AN 3.14 — Cakkavatti Sutta (The Universal Wheel-turning Monarch)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

Source: https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-3_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf#page=32

Source revision: ee5230c458ad6c1566f518d5909916ad92d12aebf1240750c5357dd9b5699f30

License: Candana — free distribution, unaltered contents — https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-3_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf

Copyright © Bhikkhu Candana, 2020, 2026. Free distribution only; do not alter the contents. The original book, including its complete permission notice, accompanies this text.

Candana source labels: 14. Site text ID: AN 3.14.

Text

14. Cakkavatti Sutta (The Universal Wheel-turning Monarch) “Bhikkhus, a Cakkavattin, who righteously rules his kingdom by The Dhamma, still cannot turn the Wheel despite being a Universal Wheel-turning head-anointed Khattiya Monarch himself, without first having a King presiding over him.”

In hearing this, one of the Bhikkhus inquired:

“But, Blessed Lord, who is it that presides over the rulership of a head-anointed Cakkavattin, a Universal Wheel-turning head-anointed Khattiya Warrior King, who righteously rules by The Dhamma?”

“It is The Dhamma itself, Bhikkhu!” responded The Blessed One, as He continued:

“A Cakkavattin, a Universal Wheel-turning head-anointed Monarch, being a Khattiya king, righteously rules by The Dhamma, while wholeheartedly respecting and venerating The Dhamma. Thus, by honoring and relying on The Dhamma, he makes it his crest, his banner, and guiding authority, as he guards and caters to the needs of his subjects at his royal court, providing them shelter and protection.

“Further, a Cakkavattin, a Universal Wheel-turning head-anointed Monarch, righteously rules while wholeheartedly respecting, venerating, and taking refuge in The Dhamma. Thus, by honoring and relying on The Dhamma, he makes it his crest, his banner, and guiding authority, as he caters to the needs of his Khattiya warrior subjects, his armies, householders, and the people throughout his domain, including recluses, brahmins, and animals of all kinds, providing them shelter and protection.

“Thus, by providing them with righteous protection and shelter, he guards all his subjects as a Cakkavattin, a Universal Wheel-turning head-anointed Monarch, who gains his power through ruling righteously by The Dhamma Itself! This, he does while overseeing and governing his entire dominion through The Dhamma, thereby maintaining the turn of the Wheel that cannot be reversed by any hostile human aggressors.

“Similarly, Bhikkhu, The Tathāgata, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, The King of The Dhamma righteously rules by The Dhamma, while wholeheartedly respecting and venerating The Dhamma. Thus, by honoring and relying on The Dhamma, He makes it His crest,

His banner, and guiding authority, as He guards and caters to the true needs, shelter, and protection of beings by means of showing them proper conduct in relation to bodily actions and behaviors, as He teaches:

‘One must cultivate certain bodily actions and behaviors, while abstaining from other bodily actions and behaviors.’

“Further, Bhikkhu, The Tathāgata, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, The King of The Dhamma righteously rules by The Dhamma, while wholeheartedly respecting and venerating The Dhamma. Thus, by honoring and relying on The Dhamma, He makes it His crest, His banner, and guiding authority, as He guards and caters to the needs, shelter, and protection of beings by means of showing them proper conduct in relation to verbal actions and behaviors, as He teaches:

‘One must cultivate certain verbal actions and behaviors, while abstaining from other verbal actions and behaviors.’

“Further, Bhikkhu, The Tathāgata, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, The King of The Dhamma righteously rules by The Dhamma, while wholeheartedly respecting and venerating The Dhamma. Thus, by honoring and relying on The Dhamma, He makes it His crest, His banner, and guiding authority, as He guards and caters to the needs, shelter, and protection of beings by means of showing them proper conduct in relation to mental actions and behaviors, as He teaches:

‘One must cultivate certain mental actions and behaviors, while abstaining from other mental actions and behaviors.’

“It is through guarding and providing such shelter and protection in relation to bodily, verbal, and mental actions and behaviors that The Tathāgata, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, The King of The Dhamma righteously rules by The Dhamma, while setting in motion The Wheel that cannot be reversed or turned back by any recluse, brahmin, Māra, or Brahmā, Devas or humans, or any hostile aggressor, throughout existence.”