concentration.

## The First Discourse - 15

This is said to be the noble truth of the practice leading to the cessation of suffering.

These, monks, are the four noble truths.

### Realisation

‘This is suffering’, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

‘This is the arising of suffering’,<sup>9</sup> to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

‘This is the cessation of suffering’, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

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<sup>9</sup> In the Pāli version of this discourse the order is somewhat different: knowledge of the truth of suffering is followed by the thought that it

## The First Discourse - 16

‘This is the practice leading to the cessation of suffering’, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is suffering” refers (i.e. suffering itself) ought to be fully known, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the arising of suffering” refers (i.e. craving) ought to be given up, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering” refers (i.e. Emancipation) ought to be experienced, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose,

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ought to be fully known and then by the realisation that it has been fully known; similarly with the others.

## The First Discourse - 17

understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of the practice leading to the end of suffering” refers (i.e. the practice itself) ought to be developed, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of suffering” refers has been fully known, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of the arising of suffering” refers has been given up, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering” refers has been experienced, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose,

## **The First Discourse - 18**

comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

Now that to which “this is the noble truth of the practice leading to the end of suffering” refers has been developed, to me, monks, regarding these previously unheard-of things reflecting wisely and practising continuously, knowledge arose, vision arose, understanding arose, comprehension arose, intelligence arose, wisdom arose and light became manifest.

### **Declaring the Awakening**

For as long as to me, monks, in regard to these four noble truths reflected upon wisely and turned like this, in three ways, twelvefold, knowledge and insight was (still) arising, for that long, monks, I did not declare that I was a Full and Perfect Sambuddha with unsurpassed complete awakening; but when knowledge and insight was no longer arising, and in regard to these four noble truths, monks, turned like this, in three ways, twelvefold, knowledge and insight had arisen (and I knew): sure is my liberation of mind, wisdom and liberation have been experienced, then I, monks, did declare that I was a Full and Perfect Sambuddha with unsurpassed complete awakening and knowledge and insight arose:

‘Destroyed is (re)birth for me,  
accomplished is the spiritual life,  
done is what ought to be done,  
there is no more of this mundane state - this I know’.

This is what was said in that place.

## Verses on Setting the Dharma-Wheel Rolling

Having a voice resounding like Brahmā, like the song of a  
Kinnara,<sup>10</sup>

Having ten-million<sup>11</sup> rays radiating (from his body),

Having cultivated truth continually for many millions of aeons,<sup>12</sup>

The Self-made<sup>13</sup> Sage of the Śākyans addressed Kauṇḍinya:

“The eye is impermanent, inconstant, and so is the ear, the nose,  
The tongue, the body, the mind --- (all) are suffering, non-self,

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<sup>10</sup> *Kinnara*-s are semi-divine like creatures, having a bird's body and a human's face, their song is renowned as being exceptionally beautiful.

<sup>11</sup> Lit: *a thousand myriads* (1,000 x 10,000), which equals ten million (10,000,000); in the next line *koṭi* means *ten million*, but the repetition sounds awkward in English, so I render it as *million*.

<sup>12</sup> The perfection of truth (*satyapāramitā*) is the only perfection the Bodhisattva always maintained unbroken from the time of his making the vow to become a Buddha.

<sup>13</sup> So called because he discovered the truth for himself.

## The First Discourse - 20

empty.

Naturally quiescent like clumps of grass, inanimate,  
There is neither Self here, nor a Person or a Soul.<sup>14</sup>

All things are produced with a condition and a cause,  
Having put aside all extreme views, (it is) as clear as the sky:  
There is no doer, nor is there one who experiences,  
He sees no deed done, whether it be bad or good.

The constituent parts<sup>15</sup> arise through conditions, and so there is  
suffering,

It is produced just as thirst is through the cutting off of water.  
Seeing equanimity towards (conditioned) things through the Path,  
It is completely destroyed, with the cessation of those things subject  
to decay.

With the production of various thoughts that are not wise  
Comes ignorance,<sup>16</sup> no one is a producer of it,

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<sup>14</sup> *Nara* (lit: *a person, a man*) and *Jīva* (lit: *life* or *the life-principle*) are both used here as an equivalent of *Ātma*, *Self*.

<sup>15</sup> The constituent parts (*skandha*) of mind and body: body, feelings, perceptions, (volitional) processes, and consciousness.

<sup>16</sup> This begins a versification of the conditional origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) formula.



## The First Discourse - 21

The cause for volitional (processes) is given,<sup>17</sup> there is no maker of them,

Consciousness arises, made by conditions,

With consciousness there is then an arising of name and form,

With name and form originate the six sense spheres,

Contact is said to fall upon the six sense spheres,

With contact the three feelings follow along,

Whatever feelings there are, all are said to be joined with craving,

From craving is born a whole mass of suffering,

From attachment comes the whole round of existence,

Because of continuation of existence birth arises for him,

With birth as foundation come the sufferings of old-age and sickness,

And many and various rebirths in the round of existence.

Thus from all these conditions there are worldly inhabitants,

There is no Self or Person encountered anywhere.

Where there is no imagining or doubt that is said to be wisdom,

Whatever comes from wisdom, in that there is no ignorance at all.

In whatever place there is cessation of ignorance

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<sup>17</sup> ...is given as ignorance.

## The First Discourse - 22

There is a cessation of all decay and the factors of existence which are destroyed by decay.<sup>18</sup>

Thus conditionality has been understood by the Realised One,  
Because of that the Self-made One declares himself (Awake).  
I do not say that the constituent parts, the sense-spheres, or the  
elements are the Buddha,  
Without an understanding of conditions no-one can become a  
Buddha.

There is no room here for those who have gone forth as heretics,  
When speaking of emptiness in connection with such things,  
(Only) those who are fully purified beings, who live (like) former  
Buddhas,  
Who speak pleasantly, get to know the Nature (of things).”

Thus the Dharma-Wheel (understood) in twelve ways was set  
rolling, it was understood by Kaundinya, and the three jewels came  
into existence.<sup>19</sup>

The Buddha, the Dharma and the Saṅgha, these are the three jewels,  
this cry passed from one to another as far as the Brahmā realm.

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<sup>18</sup> I am unsure about the translation of these two lines.

<sup>19</sup> With Kaundinya's realisation and ordination the third jewel, the Saṅgha came into being, alongside the Buddha and the Dharma.

## The First Discourse - 23

The dust-free (Dharma) Wheel was set rolling by the Lord of the World, and the three jewels, which are exceedingly rare, arose in the world.

Having first converted Kauṇḍinya, the five monks and six hundred million gods were purified by the Vision-of-the-Dharma,

And another eight hundred million gods from the Element of Form<sup>20</sup> had their vision purified by the Dharma-Wheel being set rolling.

Eighty-four thousand human beings who had assembled also had their vision purified, and were freed from all bad destinations.<sup>21</sup>

At that moment in the ten directions<sup>22</sup> without end this cry (concerning) the Buddha went forth, resounding, sweet, pleasing, beautiful, it was heard in the firmament:

“The supreme Dharma-Wheel, has been set rolling by the One Possessing Ten-Powers, by the Śākyan sage, by no other, after he had approached R̥ṣipatana, close to Vārāṇasī.”

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<sup>20</sup> I.e. the Brahmā gods.

<sup>21</sup> I.e. they all attained to Stream-Entry (*Sotāpatti*), and were no longer subject to falling into the lower realms.

## The First Discourse - 24

In the ten directions all of the hundred Buddhas<sup>23</sup> fell silent, and the leading sages who attended on them all asked the Victorious Ones:

‘Why have the Ones Possessing Ten-Powers after hearing this sound, interrupted their Dharma talk thus? What is the reason they have so quickly silenced their speech?’

‘Through a hundred previous existences Awakening was accomplished with energy and strength, and many hundred-thousand Buddhas-to-be were left behind.

So through beneficial actions and purification<sup>24</sup> the auspicious Awakening was attained, the Wheel has been rolled three times, therefore we have become silent.’

After hearing these words, those billions<sup>25</sup> of sages, after developing the strength of friendliness, advanced towards the auspicious and highest Awakening, (thinking):

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<sup>22</sup> The four main directions (East, South, West, North) the intermediate directions (South-East, etc.), above and below.

<sup>23</sup> It must mean in other realms of existence, as only one Buddha arises in a world-system at any one time.

<sup>24</sup> S.v. *uttapta* in BHSD for this meaning.

<sup>25</sup> Lit: one hundred ten-millions (= 1,000,000,000).

## The First Discourse - 25

‘We also will train under the Sage, engaged in giving rise to energy, quickly we will become supreme in the world, and will offer the Vision-of-the-Dharma (to others).’

[passage omitted]

The deep, hard to see, subtle Dharma-Wheel has been set rolling, which the Māras cannot grasp, nor any of the outside heretics.

The non-adhering, non-proliferating, non-arising, non-producing Dharma-Wheel has been set rolling, which is pure,<sup>26</sup> and naturally empty.

Without effort and without leaving off effort, without signs and characteristics, the Buddha praises the Wheel which explains the nature of equanimity.

A magical mirage, a dream, the moon in the water, an echo - just so is the Wheel that was set rolling by the Lord of the World.

The entrance to (understanding) conditionality, which is neither annihilation nor eternalism, the Dharma-Wheel, which cuts off all (wrong) views, is remembered as such.

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<sup>26</sup> S.v. *vivikta* in BHSD for this meaning.

## The First Discourse - 26

(Empty) forever like space, free from doubt, luminous, the explanation of the middle (Path), free from extremes -- such is the Dharma-Wheel said to be.

Free from being and non-being, without Self or non-Self, the Dharma-Wheel is said to be the explanation of Nature and of birth.

True from bottom to top, this is real and factual, the unique explanation of the nature (of things) - such is the Dharma-Wheel said to be.

The state of the eye is empty, and so also with the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body and the mind --- they are empty of self, inanimate.<sup>27</sup>

This Wheel is such-like, the Dharma-Wheel that has been set rolling, it Awakens the unawakened beings, therefore it is called the awakened (teaching).

By myself the state and characteristic of Nature have been understood without the teaching of others, (I am) therefore Self-made, a Visionary.

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<sup>27</sup> Edgerton (BHSD s.v. *nirīha*) gives the meaning here as *indifferent*, but it seems to me the better meaning is as in the translation.

## The First Discourse - 27

I have attained mastery of all things, so I am said to be the Lord of Dharma, I am the knower of the right and wrong way in (all) things, therefore I am said to be the Leader.<sup>28</sup>

As there are unfriendly people I will discipline them in the Discipline, (I have) attained the discipline of perfection, therefore I am called the Great Leader.

To those beings who have lost their way I point out the Path supreme, and lead them to the farther shore, therefore I am the Great Leader.

Through knowing the bases of sympathy<sup>29</sup> I welcome the people crossing through the forest of the Cycle (of birth and death), therefore I am the Caravan-Leader.

I have power over all things, therefore I am the Victorious Master of the Dharma, having set rolling the Dharma-Wheel I am said to be the Dharma-King.

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<sup>28</sup> There is a play on the sounds *naya*, *anaya*, and *nāyaka* here, which does not come across well in the English.

<sup>29</sup> In Lalitavistara (beginning of Chapter 13) these are listed as *giving*, *lovely speech*, *beneficial actions*, *even-handedness*.

## The First Discourse - 28

I am the Lord-Giver of Dharma, the Teacher, the unsurpassed Lord of the Dharma, I am Siddhārtha (the Accomplished One), who has made the sacrifice, fulfilled hopes, accomplished blessings.

I am the Comforter, the One with Insight into Safety, the Hero, the One who has put down Great Evil, the One who has Overcome all Battles, the One who is Freed and by whom the people are freed.

I am the Light of the world, the Light of Wisdom and Knowledge, I am the Destroyer of the darkness of nescience, the Torch-bearer, the Great Light.

I am the Great Doctor, the Great Knower, the Great Physician for the defilements, the unsurpassed Surgeon for beings pierced by the defilements.

I am endowed with all the characteristics, resplendent with all the marks,<sup>30</sup> having a body auspicious on all sides, (but) who resembles the lowly.<sup>31</sup>

I am the One Strong with the Ten Strengths, the most Mature of the Mature, I am the Great Sage, the Head, endowed with eighteen special qualities.”<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Characteristics and marks of a Great Man, it means.

<sup>31</sup> I.e. appears as a normal human being.



## The First Discourse - 29

This is the short explanation of the setting rolling of the Dharma-Wheel, the Realised One's beautiful virtues have thus been given and set forth.

The Buddha's knowledge is endless, just like the Great Sky, while speaking of it aeons may be destroyed, but the virtues of the Buddha will never decay.

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<sup>32</sup> There is a list in the Mahāvīyutpatti of the 18 *āveṇika*-s (s.v. *āveṇika* in BHSD); the Realised One has no perplexity, hurry, loss of mindfulness, lack of composure, manifold perception, lack of reflective equanimity; or any putting down of wholesome desire, energy, mindfulness, concentration, wisdom, freedom; he has knowledge of what precedes and what follows all bodily, verbal and mental actions, and has set rolling past, future, and present means of non-attachment, non-revenge, knowledge and insight.

## The Second Discourse<sup>33</sup>

### Further Attainments

Now when the Dhamma Wheel was set rolling by the Gracious One [all the] gods let loose a cry:

“Near Bārāṇasī, in the Deer Park at Isipatana,  
the unsurpassed Dhamma Wheel has been set rolling by the  
Gracious One,  
and it cannot be rolled back by an ascetic or by a brahmaṇa  
or by a god or by a Māra or by a Brahmā or by anyone in the  
world.”

Thus at that moment, at that second, that cry reached as far as the Brahmā worlds, and this ten-thousand world-element moved, wavered, and shook, and great and measureless light became manifest in the world, transcending the godly power of the gods. Then the Gracious One uttered this inspired utterance:

“Koṇḍañña surely knows, Koṇḍañña surely knows.”

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<sup>33</sup> Pali Text Society edition of Vinaya Piṭakam, Vol I, The Mahāvagga, pp. 12-14.

## The Second Discourse - 31

Thus to the venerable Koṇḍañña came the name Aññā Koṇḍañña (Koṇḍañña, he-who-knows).

Then the venerable Aññā Koṇḍañña, having seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, understood the Dhamma, penetrated the Dhamma, crossed over uncertainty, being without doubts, having attained full confidence, having become independent of others in the Teacher's teaching, said this to the Gracious One: “May I receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may I receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monk,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was this the venerable one's full ordination.<sup>34</sup>

Then the Gracious One gave advice and instruction with a Dhamma talk to the remaining monks. Then to the venerable Vappa and to the venerable Bhaddiya as the Gracious One gave advice and instruction with a Dhamma talk the dust-free, stainless, Vision-of-the-Dhamma arose:

“Whatever has the nature of arising, all that has the nature of ceasing.”

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<sup>34</sup> He is therefore the first monk is the dispensation, and was ordained with the *ehi-bhikkhu* formula.

## The Second Discourse - 32

They, having seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma,<sup>35</sup> understood the Dhamma, penetrated the Dhamma, crossed over uncertainty, being without doubts, having attained full confidence, having become independent of others in the Teacher's teaching, said this to the Gracious One:

“May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

Then the Gracious One, living on (those two) monks’ food gave advice and instruction with a Dhamma talk to the remaining monks, and the six monks subsisted on whatever, after walking for alms-food, the three monks brought them. Then to the venerable Mahānāma and to the venerable Assaji as the Gracious One gave advice and instruction with a Dhamma talk the dust-free, stainless, Vision-of-the-Dhamma arose:

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<sup>35</sup> According to the commentary and Jā Nid Vappa attained on the first day after Āsāḷhā, and Bhaddiya on the second, but it is hard to reconcile this with the text which treats them both together. There is a similar problem with Mahānāma and Assaji below, who are said by the commentary to have attained on the third and fourth days of the waning moon. That they were ordained in pairs strongly suggests that they attained at the same time.

## The Second Discourse - 33

“Whatever has the nature of arising, all that has the nature of ceasing.”

They, having seen the Dhamma, attained the Dhamma, understood the Dhamma, penetrated the Dhamma, crossed over uncertainty, being without doubts, having attained full confidence, having become independent of others in the Teacher's teaching, said this to the Gracious One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

### **The Discourse on the Characteristic of Non-Self (The First Arahants)**

Then the Gracious One addressed the group-of-five monks (saying):

“Bodily form, monks, is not Self,<sup>36</sup> for if this bodily form, monks, were Self this bodily form would not lead to affliction, and regarding bodily form it might be possible (to say): ‘Let my bodily

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<sup>36</sup> It is the supposed Higher or Cosmic Self that is being denied. The first proof of lack of Self in this sense is that we do not have ultimate control over the constituent parts (*khandhā*).

## The Second Discourse - 34

form be thus, let my bodily form be not thus.’ But because bodily form, monks, is not Self, therefore bodily form does lead to affliction, and regarding bodily form it is not possible (to say): ‘Let my bodily form be thus, let my bodily form be not thus.’

Feeling is not Self, for if this feeling, monks, were Self this feeling would not lead to affliction, and regarding feeling it might be possible (to say): ‘Let my feeling be thus, let my feeling be not thus.’ But because feeling, monks, is not Self, therefore feeling does lead to affliction, and regarding feeling it is not possible (to say): ‘Let my feeling be thus, let my feeling be not thus.’

Perception is not Self, for if this perception, monks, were Self this perception would not lead to affliction, and regarding perception it might be possible (to say): ‘Let my perception be thus, let my perception be not thus.’ But because perception, monks, is not Self, therefore perception does lead to affliction, and regarding perception it is not possible (to say): ‘Let my perception be thus, let my perception be not thus.’

(Mental) processes are not Self, for if these (mental) processes, monks, were Self these (mental) processes would not lead to affliction, and regarding (mental) processes it might be possible (to say): ‘Let my (mental) processes be thus, let my (mental) processes be not thus.’ But because (mental) processes, monks, are not Self, therefore (mental) processes do lead to affliction, and regarding

## The Second Discourse - 35

(mental) processes it is not possible (to say): ‘Let my (mental) processes be thus, let my (mental) processes be not thus.’

Consciousness is not Self, for if this consciousness, monks, were Self this consciousness would not lead to affliction, and regarding consciousness it might be possible (to say): ‘Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness be not thus.’ But because consciousness, monks, is not Self, therefore consciousness does lead to affliction, and regarding consciousness it is not possible (to say): ‘Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness be not thus.’

What do you think of this, monks: “(Is) bodily form permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, venerable Sir.” “But that which is impermanent, (is) that unpleasant or pleasant?” “Unpleasant, venerable Sir.” “But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ” “Certainly not, venerable Sir.”<sup>37</sup>

“(Is) feeling permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, venerable Sir.” “But that which is impermanent, (is) that unpleasant or pleasant?” “Unpleasant, venerable Sir.” “But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ” “Certainly not, venerable Sir.”

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<sup>37</sup> It is interesting that the second argument against the concept of a Self relies on the *notion of suitability* to uphold its truth.

## The Second Discourse - 36

“(Is) perception permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, venerable Sir.” “But that which is impermanent, (is) that unpleasant or pleasant?” “Unpleasant, venerable Sir.” “But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ” “Certainly not, venerable Sir.”

“(Are) (mental) processes permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, venerable Sir.” “But that which is impermanent, (is) that unpleasant or pleasant?” “Unpleasant, venerable Sir.” “But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ” “Certainly not, venerable Sir.”

“(Is) consciousness permanent or impermanent?” “Impermanent, venerable Sir.” “But that which is impermanent, (is) that unpleasant or pleasant?” “Unpleasant, venerable Sir.” “But that which is unpleasant and changeable, is it proper to regard it thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my Self?’ ” “Certainly not, venerable Sir.”

“Therefore monks, whatever bodily form (there is) in the past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, inferior or excellent, whether far or near, regarding all form: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self,’ in just this way, as it really is, it should be seen with full wisdom.

Whatever feeling (there is) in the past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, inferior or excellent, whether far or near,



## The Second Discourse - 37

regarding all feeling: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self,’ in just this way, as it really is, it should be seen with full wisdom.

Whatever perception (there is) in the past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, inferior or excellent, whether far or near, regarding all perception: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self,’ in just this way, as it really is, it should be seen with full wisdom.

Whatever (mental) processes (there are) in the past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, inferior or excellent, whether far or near, regarding all (mental) processes: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self,’ in just this way, as it really is, it should be seen with full wisdom.

Whatever consciousness (there is) in the past, future or present, internal or external, gross or fine, inferior or excellent, whether far or near, regarding all consciousness: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my Self,’ in just this way, as it really is, it should be seen with full wisdom.

Seeing in this way, monks, the learned, Noble disciple, grows weary of bodily form, and weary of feeling, and weary of perception, and weary of (mental) processes, and weary of consciousness, through weariness he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion he is

## The Second Discourse - 38

liberated, in liberation, there is the knowledge that such is liberation:

‘Destroyed is (re)birth  
accomplished is the spiritual life  
done is what ought to be done  
there is no more of this mundane state’ - this he knew.

The Gracious One said this, and the group-of-five monks were uplifted and greatly rejoiced in what was said by the Gracious One.

Moreover, as this sermon was being given, the group-of-five monks’ minds were liberated from the pollutants, without attachment, and at that time there were six Worthy Ones in the world.

## The Third Discourse<sup>38</sup>

### The First Miracle<sup>39</sup>

#### (The Dragon-King)

Then the Gracious One while walking gradually on walking tour arrived at Uruvelā. Then at that time at Uruvelā there lived three yogis:<sup>40</sup> known as Uruvelakassapa, Nadīkassapa, and Gayākassapa.<sup>41</sup> Of these, the yogi Uruvelakassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of five hundred yogis. The yogi Nadīkassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of three hundred yogis. The yogi Gayākassapa was the leader, guide, chief, director, and instructor of two hundred yogis.

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<sup>38</sup> Pali Text Society edition of Vinaya Piṭakam, Vol I, The Mahāvagga, pp. 24-25 & 32-35.

<sup>39</sup> Between the conversion of the group-of-five and that of the Kassapa brothers and their followers there are two important sections dealing with the conversion of Yasa, his family and friends, and the conversion of the thirty friends. As these incidents did not result in a discourse being recorded they have been omitted here.

<sup>40</sup> Literally: *one with a tangled mass of hair, a matted hair ascetic*. I use *yogi* to be concise.

<sup>41</sup> All the names arise from the place names where they dwelt: Kassapa at *Uruvelā*, Kassapa at the River (*Nadī*, i.e. *Nerañjarā*), and Kassapa at

### The Third Discourse - 40

Then the Gracious One approached the yogi Uruvelakassapa's ashram, and after approaching he said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we<sup>42</sup> would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse.”<sup>43</sup> “It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-king here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you.”

For a second time the Gracious One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse.” “It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-king here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you.”

For a third time the Gracious One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “If it is not troublesome to you, Kassapa, we would stay for one night in the sacrificial firehouse.” “It is not troublesome to me, Great Ascetic, (but) there is a fierce, venomous,

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*Gayā*. The name *Kassapa* (Skt: *Kāśyapa*) itself is a brahminical clan name.

<sup>42</sup> This is the so-called *royal we*, a plural that is used politely in many languages when talking about oneself.

<sup>43</sup> SED: *agnj-grha*, *house or place for keeping the sacred fire*.

### The Third Discourse - 41

poisonous, Dragon-king here, having psychic power, he should not (be allowed to) harass you.”

“It is all right, he will not harass me, come now, Kassapa, allow me the sacrificial firehouse.” “Dwell (there), Great Ascetic, according to your pleasure.”

Then the Gracious One, after entering the sacrificial firehouse and preparing a grass covering, sat down, having folded his legs crosswise, set his body straight, and established mindfulness at the front. Then the Dragon saw that the Gracious One had entered, and after seeing (him), pained, depressed, he belched out smoke.

Then this occurred to the Gracious One: “Now what if I, without having destroyed this Dragon's tegument, skin, flesh, muscle, bone, or bone-marrow, were to overcome (the Dragon's) power with (my) power?” Then the Gracious One so arranged it with his psychic powers that he (also) belched out smoke. Then that Dragon, unbearably angry, blazed forth. The Gracious One, having attained the fire-element, also blazed forth, and both of them burned so bright it was as if the sacrificial firehouse was on fire, in flames, was burning down.

## The Third Discourse - 42

Then those yogis, having surrounded the sacrificial firehouse, said this: “The Great Ascetic is surely intelligent,<sup>44</sup> but he is harassed by the Dragon.” Then the Gracious One, with the passing of that night, without harming that Dragon's tegument, skin, flesh, muscle, bone, or bone-marrow, after overcoming (the Dragon's) power with (his own) power and dropping him into his bowl, showed (him) to the yogi Uruvelakassapa, (saying): “This is your Dragon, Kassapa, his power was overcome by (my) power.”

Then this occurred to the yogi Uruvelakassapa: “Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, since he can overcome this fierce, venomous, poisonous, Dragon-King's psychic power with (his own) power, but he is surely not a Worthy One like I am.”

[many miracles omitted here]

## The Ordination of Kassapa and his Followers

Then this occurred to the Gracious One: “For a long time this will occur to that foolish fellow: ‘Powerful and majestic is this Great Ascetic, but he is surely not a Worthy One like I am.’ Now what if I were to cause spiritual anxiety to this yogi?” Then the Gracious One said this to the yogi Uruvelakassapa “You are certainly not a

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<sup>44</sup> This meaning for *abhirūpa* is attested in Sanskrit, and seems much more appropriate than *handsome*, *beautiful* in the context.

### The Third Discourse - 43

Worthy One, Kassapa. Nor have you entered the path to Worthiness. This practice of yours is not one whereby you could be a Worthy One, or one who has entered the path to Worthiness.”

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa, having fallen with his head at the Gracious One's feet, said this to the Gracious One: “May I receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may I receive the full ordination.” “But you Kassapa, are the leader, guide, chief, director and instructor of five hundred yogis. You should give them permission and they can do whatever they are thinking.”

Then the yogi Uruvelakassapa approached those yogis, and after approaching he said this to those yogis: “I wish to live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic, you, dear friends, can do whatever you are thinking.”

“For a long time, friend, we have had confidence in the Great Ascetic, if you, friend, will live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic, all of us will live the spiritual life under the Great Ascetic.”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair,<sup>45</sup> locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Gracious

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<sup>45</sup> Lit: *mixing their hair, mixing their locks, etc. in the water*, which sounds odd, even in Pāli.

### The Third Discourse - 44

One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Gracious One, they said this to the Gracious One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

The yogi Nadīkassapa saw the hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment floating in the water, and after seeing (them), this occurred to him: “Let there be no danger for my brothers,” and he sent yogis, (saying): “Go and find out about my brothers,” and he together with three hundred yogis approached the venerable Uruvelakassapa, and after approaching he said this to the venerable Uruvelakassapa: “Is this better, Kassapa?” “Yes, friend, this is better.”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Gracious One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Gracious One, they said this to the Gracious One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may we receive the full ordination.”



### The Third Discourse - 45

“Come, monks,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

The yogi Gayākassapa saw the hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment floating in the water, and after seeing (them), this occurred to him: “Let there be no danger for my brothers,” and he sent yogis, (saying): “Go and find out about my brothers,” and he together with two hundred yogis approached the venerable Uruvelakassapa, and after approaching he said this to the venerable Uruvelakassapa: “Is this better, Kassapa?” “Yes, friend, this is better.”

Then those yogis, after throwing their hair, locks, pole and basket and sacred fire equipment into the water, approached the Gracious One, and after approaching and falling with their heads at the feet of the Gracious One, they said this to the Gracious One: “May we receive the going-forth, venerable Sir, in the presence of the Gracious One, may we receive the full ordination.”

“Come, monks,” said the Gracious One, “the Dhamma has been well-proclaimed, live the spiritual life for the complete ending of suffering.” That was these venerable ones’ full ordination.

## The Instruction About Burning

Then the Gracious One, having dwelt at Uruvelā for as long as he liked, left on walking tour for Gayā's Head, together with a great Community of monks, with a thousand monks all of whom were formerly yogis. There the Gracious One dwelt near Gayā, on Gayā's Head together with a thousand monks.

There the Gracious One addressed the monks, (saying): “All is burning, monks. What all is burning, monks? The eye is burning, monks, forms are burning,<sup>46</sup> eye-consciousness is burning, eye-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on eye-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The ear is burning, sounds are burning, ear-consciousness is burning, ear-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises

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<sup>46</sup> The analysis that follows here is of the internal and external sense-spheres (*āyatanaṇi*) skilfully applied to the fire-worshippers, showing what is really burning, and what it is burning with.

### The Third Discourse - 47

dependent on ear-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The nose is burning, scents are burning, nose-consciousness is burning, nose-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on nose-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The tongue is burning, tastes are burning, tongue-consciousness is burning, tongue-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on tongue-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

### The Third Discourse - 48

The body is burning, tangibles are burning, body-consciousness is burning, body-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on body-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

The mind is burning, thoughts are burning, mind-consciousness is burning, mind-contact is burning, and whatever feeling arises dependent on mind-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, that also is burning.

With what is it burning? It is burning with the fire of passion, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of delusion. It is burning with birth, with old age and death, with griefs, with lamentations, with pains, with sorrows, and with despairs, I say.

Seeing this, monks, the learned Noble disciple grows weary of the eye, grows weary of forms, grows weary of eye-consciousness, grows weary of eye-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on eye-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that.

### The Third Discourse - 49

He grows weary of the ear, grows weary of sounds, grows weary of ear-consciousness, grows weary of ear-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on ear-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that.

He grows weary of the nose, grows weary of scents, grows weary of nose-consciousness, grows weary of nose-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on nose-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that.

He grows weary of the tongue, grows weary of tastes, grows weary of tongue-consciousness, grows weary of tongue-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on tongue-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that.

He grows weary of the body, grows weary of tangibles, grows weary of body-consciousness, grows weary of body-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on body-contact, whether pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that.

He grows weary of the mind, grows weary of thoughts, grows weary of mind-consciousness, grows weary of mind-contact, and whatever feeling that arises dependent on mind-contact, whether

### The Third Discourse - 50

pleasant, unpleasant, or neither-unpleasant-nor-pleasant, he also grows weary of that, through weariness he becomes dispassionate, through dispassion he is liberated, in liberation, there is the knowledge that such is liberation:

‘Destroyed is (re)birth  
accomplished is the spiritual life  
done is what ought to be done  
there is no more of this mundane state’ - this he knows.

Moreover, as this sermon was being given, those one thousand monks’ minds were liberated from the pollutants, without attachment.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> According to Mahāvastu the Buddha converted another 250 yogis who were followers of Upasena (perhaps this means Sāriputta's brother, who later became a monk); he also taught the *Chapter of the Thousands* of the Dharmapada in Uruvilvakāśyapa's ashram before leaving for Rājagṛha.

## The Fourth Discourse<sup>48</sup>

### King Bimbisāra goes to meet the Buddha

Then the Gracious One while walking on walking tour amongst the Magadhans with a great Community of Monks, with one thousand two hundred and fifty monks, entered the town of Rājagṛha of the Magadhans, and having reached there he lived in the Sapling garden wood on the edge of the mountain.

King Śreṇya Bimbisāra heard from his brāhmaṇa chaplain and the royal teacher: “The Gracious One, it seems, while walking on walking tour amongst the Magadhans with a great Community of Monks, with one thousand two hundred and fifty monks, has entered the town of Rājagṛha of the Magadhans, and having reached there he is living in the Sapling garden wood on the edge of the mountain. After hearing (it) he addressed a certain King's Minister (saying):

“Good Minister, I am going out to meet the Gracious One, the Awakened One. Decorate Rājagṛha, and prepare magnificent vehicles for the brāhmaṇas and householders from Magadha, and

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<sup>48</sup> From Mahāvastu, Vol. III pp. 443-9.

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the craftsmen, and guildsmen, they must go together with me to meet the Gracious One, the Awakened One.”

“Certainly, Great King”, said the King's Minister, and after agreeing with Śreṇya Bimbisāra, he quickly prepared the magnificent vehicles, and had this proclamation made in Rājagṛha at the cross-roads and entrances (to the town): “The Awakened One, the Gracious One has reached the Sapling garden on the mountain's edge and everyone must go together with King Śreṇya Bimbisāra to meet the Gracious One.”

[short passage omitted]

Then the King's Minister, after seeing that the people had assembled, the magnificent vehicles had been made ready, and approaching King Śreṇya Bimbisāra, said this to King Śreṇya Bimbisāra: “The magnificent vehicles have been made ready, Great King, and a great body of people have assembled, now is the time, your Majesty, for whatever you are thinking.”

Then the King Śreṇya Bimbisāra, after mounting a magnificent vehicle, surrounded by twelve myriads of brāhmaṇas and householders from Magadha, with great Royal power and a great body of people who were calling and shouting, with the collective noise of drums great and small, and conches, went out from the town of Rājagṛha and to the Sapling Wood garden on the edge of the mountain.



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Then the King Śreṇya Bimbisāra, having gone as far as the ground for vehicles (would allow), and descending from the vehicle, approached the Gracious One by foot, and after worshipping the Gracious One's feet with his head, he sat down on one side.

Some (of the brāhmaṇas and householders), after polite and courteous talk with the Gracious One, and exchanging greetings, sat down on one side. Some, after announcing to the Gracious One their very own Mother's and Father's name and lineage, sat down on one side. Some, after raising their hands in respectful salutation to the Gracious One, sat down on one side. Some of the brāhmaṇas and householders from Magadha, while keeping silent, sat down on one side.

[passage omitted]

## The Discourse on Arising and Ceasing

Then the Gracious One presented<sup>49</sup> this Dharma talk to the brāhmaṇas and householders from Magadha:

“Bodily form, brāhmaṇas and householders, arises and ceases, feeling arises and ceases, perception arises and ceases, (volitional) processes arise and cease, consciousness arises and ceases.

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<sup>49</sup> See BHSD, s.v. *praṇāmayati* for this meaning.

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The Noble Disciple, brāhmaṇas and householders, contemplating ‘bodily form has the nature to arise and dissolve’, contemplates ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are impermanent’,

contemplating ‘bodily form is impermanent’, contemplating ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are impermanent’, contemplating ‘bodily form is suffering’ contemplating ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are suffering’, contemplates ‘bodily form is not-self’, he contemplates ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are not-self’,

contemplating ‘bodily form is not-self’, contemplating ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are not-self’, he knows ‘bodily form arises and dissolves’, knowing ‘bodily form arises and dissolves’ he knows ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness arise and dissolve’, knowing ‘bodily form is impermanent’ he knows, knowing [thus], he knows ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are impermanent’,

knowing [thus], he knows ‘bodily form is suffering’, knowing [thus], he knows ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are suffering’, knowing [thus], he knows ‘bodily form is not-self’,

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knowing [thus], he knows ‘feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are not-self’, knowing (thus) he is not attached to anything in the world, being without attachment he personally is emancipated,

‘Destroyed is (re)birth,  
accomplished is the spiritual life  
done is what ought to be done  
there is no more of this mundane state’ - this he knows.

Then this occurred to those brāhmaṇas and householders:

“Since bodily form, it seems, is surely not-self, (since) feeling, perception, (volitional) processes, and consciousness are not-self, then who is the maker, or the one who makes, who is the animator, or the originator, or the one who puts (them) down, who takes up these processes or puts them down, for whom are these processes empty, not capable of being self, or having a self or with a capability of being self?

Then the Gracious One, knowing with his mind the reflection that had arisen in the minds of those brāhmaṇas and householders, addressed the monks (saying):

“The fool, monks, though he declares he has arrived at (the view of) not-self (thinks) his feelings, perceptions, (volitional) processes, or consciousness are ‘my self’; but again I do not say thus:

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‘I am the maker here, or the one who makes, the animator, or the originator, or the one who puts (them) down, he who puts down these processes here and takes (them) up elsewhere.’

The processes arise and the processes cease, they arise with causes, and they cease with causes, with causes for the process of rebirth, [thus] monks, does the Realised One [explain] ‘self’ and ‘the one who takes up’. I declare there is a falling away and a rearing up of beings.

I see, monks, with my divine eye which is purified and surpasses that of (normal) men beings falling away and rearing up: beautiful and ugly, well born and low born, base and excellent, I know that beings are born according to their actions, but again I do not say thus:

‘I am the maker, or the one who makes, the animator, or the activator,<sup>50</sup> or the originator, or the one who puts (them) down, who puts down these processes here and takes (them) up elsewhere.’ The processes arise and the processes cease, they arise with causes and conditions, and they cease with causes and conditions.

There is the view about causes, and the view about continuity in existence, ‘with causes processes arise’, monks, seeing this with right

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<sup>50</sup> This is additional to the formulas above.

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wisdom as it really is there will be no existence-view or eternity-view; 'with causes processes cease', monks, seeing this with right wisdom as it really is there will be no extinction view, or annihilation view.

So not having approached either of these two extremes, monks, the Realised One teaches the Dhamma which is a middle practice (thus):

Because of ignorance there are (volitional) processes,  
because of (volitional) processes: consciousness,  
because of consciousness: mind and body,  
because of mind and body: the six sense spheres,  
because of the six sense spheres: contact,  
because of contact: feeling,  
because of feeling: craving,  
because of craving: attachment,  
because of attachment: continuation,  
because of continuation: birth,  
because of birth: old age, death, grief, lamentation, pain,  
sorrow, and despair.

And so there is an origination of this [whole] great mass of suffering.

From the cessation of ignorance, there is the cessation of (volitional) processes,

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from the cessation of (volitional) processes, the cessation of  
consciousness,  
from the cessation of consciousness, the cessation of mind and  
body,  
from the cessation of mind and body, the cessation of the six  
sense spheres,  
from the cessation of the six sense spheres, the cessation of  
contact,  
from the cessation of contact, the cessation of feeling,  
from the cessation of feeling, the cessation of craving,  
from the cessation of craving, the cessation of attachment,  
from the cessation of attachment, the cessation of continuation,  
from the cessation of continuation, the cessation of birth,  
from the cessation of birth, the cessation of old age and death,  
from the cessation of old age and death,<sup>51</sup> grief, lamentation,  
pain, sorrow, and despair (all) cease,

and so there is a cessation of this whole great mass of suffering.

The Gracious One said this while living near Rājagṛha on the side  
of the mountain in the Sapling Garden, moreover, as this sermon  
was being given, as King Śreṇya Bimbisāra was sitting right there

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<sup>51</sup> This differs from the standard formula, which reads: *from the cessation of birth, old age and death, grief, lamentation, pain, sorrow, and despair (all) cease.*

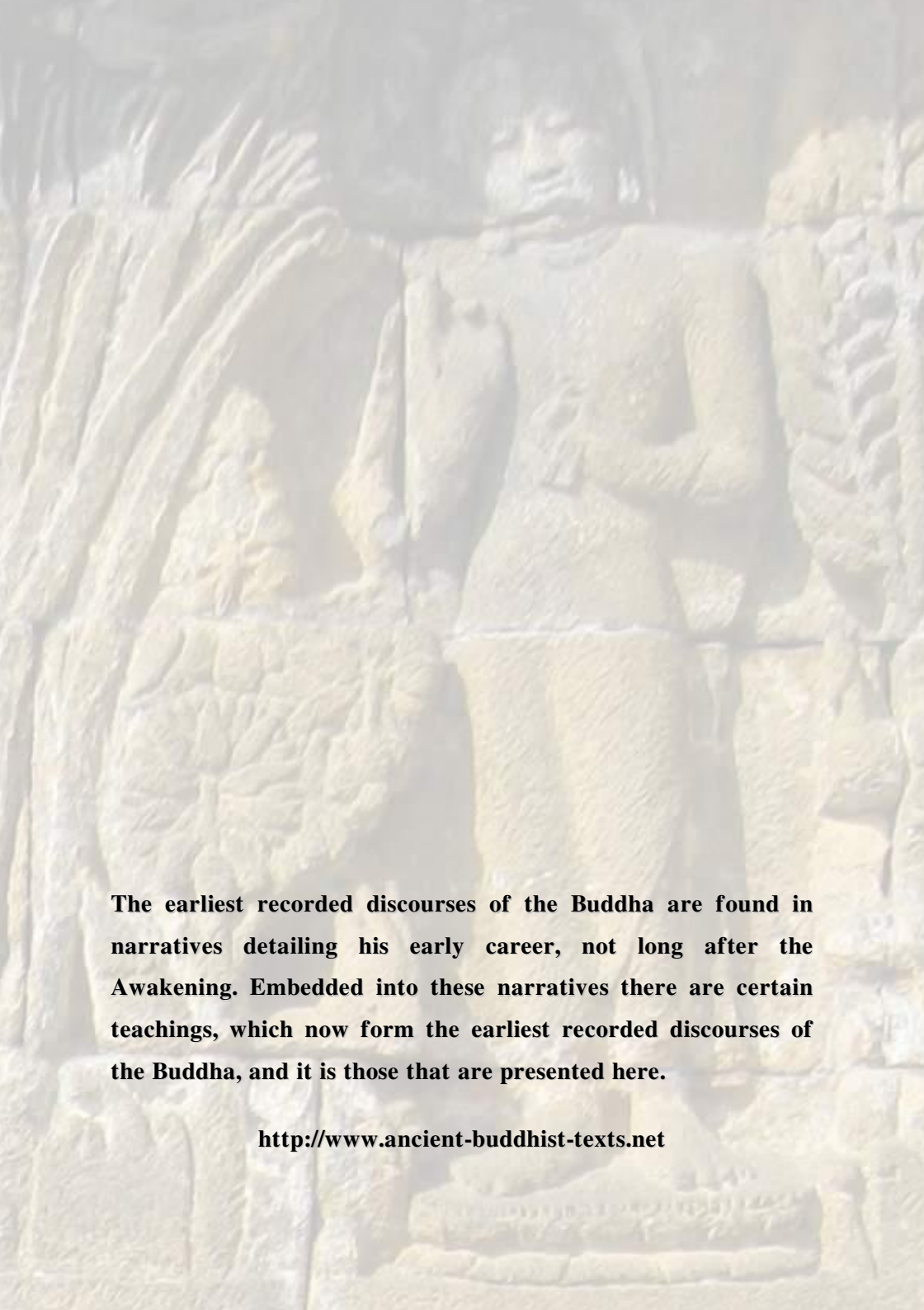
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on the seat, the dust-free, stainless, Vision-of-the-Dhamma regarding (all) things arose.

Also to eleven thousand (of the brāhmaṇas and householders) the dust-free, stainless, Vision-of-the-Dhamma regarding (all) things arose. Also the twelve thousand coachman and drivers at the back went for refuge to the Buddha, went for refuge to the Dhamma, went for refuge to the Saṅgha, and those monks, King Śreṇya Bimbisāra, and the brāhmaṇas and householders from Magadha were uplifted and greatly rejoiced in what was said by the Gracious One.







**The earliest recorded discourses of the Buddha are found in narratives detailing his early career, not long after the Awakening. Embedded into these narratives there are certain teachings, which now form the earliest recorded discourses of the Buddha, and it is those that are presented here.**

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