

CHAPTER 6

DHAMMACAKKAPPAVATTANA SUTTA

— *The First Discourse*

“The best of paths is the Eightfold Path.
The best of truths are the four Sayings.
Non-attachment is the best of states.
The best of bipeds is the Seeing One.”

— Dhp 273



ncient India was noted for distinguished philosophers and religious teachers who held diverse views with regard to life and its goal. Brahmajāla Sutta (DN 1) mentions sixty-two varieties of philosophical theories that prevailed in the time of the Buddha.

One extreme view that was diametrically opposed to all current religious beliefs was the nihilistic teaching of the materialists who were also termed *cārvākas* after the name of the founder.

According to ancient materialism which, in Pali and Sanskrit, was known as *lokāyata*, man is annihilated after death, leaving behind him whatever force generated by him. In their opinion death is the end of all. This present world alone is real. “Eat, drink, and be merry, for death comes to all,” appears to be the ideal of their system. “Virtue,” they say, “is a delusion and enjoyment is the only reality. Religion is a foolish aberration, a mental disease. There was a distrust of everything good, high, pure and compassionate. Their theory stands for sensualism and selfishness and the gross affirmation of the loud will. There is no need to control passion and instinct, since they are the nature’s legacy to men.”⁷⁸

Another extreme view was that emancipation was possible only by leading a life of strict asceticism. This was purely a religious doctrine firmly held by the ascetics of the highest order. The five monks who attended on the Bodhisatta during his struggle for enlightenment tenaciously adhered to this belief.

In accordance with this view the Buddha, too, before his enlightenment subjected himself to all forms of austerity. After an extraordinary struggle for six years he realised the utter futility of self-mortification. Consequently, he changed his unsuccessful hard course and adopted a middle way. His favourite disciples thus lost confidence in him and

78. Sri Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, vol. 1, pp. 281–282.

deserted him, saying, "The ascetic Gotama has become luxurious, had ceased from striving, and has returned to a life of comfort."

Their unexpected desertion was definitely a material loss to him as they ministered to all his needs. Nevertheless, he was not discouraged. The iron-willed Bodhisatta must have probably felt happy for being left alone. With unabated enthusiasm and with restored energy he persistently strove until he attained enlightenment, the object of his life.

Precisely two months after his enlightenment on the *Āsāḷha* (July) full moon day the Buddha delivered his first discourse to the five monks that attended on him.

The First Discourse of the Buddha

Dhammacakka is the name given to this first discourse of the Buddha. It is frequently represented as meaning "the kingdom of truth," "the kingdom of righteousness," or "the wheel of truth." According to the commentators *dhamma* here means wisdom or knowledge, and *cakka* means founding or establishment. *Dhammacakka* therefore means the founding or establishment of wisdom. *Dhammacakkappavattana* means The Exposition of the Establishment of Wisdom. *Dhamma* may also be interpreted as truth, and *cakka* as wheel. *Dhammacakkappavattana* would therefore mean The Turning or The Establishment of the Wheel of Truth.

In this most important discourse the Buddha expounds the Middle Path which he himself discovered and which forms the essence of his new teaching. He opened the discourse by exhorting the five monks who believed in strict asceticism to avoid the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification as both do not lead to perfect peace and enlightenment. The former retards one's spiritual progress, the latter weakens one's intellect. He criticised both views as he realised by personal experience their futility and enunciated the most practicable, rational and beneficial path, which alone leads to perfect purity and absolute deliverance.

This discourse was expounded by the Buddha while he was residing at the Deer Park in Isipatana near Benares.

The intellectual five monks who were closely associated with the Buddha for six years were the only human beings that were present to hear the sermon. Books state that many invisible beings such as devas and Brahmās also took advantage of the golden opportunity of listening to the sermon. As Buddhists believe in the existence of realms other than this world, inhabited by beings with subtle bodies imperceptible to the

physical eye, possibly many devas and Brahmās were also present on this great occasion. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Buddha was directly addressing the five monks and the discourse was intended mainly for them.

At the outset the Buddha cautioned them to avoid the two extremes. His actual words were: "There are two extremes (*antā*) which should not be resorted to by a recluse (*pabbajitena*).” Special emphasis was laid on the two terms "*antā*" which means end or extreme and "*pabbajita*" which means one who has renounced the world.

One extreme, in the Buddha's own words, was the constant attachment to sensual pleasures (*kāmasukhallikānuyoga*). The Buddha described this extreme as base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble, and profitless. This should not be misunderstood to mean that the Buddha expects all his followers to give up material pleasures and retire to a forest without enjoying this life. The Buddha was not so narrow-minded.

Whatever the deluded sensualist may feel about it, to the dispassionate thinker the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is distinctly short-lived, never completely satisfying, and results in unpleasant reactions. Speaking of worldly happiness, the Buddha says that the acquisition of wealth and the enjoyment of possessions are two sources of pleasure for a layman. An understanding recluse would not however seek delight in the pursuit of these fleeting pleasures. To the surprise of the average man he might shun them. What constitutes pleasure to the former is a source of alarm to the latter to whom renunciation alone is pleasure.

The other extreme is the constant addiction to the practice of self-mortification (*attakilamathanuyoga*). Commenting on this extreme, which is not practised by the ordinary man, the Buddha remarks that it is painful, ignoble, and profitless. Unlike the first extreme this is not described as base, worldly, and vulgar. The selection of these three terms is very striking. As a rule it is the sincere recluse who has renounced his attachment to sensual pleasures that resorts to this painful method, mainly with the object of gaining his deliverance from the ills of life. The Buddha, who has had painful experience of this profitless course, describes it as useless. It only multiplies suffering instead of diminishing it.

The Buddhas and arahants are described as *ariyas* meaning nobles. *Anariya* (ignoble) may therefore be construed as not characteristic of the Buddha and arahants who are free from passions. *Attha* means the ultimate good, which for a Buddhist is Nibbāna, the complete emancipation from suffering. Therefore *anattasamhitā* may be construed as not conducive to ultimate good.

The Buddha at first cleared the issues and removed the false notions of his hearers.

When their troubled minds became pliable and receptive the Buddha related his personal experience with regard to these two extremes.

The Buddha says that he (the Tathāgata), realising the error of both these two extremes, followed a middle path. This new path or way was discovered by himself. The Buddha termed his new system *majjhimā paṭipadā*—the middle way. To persuade his disciples to give heed to his new path he spoke of its various blessings. Unlike the two diametrically opposite extremes this middle path produces spiritual insight and intellectual wisdom to see things as they truly are. When the insight is clarified and the intellect is sharpened everything is seen in its true perspective.

Furthermore, unlike the first extreme, which stimulates passions, this middle way leads to the subjugation of passions, which results in peace. Above all it leads to the attainment of the four supramundane paths of sainthood, to the understanding of the four noble truths, and finally to the realisation of the ultimate goal, Nibbāna.

Now, what is the middle way? The Buddha replies: It is the Noble Eightfold Path. The eight factors are then enumerated in the discourse.

The first factor is right understanding, the keynote of Buddhism. The Buddha started with right understanding in order to clear the doubts of the monks and guide them on the right way.

Right understanding deals with the knowledge of oneself as one really is; it leads to right thoughts of non-attachment or renunciation (*nekkhamma saṅkappa*), loving kindness (*avyāpāda saṅkappa*), and harmlessness (*avihiṃsā saṅkappa*), which are opposed to selfishness, ill will, and cruelty respectively. Right thoughts result in right speech, right action, and right livelihood, which three factors perfect one's morality. The sixth factor is right effort which deals with the elimination of evil states and the development of good states in oneself. This self-purification is best done by a careful introspection, for which right mindfulness, the seventh factor, is essential. Effort, combined with mindfulness, produces right concentration or one-pointedness of the mind, the eighth factor. A one-pointed mind resembles a polished mirror where everything is clearly reflected with no distortion.

Prefacing the discourse with the two extremes and his newly discovered middle way, the Buddha expounded the four noble truths in detail. *Sacca* is the Pali term for truth which means *that which is*. Its Sanskrit equivalent is *satya* which denotes an incontrovertible fact. The Buddha enunciates four such truths, the foundations of his teaching, which are

associated with the so-called being. Hence his doctrine is homocentric, opposed to theocentric religions. It is introvert and not extrovert. Whether the Buddha arises or not these truths exist, and it is a Buddha that reveals them to the deluded world. They do not and cannot change with time, because they are eternal truths. The Buddha was not indebted to anyone for his realisation of them, as he himself remarked in this discourse thus: "With regard to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight and the light." These words are very significant because they testify to the originality of his new teaching. Hence there is no justification in the statement that Buddhism is a natural outgrowth of Hinduism, although it is true that there are some fundamental doctrines common to both systems.

These truths are in Pali termed *ariya saccāni*. They are so called because they were discovered by the greatest Ariya, that is, one who is far removed from passions.

The first noble truth deals with *dukkha* which, for want of a better English equivalent, is inappropriately rendered by suffering or sorrow. As a feeling *dukkha* means that which is difficult to be endured. As an abstract truth *dukkha* is used in the sense of contemptible (*du*) emptiness (*kha*). The world rests on suffering—hence it is contemptible. It is devoid of any reality—hence it is empty or void. *Dukkha* therefore means contemptible void.

Average men are only surface-seers. An ariya sees things as they truly are.

To an ariya all life is suffering and he finds no real happiness in this world which deceives mankind with illusory pleasures. Material happiness is merely the gratification of some desire.

All are subject to birth (*jāti*) and consequently to decay (*jarā*), disease (*vyādhī*) and finally to death (*maraṇa*). No one is exempt from these four causes of suffering.

Wish unfulfilled is also suffering. As a rule one does not wish to be associated with things or persons one detests nor does one wish to be separated from things or persons one likes. One's cherished desires are not however always gratified. At times what one least expects or what one least desires is thrust on oneself. Such unexpected unpleasant circumstances become so intolerable and painful that weak ignorant people are compelled to commit suicide as if such an act would solve the problem.

Real happiness is found within, and is not to be defined in terms of wealth, power, honours or conquests. If such worldly possessions are

forcibly or unjustly obtained, or are misdirected or even viewed with attachment, they become a source of pain and sorrow for the possessors.

Normally the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is the highest and only happiness of the average person. There is no doubt some momentary happiness in the anticipation, gratification, and retrospection of such fleeting material pleasures, but they are illusory and temporary. According to the Buddha non-attachment (*virāgattā*) or the transcending of material pleasures is a greater bliss.

In brief this composite body (*pañcupadānakkhandhā*) itself is a cause of suffering.

There are three kinds of craving. The first is the grossest form of craving, which is simple attachment to all sensual pleasures (*kāmatanḥā*). The second is attachment to existence (*bhavatanḥā*). The third is attachment to non-existence (*vibhavatanḥā*). According to the commentaries the last two kinds of craving are attachment to sensual pleasures connected with the belief of eternalism (*sassatadiṭṭhi*) and that which is connected with the belief of nihilism (*ucchedadiṭṭhi*). Bhavatanḥā may also be interpreted as attachment to realms of form and vibhavatanḥā, as attachment to formless realms since desire for form realms and desire for formless realms (*rūparāga* & *arūparāga*) are treated as two fetters (*saṃyojana*).

This craving is a powerful mental force latent in all, and is the chief cause of most of the ills of life. It is this craving, gross or subtle, that leads to repeated births in *saṃsāra*⁷⁹ and that which makes one cling to all forms of life.

The grossest forms of craving are attenuated on attaining *sakadāgāmi*, the second stage of sainthood, and are eradicated on attaining *anāgāmi*, the third stage of sainthood. The subtle forms of craving are eradicated on attaining *arahantship*.

Right understanding of the first noble truth leads to the eradication (*pahātabba*) of craving. The second noble truth thus deals with the mental attitude of the ordinary man towards the external objects of sense.

The third noble truth is that there is a complete cessation of suffering which is Nibbāna, the ultimate goal of Buddhists. It can be achieved in this life itself by the total eradication of all forms of craving.

This Nibbāna is to be comprehended (*sacchikātabba*) by the mental eye by renouncing all attachment to the external world.

This first truth of suffering which depends on this so-called being and various aspects of life, is to be carefully perceived, analysed and exam-

79. Lit. 'wandering', i.e., the round of rebirths. See note 328 on page 226.

ined (*pariññeyya*). This examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself as one really is.

The cause of this suffering is craving or attachment (*taṇhā*). This is the second noble truth.

The Dhammapada states:

From craving springs grief,
from craving springs fear;
For him who is wholly free from craving,
there is no grief, much less fear. (v. 216)

Craving, the Buddha says, leads to repeated births (*ponobhavikā*). This Pali term is very noteworthy as there are some scholars who state that the Buddha did not teach the doctrine of rebirth. This second truth indirectly deals with the past, present and future births.

This Third noble truth has to be realised by developing (*bhāvetabba*) the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga*). This unique path is the only straight way to Nibbāna. This is the fourth noble truth.

Expounding the four truths in various ways, the Buddha concluded the discourse with the forceful words:

As long, O bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these four noble truths under their three aspects and twelve modes was not perfectly clear to me, so long I did not acknowledge that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment.

When the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these truths became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment (*anuttara sammāsambodhi*).

And there arose in me the knowledge and insight: Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind, this is my last birth, and now there is no existence again.

At the end of the discourse Kondañña, the senior of the five disciples, understood the Dhamma and, attaining the first stage of sainthood, realised that whatever is subject to origination all that is subject to cessation—*Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ*.

When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the Dhammacakka, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: “This excellent Dhammacakka, which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, Māra, or Brahmā in this world, has been expounded by the Exalted One at the Deer Park, in Isipatana, near Benares.”

Hearing this, devas and Brahmās of all the other planes also raised the same joyous cry.

A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world.

The light of the Dhamma illumined the whole world, and brought peace and happiness to all beings.



The First Discourse of the Buddha: Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Exalted One was residing at the Deer Park,⁸⁰ in Isipatana,⁸¹ near Benares. Thereupon the Exalted One addressed the group of five bhikkhus as follows:

“There are these two extremes (*antā*), O bhikkhus, which should be avoided by one who has renounced (*pabbajitena*)

(i) “Indulgence in sensual pleasures⁸²—this is base, vulgar, worldly, ignoble and profitless; and,

(ii) “Addiction to self-mortification⁸³—this is painful, ignoble and profitless.

“Abandoning both these extremes the Tathāgata⁸⁴ has comprehended the Middle Path (*majjhima patipadā*) which promotes sight (*cakkhu*) and knowledge (*ñāṇa*), and which tends to peace (*vupasaṃāya*),⁸⁵ higher wisdom (*abhiññāya*),⁸⁶ enlightenment (*sambodhāya*),⁸⁷ and Nibbāna.

“What, O bhikkhus, is that middle path the Tathāgata has comprehended which promotes sight and knowledge, and which tends to peace, higher wisdom, enlightenment, and Nibbāna?

“The very Noble Eightfold Path—namely, right understanding (*sammā diṭṭhi*), right thoughts (*sammā saṅkappa*), right speech (*sammā vācā*), right action (*sammā kammanta*), right livelihood (*sammā ājīva*), right effort (*sammā vāyāma*), right mindfulness

80. Vinaya Mahāvagga, p. 10, Saṃyutta Nikāya V p. 420.

81. Modern Saranath where, in a former existence, the Master sacrificed his life to save a helpless doe and her unborn little one. The locality takes its modern name from the Bodhisatta who, in that ancient birth, was Sāranganātha, protector of the deer.

82. *Kāmasukhallikānuyoḡa*.

83. *Attakilamathānuyoḡa*.

84. Lit., “thus who hath come” or “thus who hath gone.” When the Buddha refers to himself he usually uses this epithet.

85. Subjugation of passions.

86. Realisation of the four noble truths.

87. Attainment of the four paths and four fruits of saintship.

(*sammā sati*), and right concentration (*sammā samādhi*),—this, O bhikkhus is the middle path which the Tathāgata has comprehended.

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha-ariya-sacca*):

“Birth is suffering, decay is suffering, disease is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unpleasant is suffering, to be separated from the pleasant is suffering, not to get what one desires is suffering. In brief the five aggregates⁸⁸ of attachment are suffering.

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the cause of suffering (*dukkha-samudaya-ariyasacca*):

“It is this craving which produces rebirth (*ponobhavikā*), accompanied by passionate clinging, welcoming this and that (life). It is the craving for sensual pleasures (*kāmatanḥā*), craving for existence (*bhavatanḥā*) and craving for non-existence (*vibhavatanḥā*).

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth of cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-ariyasacca*):

“It is the complete separation from, and destruction of, this very craving, its forsaking, renunciation, the liberation therefrom, and non-attachment thereto.

“Now, this, O bhikkhus, is the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha-gāminī-paṭipadā-ariyasacca*).

“It is this Noble Eightfold Path, namely:

“Right understanding, right thoughts, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

1. (i) “This is the noble truth of suffering.

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

(ii) “This noble truth of suffering should be perceived (*pariññeyya*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

(iii) “This noble truth of suffering has been perceived (*pariññāta*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

2. (i) “This is the noble truth of the cause of suffering.

88. *Pañcupadānakkhandhā*: According to Buddhism this so-called being is composed of five groups, viz: *rūpa*, matter, *vedanā*, feeling, *saññā*, perception, *saṅkhārā*, mental states, and *viññāṇa*, consciousness. These are the five psycho-physical component parts that constitute an individual. Matter is composed of forces and qualities. Mind too is composed of mental states (*cetasikas*). They are fifty-two in number. Of them *vedanā*, and *saññā* are treated as two distinct groups. The remaining fifty are collectively called *saṅkhārā*.

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (ii) “This noble truth of the cause of suffering should be eradicated (*pahātabba*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (iii) “This noble truth of the cause of suffering has been eradicated (*pahīna*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

3. (i) “This is the noble truth of cessation of suffering.

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (ii) This noble truth of cessation of suffering should be realised (*sacchikātabba*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (iii) “This noble truth of cessation of suffering has been realised (*sacchikata*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

4. (i) “This is the noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

“Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (ii) “This noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering should be developed (*bhavitabba*).

Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.

- (iii) “This noble truth of the path leading to the cessation of suffering has been developed (*bhāvetabba*).

“Thus, O bhikkhus, with respect to things unheard before, there arose in me the eye, the knowledge, the wisdom, the insight, and the light.”

(Concluding his discourse, the Buddha said):

“As long, O bhikkhus, as the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these four noble truths under their three aspects⁸⁹ and twelve modes⁹⁰ was not perfectly clear to me, so long I did not acknowledge in this world inclusive of gods, Māras and Brahmās and amongst the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment (*anuttaraṃ-sammā-sambodhiṃ*).

“When, O bhikkhus, the absolute true intuitive knowledge regarding these four noble truths under their three aspects and twelve modes, became perfectly clear to me, then only did I acknowledge in this world inclusive of gods, Māras, Brahmās, amongst the hosts of ascetics and priests, gods and men, that I had gained the incomparable supreme enlightenment.

“And there arose in me the knowledge and insight (*ñāṇadassana*). Unshakable is the deliverance of my mind.⁹¹ This is my last birth, and now there is no existence again’.”

Thus the Exalted One discoursed, and the delighted bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.

When this doctrine was being expounded there arose in the Venerable Kondaṇṇa the dustless, stainless, truth-seeing eye (*dhammacakkhu*)⁹² and he saw that “whatever is subject to origination all that is subject to cessation.”⁹³

When the Buddha expounded the discourse of the Dhammacakka, the earth-bound deities exclaimed: “This excellent Dhammacakka which could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, Māra, or Brahmā in this world has been expounded by the Exalted One at the Deer Park, in Isipatana, near Benares.”

Hearing this, the devas⁹⁴ of Cātummahārājika, Tāvātimsa, Yāma, Tusita, Nimmānarati, Paranimmitavasavatti, and the Brahmās of Brahmā Pārisajja, Brahmā Purohita, Mahā Brahmā, Paritābhā, Appamāṇābhā, Ābhassara, Parittasubha, Appamāṇasubha, Subhakiṇṇa, Vehapphala, Aviha, Atappā, Sudassa, Sudassī, and Akaniṭṭha, also raised the same joyous cry.

89. They are: (i) the knowledge of the four truths (*saccañāṇa*); (ii) the knowledge as regards the respective function of the four truths (*kiccañāṇa*); and (iii) the knowledge that the respective function of each truth has been accomplished (*katañāṇa*).

90. Each truth consists of three aspects. Thus four truths consist of twelve modes.

91. The reference is to the fruit of arahantship (*arahanttaphala*).

92. *Dhammacakkhu* signifies any of the lower three paths: *sotāpatti*, *sakadāgāmi*, and *anāgāmi*. Kondaṇṇa attained the first stage of sainthood (*sotāpatti*). The other bhikkhus attained *sotāpatti* later.

93. *Yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodha-dhammaṃ*.

94. Celestial beings of Deva and Brahmā planes.

Thus at that very moment, at that very instant, this cry extended as far as the Brahmā realm. These ten thousand world systems quaked, tottered, and trembled violently.

A radiant light, surpassing the effulgence of the gods, appeared in the world. Then the Exalted One said, “Friends, Kondañña has indeed understood. Friends, Kondañña has indeed understood.”

Therefore the Venerable Kondañña was named Aññāta Kondañña.

Some Reflections on the Dhammacakka Sutta

1. Buddhism is based on personal experience. As such it is rational and not speculative.
2. The Buddha discarded all authority and evolved a golden mean which was purely his own.
3. Buddhism is a way or a path (*magga*).
4. Rational understanding is the keynote of Buddhism.
5. Blind beliefs are dethroned.
6. Instead of beliefs and dogmas the importance of practice is emphasised. Mere beliefs and dogmas cannot emancipate a person.
7. Rites and ceremonies so greatly emphasised in the Vedas play no part in Buddhism.
8. There are no gods to be propitiated.
9. There is no priestly class to mediate.
10. Morality (*sīla*), concentration (*samādhi*), and wisdom (*paññā*), are essential to achieve the goal—Nibbāna.
11. The foundations of Buddhism are the Four Truths that can be verified by experience.
12. The Four Truths are associated with one’s person hence Buddhism is homocentric and introvert.
13. They were discovered by the Buddha and he is not indebted to anyone for them. In his own words,—“They were unheard of before.”
14. Being truths, they cannot change with time.
15. The first truth of suffering, which deals with the constituents of self or so-called individuality and the different phases of life, is to be analysed, scrutinised and examined. This examination leads to a proper understanding of oneself.
16. Rational understanding of the first truth leads to the eradication of the cause of suffering—the second truth which deals with the psy-

chological attitude of the ordinary man towards the external objects of sense.

17. The second truth of suffering is concerned with a powerful force latent in us all.
18. It is this powerful invisible mental force—craving—the cause of the ills of life.
19. The second truth indirectly deals with the past, present and future births.
20. The existence of a series of births is therefore advocated by the Buddha.
21. The doctrine of kamma,⁹⁵ its corollary, is thereby implied.
22. The third truth of the destruction of suffering, though dependent on oneself, is beyond logical reasoning and is supramundane (*lokuttara*) unlike the first two which are mundane (*lokiya*).
23. The third truth is purely a self-realisation—a Dhamma to be comprehended by the mental eye (*sacchikātabba*).
24. This truth is to be realised by complete renunciation. It is not a case of renouncing external objects but internal attachment to the external world.
25. With the complete eradication of this attachment is the third truth realised. It should be noted that mere complete destruction of this force is not the third truth—Nibbāna. Then it would be tantamount to annihilation. Nibbāna has to be realised by eradicating this force which binds oneself to the mundane.
26. It should also be understood that Nibbāna is not produced (*uppādetabbā*) but is attained (*pattabba*). It could be attained in this life itself. It therefore follows that though rebirth is one of the chief doctrines of Buddhism the goal of Buddhism does not depend on a future birth.
27. The third truth has to be realised by developing the fourth truth.
28. To eradicate one mighty force eight powerful factors have to be developed.
29. All these eight factors are purely mental.
30. Eight powerful good mental forces are summoned to attack one latent evil force.

95. Skt. *karma*.

31. Absolute purity, a complete deliverance from all repeated births, a mind released from all passions, immortality (*amata*) are the attendant blessings of this great victory.
32. Is this deliverance a perfection or absolute purity? The latter is preferable.
33. In each case one might raise the question—"What is being perfected? What is being purified?"

There is no being or permanent entity in Buddhism, but there is a stream of consciousness.

It is more correct to say that this stream of consciousness is purified by overthrowing all defilements.



*The Second Discourse: Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*⁹⁶

On one occasion the Exalted One was dwelling at the Deer Park, in Isipatana, near Benares. Then the Exalted One addressed the band of five bhikkhus, saying, "O bhikkhus!"

"Lord," they replied.

Thereupon the Exalted One spoke as follows:

"The body (*rūpa*), O bhikkhus, is soulless (*anattā*). If, bhikkhus, there were in this a soul⁹⁷ then this body would not be subject to suffering. "Let this body be thus, let this body be not thus," such possibilities would also exist. But inasmuch as this body is soulless, it is subject to suffering, and no possibility exists for (ordering): 'Let this be so, let this be not so.'

"In like manner feelings (*vedanā*), perceptions (*saññā*), mental states (*sāṅkhārā*), and consciousness (*viññāṇa*)⁹⁸ are soulless.⁹⁹

"What think ye, O bhikkhus, is this body permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent (*anicca*), Lord."

96. Mahāvagga, p. 13; Saṃyutta Nikāya pt. iii, p. 66.

97. A permanent unchanging entity, created by a God or emanating from a *para-mātmā* (divine essence).

98. The so-called being is composed of these five aggregates. Outside these five there is no being. If one removes the aggregates, nothing remains. A soul abides neither in any one group or aggregate nor in all of them nor outside them.

99. The Buddha makes the same assertion as above in connection with each of the remaining four component parts of the so-called being. The Buddha raises similar queries with regard to each of the other constituents of being. The translation is abridged here.

“Is that which is impermanent happy or painful?”

“It is painful (*dukkha*), Lord.”

“Is it justifiable, then, to think of that which is impermanent, painful and transitory: ‘This is mine; this am I; this is my soul?’”

“Certainly not, Lord.”

“Similarly, O bhikkhus, feelings, perceptions, mental states and consciousness are impermanent and painful.

“Is it justifiable to think of these which are impermanent, painful and transitory: ‘This is mine; this am I; this is my soul?’”¹⁰⁰

“Certainly not, Lord.”

“Then, O bhikkhus, all body, whether past, present or future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be understood by right knowledge in its real nature: ‘This is not mine (*n’etaṃ mama*); this am I not (*n’eso ‘ham-asmi*); this is not my soul (*na me so atta*).’

“All feelings, perceptions, mental states and consciousness whether past, present or future, personal or external, coarse or subtle, low or high, far or near, should be understood by right knowledge in their real nature as: ‘These are not mine; these am I not; these are not my soul.’

“The learned ariyan disciple who sees thus gets disgust for the body, for feelings, for perceptions, for mental states, for consciousness; is detached from the abhorrent thing and is emancipated through detachment. Then dawns on him the knowledge: ‘Emancipated am I.’ He understands that rebirth is ended, lived is the holy life, done what should be done, there is no more of this state again.”

This the Exalted One said, and the delighted bhikkhus applauded the words of the Exalted One.

When the Buddha expounded this teaching the minds of the group of five bhikkhus were freed of defilements without any attachment.¹⁰¹



100. With craving (*taṇhā*) one erroneously thinks, “This is mine.” With pride (*māna*) one thinks, “This am I.” With false view one thinks, “This is my soul.” These are the three misconceptions (*maññanā*).

101. That is, they all attained arahantship.