

# The Invitation to Expound the Dhamma

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Narada Maha Thera in *The Buddha and His Teachings*, 1998, translates and narrates how the Blessed One at first doubted that anyone else could understand the Dhamma he had discovered, and was disinclined to teach it, but the Brahma *Sahampati* appeared to him and pleaded with the Buddha to share what he had discovered.

We read,

“From the foot of the *Rājāyatana* tree the Buddha proceeded to the *Ajapāla* banyan tree and as he was absorbed in solitary meditation the following thought occurred to him.

'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 *nibbāna* – 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.' (Narada 43)

“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.

“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.'

[In the above lines, 'little dust in their eyes' means 'only a little ignorance' which keeps beings from seeing that feeling lust and attachment is the wrong way of seeing and doing things, and that if beings are not freed from the darkness of lust, hate and greed their resultant actions will continue to be cause of never-ending suffering.]

“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 overcome by birth and decay!

(Narada 44)

'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.'

“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.'

*Brahmā Sahampati* appealed to the Buddha for the second time and He made the same reply.

“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.

“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 beyond.

[With his clairvoyant vision, the Buddha surveyed the world and saw that there were, indeed, a few who could be instructed to see the way to go against the stream of attachment and ignorance which

invariably leads to suffering, and out of compassion the Buddha decided to help them.]

'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.'

(Narada 45)

“And He addressed the *Brahmā Sahampati* in a verse thus:

*'Opened to them are the Doors to the Deathless State. Let those who have ears repose confidence.'*

*Apārutātesam amatassa dvārā-ye sotavantā pamuñcantu saddham*  
*'Being aware of the weariness, O Brahma, I did not teach amongst men this glorious and excellent Dhamma.'*

“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 immediately.”

Majjhima

Nikāya, *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*, No. 26

Thus the Buddha, out of compassion, realizing that there were at least some few beings who would understand the teaching of the Dhamma undertook devote himself to help deliver fellow beings from unnecessary suffering.

## Reference

Narada Maha Thera. 1998. *The Buddha and His Teachings*.  
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