

The First Discourse of the Buddha Teaching the Four Noble Truths at Deer Park

Taishō Tripiṭaka volume 2, number 99, sūtra 379.

Translated originally by Trepitaka Guṇabhadra ca. 435-443 CE

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was dwelling in Vārāṇasī, at the Deer Park of Ṛṣipatana. At that time, the Bhagavān addressed a group of five bhikṣus, saying:

“[1] Thus is the Noble Truth of Suffering, a dharma that has never been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [2] Thus are the noble truths of the accumulation of suffering, [3] the cessation of suffering, and [4] the path that leads to the cessation of suffering: dharmas that have never been heard before, and which are to be contemplated. When doing so, they give birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi.

“[5] Moreover, you should fully know the Noble Truth of Suffering, a dharma that has never been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [6] When the Noble Truth of the Accumulation of Suffering has been known, then it should be severed. This is a dharma that has never been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [7] Moreover, from cessation of the accumulation of suffering, the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering is known, and it should be realized. This is a dharma that has not been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [8] Moreover, from this the Noble Truth of the Path that Leads to the Cessation of Suffering is known, and should be cultivated. This is a dharma that has never been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi.

“[9] Moreover, bhikṣus, when the Noble Truth of Suffering has been known, its knowledge has been produced. This is a dharma that has not been heard before,

and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [10] Moreover, when the Noble Truth of the Accumulation of Suffering has been known, its severance has been produced. This is a dharma that has not been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [11] Moreover, when the Noble Truth of the Cessation of Suffering has been known, its realization has been produced. This is a dharma that has not been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. [12] Moreover, when the Noble Truth of the Path that Leads to the Cessation of Suffering has been known, its cultivation has been produced. This is a dharma that has never been heard before, and which is to be contemplated. When doing so, it gives birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi.

“Bhikṣus, in regard to these three turnings and twelve motions of the Four Noble Truths, if they had not given birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi, then amongst all the devas, māras, brahmās, śramaṇas, and brāhmaṇas who hear the Dharma, I could not have achieved liberation, gone beyond, and departed. I also would not have had self-realization of the attainment of Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi. Yet I have, from the three turnings and twelve motions of the Four Noble Truths, given birth to vision, wisdom, understanding, and Bodhi. Amongst the devas, māras, brahmās, śramaṇas, and brāhmaṇas who hear the Dharma, I have gone beyond and achieved liberation, and have had self-realization of the attainment of Anuttarā Samyaksambodhi.”

At that time, when the Bhagavān had spoken this Dharma, then Venerable Kauṇḍinya, along with eight koṭīs of devas, left the dust and dirt far behind and attained the pure Dharma Eye. At this time, the Bhagavān addressed Venerable Kauṇḍinya, “Has the Dharma been known?” Kauṇḍinya addressed the Buddha, saying, “It has been known, Bhagavān.” Again Venerable Kauṇḍinya was addressed, “Has the Dharma been known?” Kauṇḍinya addressed the Buddha, “It has been known, Sugata.” Because Venerable Kauṇḍinya has known the Dharma, he is called Ājñātakauṇḍinya.

After Venerable Ājñātakauṇḍinya had thus known the Dharma, the earth spirits took up the cry: “The Bhagavān, in Vārāṇasī at the Deer Park of Ṛṣipatana, has turned the Dharma Wheel three times in twelve motions, that all the śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas, and all the devas, māras, and brahmās, have never before turned! This brings many true benefits, true peace and happiness, and compassion for the world; its meaning brings benefits, prosperity, and peace to devas and humans, increasing the devas and reducing the asuras!” After the earth spirits had taken up

the call, then the devas of empty space, Cāturmahārājika Heaven, Trāyastriṃśa Heaven, Yāma Heaven, Tuṣita Heaven, Nirmāṇarati Heaven, and Parinirmitavaśavartin Heaven each instantly took up the call in succession, all the way up to the Brahmā Heavens. Then the brahmā retinue took up the cry: “The Bhagavān, in Vārāṇasī at the Deer Park of R̥ṣipatana, has turned the Dharma Wheel three times in twelve motions, that all the śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas, and all the devas, māras, and brahmās, have never before turned! This brings many true benefits, and true peace and happiness; its meaning benefits all devas and humans, increasing the devas and reducing the asuras!”

Because the Bhagavān has turned the Dharma Wheel in Vārāṇasī at the Deer Park of R̥ṣipatana, this sūtra is therefore called the Dharmacakra Pravartana Sūtra. After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, the bhikṣus heard what the Buddha had said, and blissfully practiced in accordance.