**YMBA SENIOR PART (2) COURSE (YMBA BOOK 4)**

**DHAMMA CHAPTER (6): THE FIRST DISCOURSE-DHAMMA CAKKA PAVATTANA SUTTA**

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[Any suggestions to improve the plan or to make corrections will be gratefully received by Rahubadde Sarath-Chandra and Tanuja Sarath-Chandra]**[TELEPHONE 3278-9021, 3879-8015]**

**INTRODUCTION**

**The Story**

When the Buddha attained enlightenment he surveyed the world to see who would be able to understand his discoveries. He saw the five ascetics who were with him at the start now living in the deer park in Isipatana. For more than two weeks he walked until he reached the deer park. First the ascetics did not believe that their old friend was now a Buddha. With some convincing they listened. Some stayed to listen to the Dhamma and the others went for food. Venerable Kondanna was the first to attain Sotapatti. So the story continues. The story is not given in the book.

**Summary of the Discourse**

These are the main sections of the discourse:

1. The need to avoid the extremes of self-indulgence and self-torture (that is the need to follow the middle way)
2. The Four Noble Truths
3. The Noble Eight-fold Path (the fourth Truth)

The long ending section of the Sutta is the expression of the joy of celestial beings who heard the Buddha.

The teacher needs to explain these clearly while the students read the chapter.

From page 87 the actual discourse in English is given. It is not necessary remember the discourse but it is vitally important to be able to describe the main contents.

**THE MIDDLE WAY**

This is the first part of the first discourse. There are two extremes that ought to be avoided by a person practising the Buddha’s teachings. One extreme is self-indulgence or enjoying pleasures to the extreme. The other is inflicting pain and suffering on oneself. Both are pursued in the wrong belief that they lead to enlightenment.

The first extreme is also called self-indulgence (kama-sukhallikanu-yoga). There are religious groups that resort to extreme enjoyment of the senses as a way to find happiness and to enlightenment. There are individuals who subscribe to this idea. The Buddha uses the following terms to describe the hollowness of this practice:

* Base
* Vulgar
* Worldly
* Ignoble
* Profitless

*(These words are important.)*

The second extreme is called self-torture. Even today some people belonging to other religions resort to this type of practice. One example is standing on one leg for a long time. Another is living like a dog or an ox. The Buddha described this kind of practice in the following terms:

* Painful
* Ignoble
* Profitless

Again, these words are important. Notice which of the terms in each set are similar and which ones are different.

There are foolish people who misinterpret the teaching of the middle way as a justification of indulging in moderate levels of killing, stealing, misbehaving, telling lies and drinking alcohol and so on. That is to say they avoid extreme forms of bad behaviour, but still engage in some level of bad behaviour. Practising a precept needs to be as complete as practical. There is no middle way in it. So never kill a cockroach and justify your action by saying that you would not kill an elephant. This is **not** an application of the theory of the middle way.

The middle way (majjhima patipada) is a negatively stated Dhamma (e.g., the first of the five precepts say “I refrain from killing”). The positive statement of the way to follow is the Noble Eight-Fold path described in the third part of the discourse.

**THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS**

The second part of the first discourse is a description of the Four Noble Truths, the basis of Buddhist philosophy. The whole of the Dhamma is an elaboration of the Four Noble Truths. Enlightenment is reached by understanding the Four Noble Truths. It is the ultimate goal of every practising Buddhist. To get that understanding one needs to practise in line with the indicators of the noble eight-fold path. So, what are the Four Noble Truths?

**1 Existence is suffering**

1.1 Birth, Decay, Disease, Death

1.2 To be united with the unpleasant

1.3 To be separated from the pleasant

1.4 Not getting what one desires

1.5 The attachment to the five aggregates

**2 Craving is the cause of suffering**

1.1 Craving for sensual pleasures (Kama Tanha)

1.2 Craving for existence (Bhava Tanha)

1.3 Craving for non-existence (Vibhava Tanha)

*Craving produces rebirth, it is accompanied by passionate clinging and welcoming this and that.*

**3 Cessation of suffering**

Complete separation from or the destruction of craving (Asesa viraga nirodho) in ways such as the following:

Forsaking craving (Cago)

Renunciation of craving (Pati Nissaggo)

Liberation from craving (Mutti)

Non-attachment to craving (Analayo)

**4 The Path leading to the Cessation of suffering**

This is the Noble Eight Fold Path which is described in part 3 of the discourse.

*In regard to the four truths there are three aspects and therefore twelve different ways of understanding them. The 3 aspects (Tiparivattam) are:*

*1 The existence and nature of the truth (applies to all four truths)*

*2 The function relating to each of the truths*

*3 The accomplishment of each of the truths*

*TRUTH 1*

*The function of the first truth is the* ***comprehension*** *of the truth. The accomplishment of the first truth is its* ***understanding***

*TRUTH 2*

*For the second truth it is the* ***need to eradicate*** *and the* ***actual eradication*** *of craving.*

*TRUTH 3*

*For the third truth it is the* ***need for realisation*** *and the* ***actual realisation****.*

*TRUTH 4*

*For the fourth truth it is the* ***need to pursue the development*** *of the truth and the* ***completion of such development.***

This way for the 4 truths there are 12 ways (Dvadasakaram) of treating them.

**THE NOBLE EIGHT-FOLD PATH**

1 Right Understanding (Samma Ditthi)

2 Right Thought (Samma Sankappa)

3 Right Speech (Samma Vaca)

4 Right Action (Samma Kammanta)

5 Right Livelihood (Samma Ajiva)

6 Right Effort (Samma Vayama)

7 Right Mindfulness (Samma Sati)

8 Right Concentration (Samma Samadhi)

Numbers 3, 4 and 5 constitute Morality. Numbers 6, 7 and 8 constitute Bhavana or mind development/growth. Numbers 1 and 2 account for the development of wisdom. In effect these eight lines of practice amount to the well-known formula Sila, Bhavana and Panna which lead to enlightenment.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

While the discourse was being delivered there arose in the Venerable Kondanna the dustless, stainless eye of truth (he understood that whatsoever has arisen, that must inevitably perish). The monk attained Sotapatti, the first stage of enlightenment. Upon noticing this, the Buddha expressed his joy.

Celestial beings who heard about what happened in Isipatana, rejoiced. The Dhamma that could not be expounded by any ascetic, priest, god, mara or brahma in this world had been proclaimed. The rejoicing spread to all the heavens. This description is repeated for each heaven.

The Buddha explained his own experience in attaining enlightenment using a few famous terms. He had comprehended the middle path which promoted insight (**Cakkhu** or the vision) and the knowledge (**Nana**), that tend to peace (**Vupasamaya**), higher knowledge (**Abhinnaya**), enlightenment (**Sambodhaya**) and **Nibbana**. These words are repeated many times in the discourse.

***ADVICE***

*When the first discourse is chanted in the temple, we need to keep this information in mind and learn to feel a sense of joy that the sublime Dhamma was expounded in this manner. We have to be most respectful as if the Buddha was present with us and was teaching to us. Saying ‘SADHU’ at certain points helps to keep the mind on track*