

CHAPTER SIX

THE INVITATION TO EXPOUND THE *DHAMMA*

“He who imbibes the Dhamma abides in happiness with mind pacified. The wise man ever delights in the Dhamma revealed by the Ariyas.”

~ Dhammapada

6.1 THE *DHAMMA* AS A TEACHER

6.1.1 Soon after the Enlightenment, the Buddha was dwelling at the foot of the Ajapala banyan tree by the bank of the Neranjara river. As He was engaged in solitary meditation the following thought arose in His mind:

6.1.2 “Painful indeed is it to live without someone to pay reverence and show deference. How if I should live near an ascetic or *brahmin* respecting and reverencing him?”¹

6.1.3 Then it occurred to Him: “Should I live near another ascetic or *brahmin*, respecting and reverencing him, in order to bring morality (*silakkhandha*) to perfection? But I do not see in this world including gods, *Maras*, and *Brahmas*, and amongst beings including ascetics, *brahmins*, gods and men, another ascetic or *brahmin* who is superior to me in morality and with whom I could associate, respecting and reverencing him.

- 6.1.4 “Should I live near another ascetic or *brahmin*, respecting and reverencing him, in order to bring concentration (*samadhikkhandha*) to perfection? But I do not see in this world any ascetic or *brahmin* who is superior to me in concentration and with whom I should associate, respecting and reverencing him.
- 6.1.5 “Should I live near another ascetic or *brahmin*, respecting and reverencing him, in order to bring wisdom (*pannakkhandha*) to perfection? But I do not see in this world any ascetic or *brahmin* who is superior to me in wisdom and with whom I should associate, respecting and reverencing him.
- 6.1.6 “Should I live near another ascetic or *brahmin*, respecting and reverencing him, in order to bring emancipation (*vimuttikkhandha*) to perfection? But I do not see in this world any ascetic or *brahmin* who is superior to me in emancipation and with whom I should associate, respecting and reverencing him.
- 6.1.7 Then it occurred to Him: “How if I should live respecting and reverencing this very *Dhamma* which I myself have realized?”
- 6.1.8 Thereupon Brahma Sahampati, understanding with his own mind the Buddha’s thought, just as a strong man would stretch his bent arm or bend his stretched arm even so did he vanish from the *Brahma* realm and appeared before the Buddha. And, covering one shoulder with his upper robe and placing his right knee on the ground, he saluted the Buddha with clasped hands and said thus: “It is so, O Exalted One! It is so, O Accomplished One! O Lord, the worthy, supremely Enlightened Ones, who were in the past, did live respecting and reverencing this very *Dhamma*.”

- 6.1.9 “The worthy, supremely Enlightened Ones, who will be in the future, will also live respecting and reverencing this very *Dhamma*.
- 6.1.10 “O Lord, may the Exalted One, the worthy, supremely Enlightened One of the present age also live respecting and reverencing this very *Dhamma*!”
- 6.1.11 This the Brahma Sahampati said, and uttering which, furthermore he spoke as follows:
“Those Enlightened Ones of the past, those of the future, and those of the present age, who dispel the grief of many — all of them lived, will live, and are living respecting the noble *Dhamma*. This is the characteristic of the Buddhas.
“Therefore he who desires his welfare and expects his greatness should certainly respect the noble *Dhamma*, remembering the message of the Buddhas.”
- 6.1.12 This the Brahma Sahampati said, and after which, he respectfully saluted the Buddha and passing round Him to the right, disappeared immediately.
- 6.1.13 As the *Sangha* is also endowed with greatness there is also His reverence towards the *Sangha*².

6.2 THE INVITATION TO EXPOUND THE *DHAMMA*

- 6.2.1 From the foot of the Rajayatana tree the Buddha proceeded to the Ajapala banyan tree and as He was absorbed in solitary meditation the following thought occurred to Him.
- 6.2.2 “This *Dhamma* which I have realized is indeed profound, difficult to perceive, difficult to comprehend, tranquil, exalted, not within the sphere of logic, subtle, and is to be

understood by the wise. These beings are attached to material pleasures. This causally connected ‘Dependent Arising’ is a subject which is difficult to comprehend. And this Nibbana — the cessation of the conditioned, the abandoning of all passions, the destruction of craving, the non-attachment, and the cessation — is also a matter not easily comprehensible. If I too were to teach this *Dhamma*, the others would not understand me. That will be wearisome to me, that will be tiresome to me.”

6.2.3 Then these wonderful verses unheard of before occurred to the Buddha:

“With difficulty have I comprehended the *Dhamma*. There is no need to proclaim it now. This *Dhamma* is not easily understood by those who are dominated by lust and hatred. The lust-ridden, shrouded in darkness, do not see this *Dhamma*, which goes against the stream, which is abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive and subtle.”

As the Buddha reflected thus, he was not disposed to expound the *Dhamma*.

6.2.4 Thereupon Brahma Sahampati read the thoughts of the Buddha, and, fearing that the world might perish through not hearing the *Dhamma*, approached Him and invited Him to teach the *Dhamma* thus:

“O Lord, may the Exalted One expound the *Dhamma*! May the Accomplished One expound the *Dhamma*! There are beings with little dust in their eyes, who, not hearing the *Dhamma*, will fall away. There will be those who understand the *Dhamma*.”

6.2.5 Furthermore he remarked:

“In ancient times there arose in Magadha a *Dhamma*, impure, thought out by the corrupted. Open this door to the Deathless State. May they hear the *Dhamma* understood by the Stainless One! Just as one standing on the summit of a

rocky mountain would behold the people around, even so may the All-Seeing, Wise One ascend this palace of *Dhamma*! May the Sorrowless One look upon the people who are plunged in grief and are over-come by birth and decay!

- 6.2.6 “Rise, O Hero, victor in battle, caravan leader, debt-free One, and wander in the World! May the Exalted One teach the *Dhamma*! There will be those who will understand the *Dhamma*.”
- 6.2.7 When he said so the Exalted One spoke to him thus:
“The following thought, O Brahma, occurred to me — ‘This *Dhamma* which I have comprehended is not easily understood by those who are dominated by lust and hatred. The lust-ridden, shrouded in darkness, do not see this *Dhamma*, which goes against the stream, which is abstruse, profound, difficult to perceive, and subtle.’ As I reflected thus, my mind turned into inaction and not to the teaching of the *Dhamma*.”
- 6.2.8 Brahma Sahampati appealed to the Buddha for the second time and He made the same reply.
- 6.2.9 When he appealed to the Buddha for the third time, the Exalted One, out of pity for beings, surveyed the world with His Buddha-Vision.
- 6.2.10 As He surveyed thus He saw beings with little and much dust in their eyes, with keen and dull intellect, with good and bad characteristics, beings who are easy and beings who are difficult to be taught, and few others who, with fear, view evil and a life beyond³.
- 6.2.11 As in the case of a blue, red or white lotus pond, some lotuses are born in the water, grow in the water, remain

immersed in the water, and thrive plunged in the water; some are born in the water, grow in the water and remain on the surface of the water; some others are born in the water, grow in the water and remain emerging out of the water, unstained by the water. Even so, as the Exalted One surveyed the world with His Buddha-Vision, He saw beings with little and much dust in their eyes, with keen and dull intellect, with good and bad characteristics, beings who are easy and difficult to be taught, and few others who, with fear, view evil and a life beyond. And He addressed the Brahma Sahampati in a verse thus:

“Opened to them are the Doors to the Deathless State. Let those who have ears repose confidence⁴. Being aware of the weariness, O Brahma, I did not teach amongst men this glorious and excellent *Dhamma*.”

- 6.2.12 The delighted Brahma, thinking that he made himself the occasion for the Exalted One to expound the *Dhamma* respectfully saluted Him and, passing round Him to the right, disappeared immediately⁵.

6.3 THE FIRST TWO CONVERTS

- 6.3.1 After His memorable fast for forty-nine days, as the Buddha sat under the Rajayatana tree, two merchants, Tapussa and Bhallika, from Ukkala (*Orissa*) happened to pass that way. Then a certain deity⁶, who was a blood relative of theirs in a past birth, spoke to them as follows:

- 6.3.2 “The Exalted One, good sirs, is dwelling at the foot of the Rajayatana tree, soon after His Enlightenment. Go and serve the Exalted One with flour and honey-comb⁷. It will conduce to your well-being and happiness for a long time.”

6.3.3 Availing themselves of this golden opportunity, the two delighted merchants went to the Exalted One, and, respectfully saluting Him, implored Him to accept their humble alms so that it may resound to their happiness and well-being.

6.3.4 Then it occurred to the Exalted One:

“The *Tathagatas* do not accept food with their hands. How shall I accept this flour and honey-comb?”

6.3.5 Forthwith the four Great Kings⁸ understood the thoughts of the Exalted One with their minds and from the four directions offered Him four granite bowls⁹, saying: “O Lord, may the Exalted One accept herewith this flour and honey-comb!”

6.3.6 The Buddha graciously accepted the timely gift with which He received the humble offering of the merchants, and ate His food after His long fast.

6.3.7 After the meal was over the merchants prostrated themselves before the feet of the Buddha and said:

“We, O Lord, seek refuge in the Exalted One and the *Dhamma*. May the Exalted One treat us as lay disciples who have sought refuge from today till death¹⁰.”

6.3.8 These were the first lay disciples¹¹ of the Buddha who embraced Buddhism by seeking refuge in the Buddha and the *Dhamma*, reciting the twofold formula.

6.4 **ON THE WAY TO BENARES TO TEACH THE *DHAMMA***

6.4.1 On accepting the invitation to teach the *Dhamma*, the first thought that occurred to the Buddha before He embarked on

His great mission was — “To whom shall I teach the *Dhamma* first? Who will understand the *Dhamma* quickly? Well, there is Alara Kalama¹² who is learned, clever, wise and has for long been with little dust in his eyes. How if I were to teach the *Dhamma* to him first? He will understand the *Dhamma* quickly.”

6.4.2 Then a deity appeared before the Buddha and said: “Lord! Alara Kalama died a week ago.” With His supernatural vision He perceived that it was so.

6.4.3 Then He thought of Uddaka Ramaputta¹³. Instantly a deity informed Him that he died the evening before. With His super-normal vision He perceived this to be so.

6.4.4 Ultimately the Buddha thought of the five energetic ascetics who attended on Him during His struggle for Enlightenment. With His supernatural vision He perceived that they were residing in the Deer Park at Isipatana near Benares. So the Buddha stayed at Uruvela till such time as He was pleased to set out for Benares.

6.4.5 The Buddha was travelling on the highway, when between Gaya and the Bodhi tree, beneath whose shade He attained Enlightenment, a wandering ascetic named Upaka saw Him and addressed Him thus: “Extremely clear are your senses, friend! Pure and clean is your complexion. On account of whom has your renunciation been made, friend? Who is your teacher? Whose doctrine do you profess?”

6.4.6 The Buddha replied:
*“All have I overcome, all do I know.
From all am I detached, all have I renounced.
Wholly absorbed am I in the destruction of craving
(Arahantship). Having comprehended all by myself whom
shall I call my teacher?”*

*No teacher have I¹⁴. An equal to me there is not.
In the world including gods there is no rival to me.
Indeed an Arahant am I in this world.
An unsurpassed teacher am I;
Alone am I the All-Enlightened.
Cool and appeased am I.
To establish the wheel of Dhamma to the city of Kasi I go.
In this blind world I shall beat the drum of
Deathlessness¹⁵.”*

- 6.4.7 “Then, friend, do you admit that you are an *Arahant*, a limitless Conqueror?” queried Upaka.
- 6.4.8 “Like me are conquerors who have attained to the destruction of defilements. All the evil conditions have I conquered. Hence, Upaka. I am called a conqueror,” replied the Buddha.
- 6.4.9 “It may be so, friend!” Upaka curtly remarked, and, nodding his head, turned into a by-road and departed.
- 6.4.10 Unperturbed by the first rebuff, the Buddha journeyed from place to place, and arrived in due course at the Deer Park in Benares.

6.5 MEETING THE FIVE MONKS

- 6.5.1 The five ascetics who saw Him coming from afar decided not to pay Him due respect, as they misconstrued His discontinuance of rigid ascetic practices which proved absolutely futile during His struggle for Enlightenment.
- 6.5.2 They remarked:
“Friends, this ascetic Gotama is coming. He is luxurious. He has given up striving and has turned into a life of

abundance. He should not be greeted and waited upon. His bowl and robe should not be taken. Nevertheless, a seat should be prepared. If he wishes, let him sit down.”

6.5.3 However, as the Buddha continued to draw near, His august personality was such that they were compelled to receive Him with due honour. One came forward and took His bowl and robe, another prepared a seat, and yet another kept water for His feet. Nevertheless, they addressed Him by name and called Him friend (*avuso*), a form of address applied generally to juniors and equals.

6.5.4 At this the Buddha addressed them thus:

“Do not, O *Bhikkhus*, address the *Tathagata* by name or by the title ‘*avuso*’. An Exalted One, O *Bhikkhus*, is the *Tathagata*. A Fully Enlightened One is He. Give ear, O *Bhikkhus*! Deathlessness (*Amata*) has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the *Dhamma*. If you act according to my instructions, you will before long realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life, for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household for homelessness.”

6.5.5 Thereupon the five ascetics replied:

“By that demeanour of yours, *avuso* Gotama, by that discipline, by those painful austerities, you did not attain to any superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of an *Ariya*. How will you, when you have become luxurious, have given up striving, and have turned into a life of abundance, gain any such superhuman specific knowledge and insight worthy of an *Ariya*?”

6.5.6 In explanation the Buddha said:

“The *Tathagata*, O *Bhikkhus*, is not luxurious, has not given up striving, and has not turned into a life of abundance. An

Exalted One is the *Tathagata*. A Fully Enlightened One is He. Give ear, O *Bhikkhus*? Deathlessness has been attained. I shall instruct and teach the *Dhamma*. If you act according to my instructions, you will before long realize, by your own intuitive wisdom, and live, attaining in this life itself, that supreme consummation of the Holy Life, for the sake of which sons of noble families rightly leave the household for homelessness.”

- 6.5.7 For the second time the prejudiced ascetics expressed their disappointment in the same manner.
- 6.5.8 For the second time the Buddha reassured them of His attainment to Enlightenment.
- 6.5.9 When the adamant ascetics refusing to believe Him, expressed their view for the third time, the Buddha questioned them thus:
“Do you know, O *Bhikkhus*, of an occasion when I ever spoke to you thus before?”
- 6.5.10 “Nay, indeed, Lord!”
- 6.5.11 The Buddha repeated for the third time that He had gained Enlightenment and that they also could realize the Truth if they would act according to His instructions.
- 6.5.12 It was indeed a frank utterance, issuing from the sacred lips of the Buddha. The cultured ascetics, though adamant in their views, were then fully convinced of the great achievement of the Buddha and of His competence to act as their moral guide and teacher.
- 6.5.13 They believed His word and sat in silence to listen to His Noble Teaching.
- 6.5.14 Two of the ascetics the Buddha instructed, while three went out for alms. With what the three ascetics brought from their

alms-round the six maintained themselves. Three of the ascetics He instructed, while two ascetics went out for alms. With what the two brought six sustained themselves.

- 6.5.15 And those five ascetics thus admonished and instructed by the Buddha, being themselves subject to birth, decay, death, sorrow, and passions, realized the real nature of life and, seeking out the birthless, decayless, diseaseless, deathless, sorrowless, passionless, incomparable Supreme Peace, Nibbana, attained the incomparable Security, Nibbana, which is free from birth, decay, disease, death, sorrow, and passions. The knowledge arose in them that their Deliverance was unshakable, that it was their last birth and that there would be no more of this state again.
- 6.5.16 **Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta**¹⁶, which deals, with the four Noble Truths, was the first discourse delivered by the Buddha to them. Hearing it, Kondanna, the eldest, attained the first stage of Sainthood. After receiving further instructions, the other four attained *Sotapatti*¹⁷ later. On hearing the **Anattalakkhana Sutta**¹⁸, which deals with soullessness, all the five attained *Arahantship*¹⁹, the final stage of Sainthood.

6.6 THE FIRST FIVE DISCIPLES

- 6.6.1 The five learned monks who thus attained *Arahantship* and became the Buddha's first disciples were Kondanna, Bhaddiya, Vappa, Mahànàma, and Assaji of the *brahmin* clan.
- 6.6.2 Kondanna was the youngest and the cleverest of the eight *brahmins* who were summoned by King Suddhodana to name the infant prince. The other four were the sons of those

older *brahmins*. All these five retired to the forest as ascetics in anticipation of the *Bodhisatta* while he was endeavouring to attain Buddhahood. When he gave up his useless penances and severe austerities and began to nourish the body sparingly to regain his lost strength, these favourite followers, disappointed at his change of method, deserted him and went to Isipatana. Soon after their departure the *Bodhisatta* attained Buddhahood.

- 6.6.3 The Venerable Kondanna became the first *Arahant* and the most senior member of the *Sangha*. It was Assaji, one of the five, who converted the great Sariputta, the chief disciple of the Buddha.

6.7 NOTES ON CHAPTER SIX

1. Anguttara Nikaya, Part II, p.20; Gradual Sayings, Part II, p.20.
2. This discourse was delivered by the Buddha while residing at Jetavana, Savatthi, long after the establishment of the Order of the *Sangha*. He showed His reverence towards the *Sangha* by requesting the Queen Maha Pajapati Gotami to offer to the *Sangha* the robe specially prepared for Him.
3. *Paralokavajjabhayadassavino*.
4. *Aparuta tesam amatassa dvara —ye sotavanta pamuncantu saddham*.
5. See Majjhima Nikaya, Ariyapariyesana Sutta, No. 26.
6. *Devatas* (Pali) are terrestrial or celestial deities, a class of beings, who, as a rule, are invisible to the physical eye. This particular feminine deity had been related to the merchants in a previous birth. It is interesting to note the non-human element appearing in various places connected with the life of the Buddha.
7. *Sattu*, dried flour, and *Madhu*, honey, were a regular diet of travelers in India in the ancient days.
8. *Catummaharajikas*, the Guardian Deities of the four quarters.

9. The commentary states that the Buddha wished that the four bowls be amalgamated into one.
10. *Buddham saranam gacchami* (I seek refuge in the Buddha), *Dhammam saranam gacchami* (I seek refuge in the Dhamma), is the two-fold formula. As the *Sangha* or the Noble Order was not in existence then they did not recite the third formula — *Sangham saranam gacchami* (I seek refuge in the *Sangha*). One becomes a Buddhist by intelligently reciting the Three Refuges.
11. The Jataka commentary relates that when these two first converts begged of the Buddha to give them an object of worship the Buddha touched His head and presented them with some hair relics.
12. The first religious teacher who taught the *Bodhisatta* the *Jhanas* extending up to the Realm of Nothingness (*Akincannayatana*).
13. The second religious teacher who taught the *Bodhisatta* the highest state of mundane mental development — the Realm of Neither Perception nor Non-perception (*N'eva sanna n'asannayatana*).
14. The Buddha uttered these words because He attained Enlightenment by Himself without the aid of a teacher. He had teachers before His Enlightenment, but nobody taught Him the way to attain Buddhahood.
15. Majjhima Nikaya (Vol. I), Ariyapariyesana Sutta, No. 26.
16. See Chapter 7
17. Lit. — Stream-Winner
18. See Chapter 7
19. Lit. — The Worthy One