



REVIEW OF RESEARCH

ISSN: 2249-894X

IMPACT FACTOR : 5.7631(UIF)

VOLUME - 14 | ISSUE - 3 | DECEMBER - 2024



THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DHAMMACAKKAPAVATTANA SUTTA IN THERAVADA BUDDHISM

Iddhimanda

Nagarjuna Nagar, Guntur , Andhra Pradesh, India

ABSTRACT

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta, or the "Discourse on the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma," is one of the most significant teachings in Buddhism. Delivered by the Buddha in Sarnath after his enlightenment, this sutta sets out the core teachings that form the foundation of Buddhist thought and practice. It particularly focuses on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, laying the groundwork for the entire Buddhist doctrine. Here is a summary and explanation of the sutta, integrating references from seven books with page numbers to give a more comprehensive understanding.



KEYWORDS: *Summary of Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta in Theravada Buddhism, The Significance of the Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta in Theravada Buddhism and The Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma in Buddhism.*

INTRODUCTION

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta is one of the most important discourses in Theravāda Buddhism, often considered the Buddha's first sermon after his enlightenment. Delivered to the five ascetics at the Deer Park in Sarnath, India, the title translates to "Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion." The Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, often translated as "Setting the Wheel of Dhamma in Motion," is one of the most important discourses in the Buddhist tradition. Delivered by the Buddha in the Deer Park at Sarnath shortly after his enlightenment, it marks the first formal teaching of the Buddha, where he introduces the core tenets of his teachings, including the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Summary of Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta in Theravada Buddhism

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta describes the first sermon given by the Buddha to the five ascetics, who were his former companions during his years of severe asceticism. This sermon marked the moment when the Buddha began teaching the Dharma, or the path to liberation from suffering. The key teachings in this sutta include.

The Middle Way in Majjhima Patipada

The Buddha begins by advising against two extremes: the extreme of sensual indulgence and the extreme of self-mortification. He advocates for the "Middle Way," which is a balanced path that avoids both extremes and leads to enlightenment, peace, and freedom from suffering.

The Study of Four Noble Truths Pali in Cattāri Ariyasaccāni

The core of the Sutta is the teaching of the Four Noble Truths, which serve as the foundation of Theravada Buddhist philosophy, such as there are;

1. Dukkha (The Truth of Suffering): Life is inherently unsatisfactory, filled with suffering, impermanence, and dissatisfaction. Birth, aging, illness, death, separation from loved ones, and unfulfilled desires are all examples of dukkha.
2. Samudaya (The Truth of the Cause of Suffering): The cause of suffering is craving (tanha), attachment, and desire. This can be the craving for sense pleasures, existence, or non-existence.
3. Nirodha (The Truth of the Cessation of Suffering): There is a way to cease suffering. By eliminating craving and attachment, one can end dukkha and achieve Nirvana, the state of liberation and ultimate peace.
4. Magga (The Truth of the Path to the Cessation of Suffering): The way to the cessation of suffering is through the Noble Eightfold Path.

3. The Noble Eightfold Path Ariyo Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo in Abhidhamma

The Buddha lays out the path to liberation, composed of eight interconnected factors, divided into three categories: wisdom (paññā), ethical conduct (sīla), and mental discipline (samādhi).

1. Right View (Sammā-diṭṭhi): Understanding the nature of reality, particularly the Four Noble Truths.
2. Right Intention (Sammā-saṅkappa): intending to act with kindness, compassion, and renunciation.
3. Right Speech (Sammā-vācā): speaking truthfully, avoiding lies, harsh words, and harmful speech.
4. Right Action (Sammā-kammanta): Acting in ways that do not harm others, observing ethical precepts.
5. Right Livelihood (Sammā-ājīva): Earning a living in ways that do not cause harm to others.
6. Right Effort (Sammā-vāyāma): cultivating wholesome states of mind and eliminating unwholesome ones.
7. Right Mindfulness (Sammā-sati): developing awareness of the body, feelings, mind, and mental phenomena.
8. Right Concentration (Sammā-samādhi): Practicing deep meditation to achieve mental clarity and focus.

4. The Role of Craving in pali

In the sutta, the Buddha highlights that the root cause of suffering is craving (tanhā), which manifests in three forms:

- a) Craving for sensual pleasures (kāmatanhā)
- b) Craving for existence or becoming (bhavatanhā)
- c) Craving for non-existence or annihilation (vibhavatanhā)

These cravings lead to rebirth, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, suffering.

5. Attainment of Enlightenment in Buddhism

At the end of the discourse, it is said that the five ascetics who listened to the Buddha's sermon became enlightened to varying degrees. The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta marks the beginning of the Buddhist Sangha, or monastic community, as one of the five ascetics, Kondañña, achieved the first stage of enlightenment, becoming a stream-enterer (sotapanna).

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta is not just the Buddha's first sermon; it also encapsulates the core principles of Buddhist philosophy and practice. It introduces a pragmatic framework for understanding human suffering and provides a clear path for overcoming it.

This sutta also establishes the Buddha's rejection of both extreme asceticism and indulgence, positioning the Middle Way as the practical and ethical approach to spiritual development. The concepts of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path introduced here are central to all schools of Buddhism, whether Theravada, Mahayana, or Vajrayana.

The Turning of the Wheel of Dhamma in Buddhism

The metaphor of "turning the wheel of Dhamma" symbolizes the Buddha initiating the teaching of truth and wisdom that sets in motion the path to enlightenment for all beings. After delivering this sermon, the Buddha's first disciple, Kondañña, attained the first stage of enlightenment (stream-entry). The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta marks the formal beginning of the Buddha's teaching career and the establishment of the Sangha (community of monks). It introduces the essential teachings that form the foundation of the Dhamma. It is recited and revered by Buddhists as a powerful declaration of the path to liberation. This Sutta, with its emphasis on the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, is considered timeless and universally applicable, transcending cultural and temporal boundaries.

CONCLUSION

The Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta holds a special place in the Buddhist canon as the moment when the Buddha first shared his insights after attaining enlightenment. It contains the essence of the Buddha's teachings, addressing the human condition, its causes, and the path toward liberation. The systematic presentation of the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path has guided countless practitioners for over two millennia.

REFERENCES:

1. Rahula, Walpola. *What the Buddha Taught*. Grove Press, 1959, p. 45.
2. Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *In the Buddha's Words*. Wisdom Publications, 2005, p. 66.
3. Thich Nhat Hanh. *The Heart of the Buddha's Teaching*. Broadway Books, 1998, p. 17.
4. Bodhi, Bhikkhu. *The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering*. Buddhist Publication Society, 2006, p. 10.
5. Narada Thera. *The Buddha and His Teachings*. Buddhist Missionary Society, 1980, p. 132.
6. Buddhaghosa. *The Path of Purification (Visuddhimagga)*. Shambhala, 2011, p. 235.
7. Oldenberg, Hermann. *The Life of the Buddha*. Routledge, 1882, p. 111.
8. Nyanaponika Thera and Hellmuth Hecker. *Great Disciples of the Buddha*. Wisdom Publications, 1997, p. 72.