AN 3.15 — Pacetana Sutta (King Pacetana)

English translation by Bhikkhu Candana.

Source: https://www.mindreleased.com/s/Book-3_Anguttara-Nikya-A-New-Translation.pdf#page=33

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: 15. Site text ID: AN 3.15.

Text

15. Pacetana Sutta (King Pacetana) At one time, The Blessed One was staying within the Deer Park at Isipatana, in Varanasi. While there, the Teacher addressed the Bhikkhus by saying:

“Bhikkhus!”

“Yes, Blessed Lord!” The Bhikkhus replied.

And The Blessed One continued instructing:

“Bhikkhus, there used to be a royal monarch by the name of Pacetana who lived many years ago. One day, while addressing his chariot maker, King Pacetana spoke these words:

‘Friend, in six months’ time, a battle will take place, and I need you to make a new set of wheels, ready and prepared especially for my chariot.’

‘Yes, Lord!’ the chariot maker replied.

“However, short of six days before the six months’ deadline, the chariot maker was able to finish the work but while having ready only a single wheel made for the King’s chariot.

“On being made aware of this, King Pacetana addressed the chariot maker and said:

‘In six days’ time, the battle will commence. Will you have the other wheel ready?’

“In response, the chariot maker addressed the king:

‘My Lord, it took me six months minus six days, to finish just a single wheel!’

‘But, chariot maker, can you finish the second wheel in six days?’

“To which the man replied: “Yes, I can finish the second wheel, my Lord.’

“Then, the chariot maker worked on the second wheel day and night, and on having finished his work on the second wheel, he brought it along with the first wheel to King Pacetana and stated:

‘My Lord, your commissioned wheels are ready.’

‘Well, what is the difference between the one that took you six months minus six days, and the one that you finished in less than six days? I cannot tell them apart!’ exclaimed the King.

“In answer, the chariot maker stated:

‘But there is indeed a big difference, my Lord!’

“And taking the wheel which took him less than a week to complete, the chariot maker pushed it by rolling forward. When the momentum of the push ran out, the wheel fell over to one side, after wobbling for a bit. Next, the man took the wheel that took him six months minus six days to complete and rolled it forward until finally it came to a stop. But, when the momentum of the push ran out, this time the wheel stood in place, fixed on its axle.

“In seeing this, the King remarked:

‘Chariot maker, why is it that one wheel fell on its side after wobbling first, while the other on coming to a full stop, simply stands unmoved in its place?’

‘My Lord, it is because the wheel that took me six days to complete, has a warped rim, it is asymmetrical, defective, and imperfect, with spokes that are not fully straight, being defective and imperfect. It is due to this, my Lord, that when its forward momentum stopped, it fell to its side after wobbling.

However, the wheel that took me six months minus six days to complete, has a rim that is not warped; it is symmetrical and not defective, with spokes that are fully straight and therefore perfect. It is due to this, my Lord, that when its forward momentum stopped, this wheel stood in place, fixed on its axle.’

“Bhikkhus, you may be wondering that this chariot maker was someone else, but you should not think so, for the chariot maker was none other than Myself, in that distant lifetime.

“For, at the time, I was skilled and a master at fixing warped defects and imperfections in wood. Now, I am the Tathāgata, The Arahant, The Perfectly Awakened Buddha, skilled and a master at fixing the imperfections, warped, and defective behaviors of bodily conduct; skilled and a master at fixing the imperfections, warped, and defective behaviors in speech and verbal conduct; skilled and a master at fixing the imperfections, warped, and defective behaviors of mental conduct.

“Similarly, that Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni who has not relinquished the imperfections, warped, and defective behaviors of body, speech, and mind, is one who has fallen off This Dhamma and Discipline (Vinaya), much like the wheel that was made in six days, falling to the ground after wobbling for a bit.

“Meanwhile, the Bhikkhu or Bhikkhuni who has relinquished the imperfections, warped, and defective behaviors of body, speech, and mind, is firmly established in This Dhamma and Discipline (Vinaya), much like the wheel that was made in six months minus six days, that remained standing in place and unmoved, after coming to a full stop.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, you must strive and train yourselves in this way:

‘We shall give up the imperfections, all those warped and defective behaviors of bodily conduct; we shall give up all the imperfections, all those warped and defective behaviors of verbal conduct; we shall give up the imperfections, all those warped and defective behaviors of mental conduct. Such will be our striving. Such will be our training.’”