

The Jewel Discourse

The occasion for this discourse, in brief, according to the commentary, is as follows: The city of Vesali was afflicted by a famine, causing death, especially to the poor folk. Due to the presence of decaying corpses, evil spirits began to haunt the city; this was followed by a pestilence. Plagued by these three fears of famine, non-human beings and pestilence, the citizens sought the help of the Buddha who was then living at Rajagaha.

Followed by a large number of monks including the Venerable Ananda, his attendant disciple, the Buddha came to the city of Vesali. With the arrival of the Master, there were torrential rains which swept away the putrefying corpses. The atmosphere became purified, the city was clean.

Thereupon the Buddha delivered this Jewel Discourse (in Pali, The Ratana Sutta[2]) to the Venerable Ananda, and gave him instructions as to how he should tour the city with the Licchavi citizens reciting the discourse as a mark of protection to the people of Vesali. The Venerable Ananda followed the instructions, and sprinkled the sanctified water from the Buddha's own alms bowl. As a consequence the evil spirits were exorcised, and the pestilence subsided. Thereafter the Venerable Ananda returned with the citizens of Vesali to the Public hall where the Buddha and his disciples had assembled awaiting his arrival. There the Buddha recited the same Jewel Discourse to the gathering: [3] This is what the Buddha spoke. He said:

1. "Whatever beings are assembled here,
terrestrial or celestial,
may they all have peace of mind,
and may they listen attentively to these words:

2. "O beings, listen closely.
May you all radiate loving-kindness to those who, by day and night,
offer merit to you.
May you protect them with diligence.

3. "Whatever treasure there be either in the world beyond,
whatever precious jewel there be in the heavenly worlds,
there is nothing comparable to the Tathagata, the perfect One.

This precious jewel is the Buddha.[4]
By this truth may there be happiness.

4. "That Cessation, that Detachment,
that Deathlessness, Nibbana supreme,
the calm and collected Sakyan Sage, the Buddha, had realized.
There is nothing comparable to this Nibbana Dhamma.

This precious jewel is the Dhamma.[5]
By this truth may there be happiness.

5. "The Supreme Buddha extolled a path of purity,
the Noble Eightfold Path,
calling it the path which unfailingly brings concentration.
There is nothing comparable to this concentration.

This precious jewel is the Dhamma.
By this truth may there be happiness.

6. "The eight persons extolled by virtuous men and women constitute four
pairs.
They are the disciples of the Buddha and are worthy of offerings.
Gifts given to them yield rich results.

This precious jewel is the Sangha.[6]
By this truth may there be happiness.

7. "With a steadfast mind,
and applying themselves well in the dispensation of the Buddha Gotama,
free from defilements,

they have attained to that which should be attained,
encountering the Deathless.
They enjoy the Peace of Nibbana freely obtained.[7]

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

8. "As a post deep-planted in the earth stands
unshaken by the winds from the four quarters,
so, too, I declare is the righteous man
who comprehends with wisdom the Noble Truths.

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

9. "Those who realized the Noble Truths
well taught by him who is profound in wisdom, the Buddha,
even though they may be exceedingly heedless,
they will not take an eighth existence.[8]

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

10. "With his gaining of insight he abandons three states of mind,
namely self-illusion, doubt,
and indulgence in meaningless rites and rituals, should there be any.
He is also fully freed from the four states of woe,
and therefore, incapable of committing the six major wrongdoings.[9]

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

11. "Any evil action he may still do
by deed, word or thought,

he is incapable of concealing it;
since it has been proclaimed
that such concealing is impossible
for one who has seen the Path (of Nibbana).[10]

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

12. "As the woodland groves in the early heat of summer
are crowned with blossoming flowers,
even so is the sublime Dhamma
leading to the (calm) of Nibbana
which is taught (by the Buddha) for the highest good.

This precious jewel is the Buddha.
By this (asseveration of the) truth may there be happiness.

13. "The Peerless Excellent one, the Buddha,
the Knower of Nibbana,
the Giver of Nibbana,
the Bringer of the Noble Path,
taught the excellent Dhamma.

This precious jewel is the Buddha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

14. "Their past (kamma) is spent,
their new (kamma) no more arises,
their mind to future becoming is unattached.
That seed is gone.

Of those Wise Ones it can be said:

The kamma impelling them to take uncontrolled rebirth

in the six realms is no more -
that kamma has faded away,
just as the flame of this lamp
which has just faded away.

This precious jewel is the Sangha.
By this truth may there be happiness.

Then Sakra said:

15. "Whatever beings are assembled here,
terrestrial or celestial,
come let us salute the Buddha, the Tathagata, the perfect One,
honored by gods and men.
May there be happiness.[11]

16. "Whatever beings are assembled here
terrestrial or celestial,
come let us salute the perfect Dhamma, honored by gods and men.
May there be happiness.

17. "Whatever beings are assembled here
terrestrial or celestial,
come let us salute the perfect Sangha, honored by gods and men.
May there be happiness."

Notes

1. Khp. No. 6; Sn. 39
2. Ratana means precious jewel. Here the term is applied to the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha.
3. KhpA. 161.
4. Literally, in the Buddha is this precious jewel.
5. Literally, in the Dhamma is this precious jewel.
6. Literally, in the Sangha is this precious jewel.

7. Obtained without payment; "avyayena," KhpA. I., 185.
8. The reason why it is stated that there will be no eighth existence for a person who has attained the stage of sotapatti or the first stage of sanctity is that such a being can live at the most for only a period of seven existences in the realm of sense spheres.
9. Abhithanani; i. matricide, ii. patricide, iii. the murder of arahants (the Consummate Ones), iv. the shedding of the Buddha's blood, v. causing schism in the Sangha, and vi. pernicious false beliefs (niyata micca ditthi).
10. He is a sotapanna, stream-enterer, one who has attained the first stage of sanctity. Also see Notes at the end of the book.
11. The last three stanzas were recited by Sakka, the chief of Devas (gods), KhpA. 195.

Dedication Prayers

Chants of Protection, from 'Paritta Chants for Special Blessings'

1.

Whatever bad omens, inauspiciousness, undesirable sounds of birds, unlucky planets, or unpleasant bad dreams there are, may they vanish by the power of the Buddha.

2.

Whatever bad omens, inauspiciousness, undesirable sounds of birds, unlucky planets, or unpleasant bad dreams there are, may they vanish by the power of the Dhamma.

3.

Whatever bad omens, inauspiciousness, undesirable sounds of birds, unlucky planets, or unpleasant bad dreams there are, may they vanish by the power of the Sangha.

4.

May those afflicted with pain be free from pain,

May those afflicted with fear be free from fear,

May those afflicted with grief be free from grief,

For all beings, may it be so.

5.

May you all practice generosity with faith in the Triple Gem.

May you always keep moral precepts.

May you all rejoice in bhavana.

6.

All Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Arhats are powerful.
By their power, may you all be blessed

Dedication prayers from The Book of Protection, lightly edited

May the blessings of all the Buddhas,
Bodhisattvas, and Arhats be upon you

May all misfortunes be warded off,
May all ailments cease;
May no calamities befall you;
May you live long in peace.

May all blessings be upon you.
May all devas protect you.

By the protective power of all the Buddhas, Dharma, and Sangha,
may safety ever be yours.

By the power of this recitation,
may you be free from all dangers
arising from malign influences of the planets, demons, and spirits,
May all your misfortunes vanish.

By the power of the Buddha
may all evil omens and untoward circumstances,
the ominous cry of birds,
the malign conjunctions of the stars,
and evil dreams be neutralized.

By the power of the Dhamma, may these be nullified.
By the power of the Sangha, may they be rendered harmless.

May those beings who suffer be free from suffering.
those who are in fear be free from fear.
those who are in grief be free from grief.

May the rains fall in due season;
May there be a rich harvest;
May the world prosper;
And May the ruler be righteous.

May beings, celestial and terrestrial,
Devas and Nagas of mighty power,
share this merit of ours.
And May they long protect the Dispensation.

May all beings share this merit which we have thus acquired.
And May it be a cause of their happiness.

Let this merit be received by my relatives;
May they be well and happy.

From the highest realm of existence to avici hell,
whatever beings that are born -
those with form and the formless ones,
those with or without consciousness -
may they all be free from suffering!
May they all attain Nibbana!

By the power of the merit of paying homage
to the the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha,
those that are eminently worthy of reverence,
may all dangers cease!

May all beings be entirely well and at their ease!