

## D. Turning the Dharma Wheel



**Emperor Asoka's pillar at the Dear Park (Isipatana -Sarnath):** The pillar with the lion capital, the national symbol of India. The capital with its four magnificent lions upholds the "Dharma Wheel" (Dharma Cakra) now stands in the museum of Sarnath.

After realising the Supreme Enlightenment, the Buddha stayed in the vicinity of the Bodhi tree for several weeks, thinking of the Way He had discovered. He thoroughly reflected on dependent arising (the Twelve-Link Causation Theory - paticcasamuppada) in direct order, i.e., from CAUSE to EFFECT, or

**CAUSE >> EFFECT: Read as "Dependent on CAUSE, EFFECT arises".**

Ignorance (avijja) >> Moral and immoral conditioning activities (samkhara) >> Consciousness >> Mind and matter (nama-rupa) >> Six spheres of sense >> Contact >> Feeling >> Craving >> Grasping >> Becoming >> Birth >> Sufferings (decay, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, despair, etc.).

The Buddha then reflected on dependent arising in reverse order,

**NO EFFECT << NO CAUSE: Read as "To cease EFFECT, stop CAUSE."**

No sufferings << No birth << No becoming << No grasping << No craving << No feeling << No contact << No six spheres of sense << No mind and matter << No consciousness << No moral and immoral conditioning activities << No ignorance.

After thoroughly checking the Way, especially the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve-Link Causation Theory and the Eightfold Noble Path, the Buddha decided to go spreading the Dharma, the Way He had just discovered. First He thought of His two teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Ramaputta. However they had died. He then knew that His former ascetic companions, Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji, were practising austerity at the Deer Park in Isipatana near Benares (now Sarnath). The Buddha went there and gave them the first discourse about the Four Noble Truths, the Dhammacakkappavattava (Turning the Wheel of Dharma) Sutra. Through this sutra, the Buddha expounded the Middle Way, which guided people to avoid the two extremes: to plunge oneself into sensual pleasures or to practise extreme asceticism.

The Turning the Dharma Wheel sutra has formed the essence of the Buddha's teaching. Hearing the sutra, Kondanna, and then the other four ascetics, attained the first stage of sainthood (Sotapatti -Stream-Winner). On hearing some other sutras, including the Anattalakkhana, which dealt with the impermanence and the non-self nature of all things, the five ascetics attained the second, the third and the final stages of sainthood (Sakadagami -Once-Returner, Anagami -Never-Returner, and Arahant). Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji are the Buddha's first disciples. From that time we have the Three Jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. It was stated that many invisible living beings from other realms also took advantage of the golden opportunity to listen to the sutras.

The Buddha then continued spreading the Dharma for 45 years. Most of the days, the Buddha and His disciples meditated and studied in the morning. Before noon, they went for alms (begging for food) from house to house of poor as well as rich people. This practice was part of the Eightfold Noble Path (Right Livelihood). It gave opportunities for people to practise generosity through charity, as well as for the Sangha to improve their humility and to keep in touch with society. After the alms, the Buddha and the Sangha went back to monasteries or found quiet spaces (forests or trees) to have lunches. After the meals, the Buddha Himself or a senior discipline gave a talk to the whole community, including monks, nuns, and laity. In

the afternoon and evening, monks and nuns meditated or discussed the Dharma. Sometimes they explained the Dharma to lay disciples.



**Nalanda University in Rajagaha (Rajgir):** This is one of the oldest universities in the world; it was well established before the development of Paris and its university. Nalanda is about 110 km North-East of Bodh Gaya (Photo taken in January 2002).

Every year, during the rainy season, the Buddha and the Sangha did not go for alms. They stayed in monasteries to keep them away from the rain as well as to avoid stepping on insects. This practice showed the Buddha's love towards His disciples and living beings. The annual rain season retreats were opportunities for the Sangha as well as lay disciples to spend more time on their study under the direct guidance of the Buddha or His senior disciples.

Following are important places where the Buddha and His disciples stayed and spread the Dharma in a chronological order:

Place	Sutra and Activities	Important Disciples
Bodh Gaya	Supreme enlightenment	Sujata and Svastika
Deer Park (Isipatana)	Four Noble Truths (First rainy season)	Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahanama and Assaji.
Uruvela	All in Flames (Adittapariyaya)	Three Kassapa brothers: Uruvela, Nadi and Gaya Kassapa.
Gijjhakuta Mountain, Vulture Peak, Rajagaha, Bamboo Forest (Venuvana) Monastery (Magadha)	Dependent Co-Arising: <i>"From interdependent origins all things arise and pass away. So teaches the Enlightened One."</i> Vedana Pariggaha (Dighanakha) Tradition of Rainy Season Retreat (Second rainy season)	King Bimbisara, Queen Videhi and Prince Ajatasattu. Sariputta and Moggallana Kaludayi Dighanakha. Ambapali and Jivaka (King Bimbisara's son).
Nigrodha Park Kapilavatthu	Vessantara Jataka, Dhamma-pala Jataka, Candakinnara Jataka (previous lives)	King Suddhodana, Nanda, Rahula
Anupija (Kosala)		Upali, Anuruddha, Baddhiya, Bhagu, Kimbila, Devadatta and Ananda.
Bamboo Forest Monastery	Third Retreat Season	Maha-Kassapa (wife Bhadra Kapilani) Sudatta (Anathapindika - Philanthropist)
Great Forest, Mango Grove (Vesali)		Ambapali and Jivaka. Othaddha and Sunakhatta (of Licchavi clan)
Jetavana -Savatthi	<i>"Every person's blood is red."</i>	King Pasenadi, Queen

(Kosala)	<i>Every person's tears are salty."</i> <i>"Only greed, hatred, and delusion can pollute us."</i> Fourth Retreat Season	Mallika, Prince Jeta and Princess Vajiri. Punnalakkhana (Suddata's wife), Sunita
Kutagarasala Great Forest Monastery (Vesali)	King Suddhodana sick. Fifth Retreat Season	
Kapilavatthu	King Suddhodana died. King Mahanama's coronation.	
Vesali	The Eight Rules for bhikkhunis	Mahapajapati (Gotami)
Makula	Sixth Retreat Season	
Samkasya	Seventh Retreat Season	
Sumsumara-gira (Bhagga)	Eight Retreat Season	
Ghosira Monastery (Kosambi)	Sangha conflict. Ninth Retreat Season	
Eastern Bamboo Forest (Balakalona-karagama)	Six Principles of Harmonious Living	Anuruddha, Nandiya and Kimbila.
Rakkhita Forest (Parileyyaka)	Tenth Retreat Season (Buddha alone)	
Jevavana	Seven Practices of Reconciliation (Saptadhikarana-samatha)	
Rajagaha	11 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Savatthi	Four immeasurables: Loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and non-attachment.	Rahula
Vejanra	12 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Calika	13 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Jetavana (Savatthi)	Rahula's ordination (20 years old).	Rahula

	Bhaddekaratta (Knowing the better way to live alone) Sutra The Buddha's lotus flower and Maha-Kassapa's smile (origin of Zen). 14 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	Maha-Kassapa.
Nigrodha Kapilavatthu	Sakya and Koliya conflict 15 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Alavi	16 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Venuvana	17 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Koliya	18 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Rajagaha	19 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	
Jetavana	Ananda became the Buddha's attendant. Jetavana (Savatthi) became permanent centre for annual Retreat Season. 20 <sup>th</sup> Retreat Season	Vrsababhaksatriya (King Pasenadi's 2 <sup>nd</sup> wife -King Mahanama's daughter) and Prince Vidudabha. Lady Visakha (Purvarama Monastery)
Kammassa-dhamma (Kuru)	Satipatthana (Four Establishments of Mindfulness) sutra: body, feeling, mind states (activities) and objects of mind. Seven Factors of Awakening: investigating dharmas, energy, joy, ease, full attention, concentration, and letting-go.	
Jetavana		Angulimala
Pava	Buddha's last meal	Cunda
Sala Grove Kusinara	Buddha entering into Nirvana: <i>"Strive on with Diligence!"</i>	Subhadda, Buddha's last disciple.



**Asokan Pillar and Stupa Complex Kolhua at Vesali (Vaishali):** The pillar is 110 m (feet?) high with a seated lion capital. Other monuments at the site are a brick stupa (North of the pillar), a large tank and a monastery (West of the Pillar). The stupa was built to commemorate the event of the monkey chief offering honey to the Buddha (Photo taken in January 2002, site details were extracted from the site information).



**Buddha with Lotus Flower:** The Buddha statue at Maha-Kassapa stupa in Bodh Gaya. In the beginning of a Dharma talk, the Buddha kept silence, and slowly raised a lotus flower with His hand. The whole community did not understand the Buddha's intention, except Maha-Kassapa, who smiled slightly. Maha-Kassapa is the first patriarch of Buddhist Zen tradition.