

A Bodhi Leaf Special Edition

**Selections from
The Dhammapada
Sayings of the Buddha**

Piyadassi Thera



BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY



Selections from The Dhammapada

Sayings of the Buddha

With Introductory Essays and Notes

Translated by

Piyadassi Thera

Buddhist Publication Society

Kandy • Sri Lanka

Bodhi Leaves Special Edition

First published 1974

Digital Transcription Source: BPS is grateful to Mr. Bill Hamilton, who very kindly scanned an original copy, extracted the text using OCR, then provided PBS the corrected text.

For free distribution. This work may be republished, reformatted, reprinted and redistributed in any medium. However, any such republication and redistribution is to be made available to the public on a free and unrestricted basis, and translations and other derivative works are to be clearly marked as such and the BPS is to be acknowledged as the original publisher.

The Buddha

Over 2,500 years ago there lived in Northern India a religious teacher who had attained supreme enlightenment and security from bondage through moral, intellectual and spiritual perfection, a teacher with an indefatigable zeal and steel determination for propagating the truth he had realized. That dynamic personality is none other than Siddhattha Gotama (Sid11dhārtha Gautama in Sanskrit) popularly known as the BUDDHA.

His father, Suddhodana, ruled over the land of the Sākya at Kapilavastu on the Nepalese frontier. Mahāmāyā, princess of the Koliyas, was Suddhodana's queen.

At the early age of sixteen the prince was– married to a beautiful princess named Yasodharā. Lacking nothing of the earthly joys of life, he lived amidst song and dance, in luxury and pleasure. However, with the advance of maturity the prince began to glimpse the woes and miseries of life despite the father's endeavours to keep them out of the sight of the son's inquiring eyes. Such attempts only heightened the son's eagerness to understand the meaning of sorrow and to find a way out of it for the benefit of suffering mankind.

The more he came in contact with the world outside his

palace walls the more convinced he became that the world was lacking in true happiness, and that what appeared to be happiness was distinctly temporary and unstable, and its disappearance became a cause for further unhappiness.

Now at the age of twenty-nine when Yasodharā gave birth to his only son, Rahūla, the prince left the palace renouncing wife, child, father (his mother had already passed away) and a crown that held the promise of power and glory, and in the guise of an indigent ascetic retreated into the solitude of the forest—there to seek an answer to the riddle of life and to obtain enlightenment.

Dedicating himself to the noble task of discovering a remedy for life's universal ill, he began a determined struggle to subdue his body in the hope that his mind, set free from the shackles of the body, might be able to soar to the heights of liberation. At the end of six years' self-mortification he realized the futility of such an endeavour. He also realized that the path to the fruition of his ardent longing lies in the direction of a search inward into his own mind.

This led to a critical analysis of the function of the human mind which ultimately brought him a realization of the four fundamental principles appertaining to life which he called the Four Noble Truths: 1. The fact of *dukkha*, that is, suffering or disharmony or conflict or unsatisfactoriness; 2. its cause; 3. its cessation; and 4. the way leading to its cessation.

Thus Siddhārtha Gautama by comprehending in all their fullness and profundity the import of the Four Noble Truths became the Buddha or the Awakened One. Even after he became a Buddha he did not claim to be any divine being, a God or Brahma, who creates, and sits in judgement over the destinies of mankind. He is a MAN among men. Asked as to who he was the answer came: “I am one awake”, and summed up his attainments In these words:

“I know what should be known, what should
Be cultivated I have cultivated.
What should be abandoned that I have let go.
Hence, I am BUDDHA, the Awakened One”.

(Sutta Nipāta, 558)

His followers, therefore, do not pray to him, do not expect rewards and punishments from him knowing as they do that rewards and punishments are consequences of one’s own deeds and misdeeds. They take refuge in him in the understanding that his life and teaching is a model to be followed, and which, if faithfully followed, would lead them from lower to higher levels of mental life, and finally to that bliss that results from the highest culmination of spiritual progress which is Nibbāna (Skt. Nirvāna).

Without resting on his laurels the Buddha came out of his solitude, and beginning with his first sermon to the five ascetics, his former friends, still steeped in the fruitless rigours of extreme asceticism, embarked on a long and

tireless mission of a period of forty-five years disseminating the message of the Dhamma (his teaching) far and wide.

He made no distinction of caste, colour, class or clan when he disseminated the Dhamma. Men and women from different walks of life—the rich and the poor; the lowliest and the highest; the literate and the illiterate; brahmins and outcasts; princes and paupers; saints and criminals—listened to him as he showed the path to peace and enlightenment. What the Buddha taught was not only for India, not only for his time. It is for all people, for all time. The path he had pointed out is open to all.

The Buddha passed away at the age of eighty at Kusinārā (in modern Uttar Pradesh in India) with a final admonition to his followers:

“Subject to change and transiency are all component things.

Work out your deliverance with diligence”.

This, in short, is an account of who the Buddha is and what he had done for the world at large. The Four Noble Truths is the priceless message that he gave unto suffering mankind for their guidance and to help them to be rid of the bondage of dukkha, and to attain that Absolute Happiness, that Absolute Reality—Nibbāna.

These Truths are not his creation. He only discovered their existence. We thus have in the Buddha one who deserves our respect and reverence not only as a teacher but also as a

pattern of noble, self-sacrificing and meditative life we would do well to follow if we wish to improve ourselves.

About the Dhammapada

The verses presented here are from a book of the Buddhist Canonical writings called the Dhammapada. Dhamma-pada is a compound word from the Pāli language, in which the oldest and most authentic Buddhist texts are written.

The word dhamma has several meanings; so has the word *pada*. This compound dhamma-pada, in this context, could be rendered as 'The Path of Truth'; or as 'The Words of Truth'.

It is hardly necessary to probe further the connotation of the word and it would quite suffice to call this book by its original title Dhammapada. It is famous for the collection of gems of thought which it offers to the reader in 423 verses.

In this publication there will appear only 200 verses selected out of the original 423. They have been selected as being verses which have a common human appeal and are considered sufficient for the benefit of those readers who have no time to go through the entirety of the 423 verses. It is hoped, however, that the richness of the contents of these 200 verses will create in the reader an urge to have access to the full version and enjoy the reading of the remaining verses which are no less interesting and instructive as those

appearing in this abridged version.

The Dhammapada, like other great books of the world, has been translated into many languages, Eastern and Western, ancient and modern. There are a number of translations in English. However, no apology is needed for bringing out another edition in English of this sacred book because its message is one that does not lose its lustre with the lapse of time. It is a book that is aglow with the light of perennial wisdom. Its pages sparkle with sayings the truth of which have stood the test of time.

Here is found the authentic teaching of the Buddha as it was proclaimed twenty-five centuries ago. It partakes both of the ancientness of the past as well as of the modernity of the present age.

I have not sought in this translation to sacrifice sense for embellishment, and therefore, endeavoured my best to keep as close as possible to the original wordings in the text.

Today science is assailing the citadels of dogmatic religions, and there is now an increasing number of critical minds that find it impossible to accept any longer the tenets of traditional religious beliefs. The advances made in the scientific and technical spheres have been so phenomenal that the new generation of youth finds dogmatic religion stifling its thirst for spiritual knowledge. Science itself, however, is no alternative to, or substitute for religion, and does not claim or aim to be such. Science is not concerned with ethical and spiritual values, yet without them science

may well prove to be more a curse than a blessing to mankind.

We have seen the danger of science devoid of ethical elements in the havoc created by atom bombs and nuclear weapons. Nuclear tests are still going on. As the Late President Dwight D. Eisenhower said: 'Science seems ready to confer upon us, as its final gift, the power to erase human life from this planet'.

The material world with all its complexities and variations calls for so much consideration and investigation which cannot reach a satisfactory solution in the absence of a search into the inner life.

The traditional religions with their age-old theories are not meeting the challenge of the new world that is emerging. The new generation, especially in the Western world, is searching for something new because the traditionally accepted dogmas and theories have failed to satisfy them. The problems of youth find no solutions in the dogmatic creeds of hereditary religion. The question of inner self, the inner world, remains unanswered. The values placed on the material aspect of life are taken so much for granted that they seem so superficial to the searching mind. The problems of the Western world are basically psychological. Obviously material knowledge and scientific and technological know-how have not brought man the answers to world problems. This type of knowledge has only led to the multiplication of problems.

We need a message of hope, true love, and wisdom. Those who are in search of such a lofty message will certainly find it in the ancient but ever fresh verses of the Dhammapada.

This priceless book is respected for its universality—that is to say it deals with all the conditions and attitudes to which the human mind is subject, both in regard to the highest flights to which it can ascend, as well as to the lowest depths to which it can descend. It will, therefore, appeal to every type of human being irrespective of race or creed, and must therefore, strike a responsive chord in the heart of every person whatever his experience of life may be, and whoever he may be.

There is yet another reason why the Dhammapada is greatly respected. When we look round and view the conditions of the present world we are struck by the sad thought that there is no proper unity among the peoples that inhabit this world. In every department of life, in every sphere of human activity, there is conflict and jealousy. There is nothing which can bind the hearts of one to another so powerfully and strongly as the inspiring words of the Dhammapada.

Here then is the universal lesson the Buddha taught all mankind: the lesson of virtuous conduct (*sīla*) that leads gradually to tranquillity (*samādhi*) Which step by step graduates into emancipating Wisdom (*paññā*) and culminates in deliverance (*vimutti*) which is Nibbāna. So here the perplexed will find clarity, the distraught solace,

and the disheartened hope and courage. The Dhammapada has exercised a deep and abiding influence on the course of human thought, and therefore on the course of human conduct. It has shaped the minds, and fashioned the lives of men and women for centuries. Verily it is a timeless message.

In conclusion I would like to quote from the late Ven. Kassapa Thera (one-time Dr. Cassius Pereira) of Sri Lanka:

‘If I were to name any book from the whole Tipiṭaka, as having been of most service to me, I should without hesitation choose the Dhammapada. And it goes without saying that, to me, it is the best single book in all the wide world of literature. For forty years, and more, it has been my constant companion and never-failing solace in every kind of misfortune and grief.

‘There is not a trouble, that man is heir to for which the Lord over sorrow cannot point out cause, and prescribe sure remedy. One never turns in vain to these stanzas of incomparable beauty for advice, for alleviation of life’s manifold pains, or for message of cheer and penetrating insight’. [1]

Selections from The Dhammapada

- 1 All (evil mental) states have mind as their fore-runner, mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a polluted mind, then suffering follows one even as the wheel follows the hoof of the draught-ox.
- 2 All (good mental) states have mind as their fore-runner, mind is their chief, and they are mind-made. If one speaks or acts with a pure mind, then happiness follows one as one's shadow that never departs.
- 3 'He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me'. The hatred of those who harbour such thoughts is never appeased.
- 5 Hatred is never appeased through hatred in this world. By love alone is it appeased. This is an ancient Law.
- 11 Those who imagine the non-essential as essential, and the essential as non-essential, by reason of such wrong thinking never arrive at the Essential (Nibbāna, the supreme security from bondage).
- 12 Having known the essential as es Nibbāna sential, and the non-essential as non-essential, they do arrive at the Essential because of such right thinking.
- 15 Here he grieves, hereafter he grieves; both here and there does the evil-doer grieve. He grieves, he suffers seeing his own foul deeds.
- 16 Here he rejoices, hereafter he rejoices; both here and there does the righteous man rejoice. He rejoices, exceedingly rejoices seeing his own pure deeds.

- 19 Though he recites much the texts but being heedless, acts not accordingly, he, like the cowherd that counts the cattle of others, shares not the fruit of a recluse's life.
- 20 Though he recites little of the texts but conduct himself according to the teaching (Dhamma), he abandoning lust, hate and delusion, possessed of right understanding, mind well-freed, clinging to nothing here or hereafter, shares the fruit of a recluse's life.
- 21 Diligence is the path to the Deathless; [2] negligence is the path to death. The diligent do not die; [3] the negligent are like unto the dead.
- 22 Having distinctly understood this (difference) [4] the wise established in heedfulness and delighting in the realm of Noble Ones rejoice in heedfulness.
- 23 Those wise ones who meditate and steadfastly persevere, realize Nibbāna, the supreme security from bondage.
- 24 Whosoever is striving, mindful, pure in conduct, discriminating, self-controlled, rightly living and wide awake, his fame steadily increases.
- 25 Through effort, diligence, discipline and self-control let the wise man make of himself an island that no flood can overwhelm.
- 26 Fools, men of inferior intelligence, indulge in negligence. The wise man guards diligence as a supreme treasure.

- 27 Indulge not in negligence; have no intimacy with sense pleasures. The man who meditates with diligence, indeed, attains much happiness.
- 29 Diligent among the negligent, wide awake among the sleeping, the wise one advances as a swift horse outstrips a decrepit hack.
- 33 The fickle unsteady mind so hard to guard, so hard to control, the wise man straightens, as the fletcher the arrow.
- 34 Like a fish jerked out of its watery abode and cast on land, this mind quakes, therefore, the realm of Mara (passions) should be abandoned.
- 35 Good it is to control the mind which is difficult to control, which is swift and apt to alight on whatever it pleases. The controlled mind yields happiness.
- 38 He whose mind is unsteady, he who knows not the sublime teaching, he whose confidence wavers—the wisdom of such a person does not attain fullness.
- 41 Before long, this body devoid of consciousness, will lie discarded on the ground worthless as a log of wood.
- 42 Whatever harm an enemy may do to an enemy, or one who hates to one who is hated, and ill-directed mind can do one far greater harm.
- 43 What good neither mother nor father nor any other kinsmen can do to a man, a well-directed mind does to

him and thereby ennoble him.

- 41 The man who gathers only the flowers (of sense pleasures), whose mind is absorbed in (sense objects), death carries him away as a great flood a sleeping village.
- 50 Not the faults of others, nor what others have done or left undone, but one's own deeds, done and left undone, should one consider.
- 51 As a flower beautiful and brilliant of hue, but without fragrance, even so fruitless is the well-spoken word of one who does not practice it.
- 52 As a flower beautiful, brilliant of hue and full of fragrance too, even so fruitful is the well-spoken word of one who does practice it.
- 53 As from a heap of flowers many a garland is made even so many a good deed should be done by one born as a human being.
- 57 Māra **[5]** (the evil one, the tempter), finds not the path of those who are perfect in virtue, heedful in living, and liberated (from taints) through perfect realization (of the Truths).
- 60 Long is the night to him who is awake, long is the league to the weary (traveller), and long is repeated existence (saṃsāra) to the foolish who knows not the sublime teaching.
- 61 If a man goes (in search of a friend) and cannot find one

who is better or equal, let him resolutely pursue the solitary course of life; there can be no friendship with the fool.

- 62 I have sons; I have wealth!' Thus the fool fusses in his mind. But he himself is not his own. What of sons and wealth?
- 63 A fool aware of his folly is for that very reason a wise man. But the fool who deems himself wise is called a fool, indeed.
- 64 Even if all his life a fool associates with a wise man, he will not understand the Truth (Dhamma) even as the spoon (does not understand) the flavour of the soup.
- 65 Even for a moment, if a man of intelligence associates with a wise man, he quickly understands the Truth, as the tongue (perceives) the flavour of soup.
- 66 Fools, men of inferior intelligence, behave as enemies unto themselves doing ill deeds that produce bitter fruit.
- 67 That deed is not well done, which one repents when it is done, and the result of which one experiences lamenting with a tearful face.
- 68 Well done is that deed, which one repents not when it is done, and the result of which one experiences with great delight and happy mind.
- 69 So long as an evil deed committed does not bear fruit, thus long does the fool think it as sweet as honey. But

when the evil deed ripens the fool comes to grief.

- 71 An evil deed committed does not immediately bear fruit even as milk that curdles not at once. Like fire, covered by ashes, burns, so does the evil deed follow the fool burning him.
- 76 If one sees a wise man, who, like a revealer of treasure, points out faults and rebukes, one should associate with such a person. One will fare well and not ill in the company of such a person,
- 77 Let him (the wise man) advise and exhort, and dissuade (others) from evil. Such a person is dear to the good; unpleasant to the wicked.
- 78 Do not associate with evil friends; do not keep company with mean men. Associate with good friends; keep company with the best of men.
- 79 He who imbibes the (nectar of) the Dhamma, the Truth, lives happily with a serene mind. The wise man ever delights in the Dhamma proclaimed by the noble saints.
- 80 Irrigators lead the water; fletcher's fashion the shaft; carpenters carve the wood; the wise discipline themselves.
- 81 As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, even so the wise remain unshaken amidst blame and praise.
- 82 As a deep lake is limpid and calm, so do wise men become calm on hearing the Dhamma, the teaching.

- 85 Few among men are they who cross to the further shore. The other folk only run up and down the bank on this side.
- 90 For him, whose journey is over, who is sorrowless, fully free from everything, and has put an end to all bonds, there is no burning (of the passions).
- 94 He whose senses are controlled like horses well under the control of the charioteer, he who is cleansed of pride, and rid of passions, such a steadfast one even the gods envy.
- 96 His mind is calm, calm is his word and deed who is liberated through perfect knowledge, who is pacified and steadfast.
- 98 Delightful, indeed, is that place where the Worthy Ones (Arahats) dwell—whether in village or in forest, whether in glen or in glade.
- 99 Delightful are the forests where worldlings find no pleasure. There the passionless rejoice; for they are no seekers of sense pleasures.
- 100 Better than a thousand utterances, better than a mere jumble of meaningless words, is one sensible phrase on hearing which one is pacified.
- 103 Though one conquers in battle thousand times thousand men, yet he is the greatest conqueror who conquers himself.

- 104–105 Better is it to conquer oneself than to conquer others. Neither a god, nor a Gandhabba (demigod) nor Māra nor Brahma can undo the victory of a person who is self-mastered and ever conducts himself with restraint.
- 110 A single day's life of a person who is virtuous and meditative is better than a life of one hundred years of a person who is immoral and uncontrolled.
- 112 A single day's life of a person who strives with firm endeavour is better than a life of one hundred years of a person who is lazy and indolent.
- 116 Make haste in doing good; restrain your mind from evil; for whosoever is slow in doing good delights in evil.
- 117 If a man commits evil, let him not do it again and again, let him not delight in it; painful is the accumulation of evil.
- 118 If a man does good, let him do it again and again, let him take delight in it; happy is the accumulation of good.
- 119 The evil-doer sees good until his evil deed bears fruit. But when the fruit does ripen then does he see its ill effects.
- 121 Think not lightly of evil, saying: 'it will not come to me'. Even a water pot is filled by the falling of drops. Likewise the fool, gathering it little by little, fills himself with evil.
- 122 Think not lightly of good, saying: 'it will not come to

me'. Even a water pot is filled by the falling of drops. In the same way the wise man, gathering it little by little, fills himself with good.

123 Even as a merchant with a small caravan but carrying much wealth would avoid a dangerous road, and as a man who loves life would avoid poison, so should one avoid evil.

125 Whosoever harms an innocent man, pure, and faultless, upon that very fool that evil recoils like fine dust thrown against the wind.

127 Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering a cleft in the mountains is found a place where abiding himself, one may escape from (the consequences of) one's evil deeds.

128 Neither in the sky nor in mid-ocean, nor by entering a cleft in the mountains is found a place where abiding himself, death will not overcome him.

130 All fear punishment (violence), life is dear to all. Comparing oneself with others, one should neither kill nor cause to kill.

131 Whosoever, seeking his own happiness, torments with the cudgel those who desire happiness themselves, shall not get happiness after death.

132 Whosoever, seeking his own happiness, does not torment with the cudgel beings that are fond of happiness, shall find happiness hereafter.

- 133 Speak not harshly to anyone; for those accosted will retort; painful is vindictive talk, and you may receive blows in exchange.
- 135 As a cowherd with a stick drives the cattle into the pasture-ground, so do ageing and death drive the life span of beings (to its end).
- 146 What laughter, what joy when it is ever burning (with passions)? Enveloped in darkness would you not seek a light?
- 150 A citadel made of bones (is this body), plastered over with flesh and blood wherein are stored up ageing and death, pride and detraction.
- 152 The man of little learning, grows like a bull; his flesh grows; but not his wisdom.
- 155 Not having lived the noble life, not having acquired wealth in their youth, men pine away like old herons in a pond without fish.
- 158 Let one establish oneself first in what is proper, and then advise others. Such a wise man will not get defiled.
- 159 As he admonishes others, so should he himself act. Himself well controlled, he should have control over others. It is difficult, indeed, to control oneself.
- 160 Oneself is one's own protector (refuge); who else could the protector be? With oneself well-controlled one obtains a protection which is difficult to obtain.

- 163 Easy to do are things that are evil and harmful. What is beneficial and good, that, indeed, is very difficult to do.
- 165 By oneself is evil done and by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil left undone and by oneself is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one can purify another.
- 167 Do not follow mean things; do not live in heedlessness; do not embrace false views; do not be a world-upholder (by prolonging the cycle of existence and continuity, Saṃsāra).
- 168 Rise up (rouse yourself), never be heedless; follow the law of virtue. He who practices virtue lives happily in this world and in the next.
- 169 Follow the path of virtue, do not follow the path of evil. He who practices virtue lives happily in this world and in the next.
- 171 Come, behold this world, how it resembles an ornamented royal chariot in which fools flounder. For the wise, however, there is no attachment to it.
- 173 Whose evil deed is covered by the good deed (done by him), he illumines this world like the moon set free from a cloud.
- 174 This world is blind; only a few here can see clearly. A few go to a heavenly realm, like birds freed from the net.
- 176 There is no evil that cannot be done by a lying person

who has transgressed the one law (of truthfulness), and who is indifferent to a world beyond.

- 183 The giving up of all evil, the cultivation of all that is good, cleansing of one's mind, this is the teaching of the Buddhas.
- 184 Patience and forbearance is the highest asceticism, the Buddhas declare Nibbāna to be the supreme. He indeed, is no recluse who harms others nor is he an ascetic who vexes others.
- 185 Not to reproach, not to do any harm, to practice restraint according to the fundamental precepts (patimokkha), to be moderate in eating, to dwell in solitude, to devote oneself to lofty mental concentration, this is the teaching of the Buddhas.
- 188–189 Men driven by fear go to many a refuge: to mountains, forests, groves, trees and shrines. This, however, is not a safe refuge; having resorted to this refuge one is not freed from suffering.
- 190–192 One who has gone for refuge to the Buddha, to the Dhamma, and to the Saṅgha sees with right understanding the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the arising (cause) of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the Noble Eightfold Path leading to the cessation of suffering. This, verily, is the safe refuge; this, indeed, is refuge supreme; having resorted to this refuge one is delivered from all suffering.

- 194 Happy is the birth of the Budhref="#Ndhas; happy is the teaching of the sublime Dhamma; happy is the unity of the Saṅgha, and happy is the austere life of the united.
- 197 Happily, indeed, we live without hate among the hateful, among men who hate let us live without hatred.
- 201 The victor creates enmity (in the defeated); the defeated live in distress. The peaceful live happily giving up both victory and defeat.
- 202 There is no fire like lust; there is no evil (crime) like hate; there is nothing so painful as the aggregates [6] (this body and mind); there is no happiness greater than Peace (Nibbāna).
- 203 Hunger is the greatest ailment; component things (the aggregates) are the most painful. Knowing this as it really is (the wise realize) Nibbāna, the Supreme Bliss.
- 204 Health is the highest gain; contentment is the greatest wealth; a trusted friend is the best kinsman; Nibbāna is Bliss Supreme.
- 213 From affection arises grief; from affection arises fear; to him who is free from affection there is no grief, whence fear?
- 215 From lust arises grief; from lust arises fear; to him who is free from lust there is no grief. Whence fear?
- 216 From craving arises grief; from craving arises fear; to him who is free from craving there is no grief, whence

fear?

- 217 Whosoever is perfect in virtue and insight, is established in the Dhamma, speaks the truth and fulfils his own duties, him do people hold dear.
- 222 He who holds back the anger arisen (in him) as one checks a whirling chariot, him do I call a charioteer. Other folk merely hold the reins.
- 223 Conquer the angry man by love; conquer the ill-natured man by goodness; conquer the miser with generosity; conquer the liar with truth.
- 224 One should speak the truth, and not yield to anger; when asked, one should give though there be little; by these three things one may go to the presence of the devas, the gods.
- 227 This is a thing of old, Atula, not only of today; they blame him who remains silent, they blame him who talks much, they blame him who speaks in moderation; none in the world is left unblamed.
- 228 There never was, there never will be, nor is there now to be found anyone who is wholly blamed or wholly praised.
- 231 One should check bodily wrongs, and be controlled in body. Giving up bodily wrongs one should be of good conduct in body.
- 232 One should check verbal wrongs, and be controlled in

speech. Giving up evil speech one should be of good conduct in speech.

233 One should check mental wrongs and be controlled in mind. Giving up evil thought one should be of good conduct in mind.

234 The wise are controlled in deed; they are controlled in words and in thoughts; verily they are well controlled.

239 Gradually, little by little, from moment to moment, the wise man removes his own impurities as a smith removes the dross of silver.

240 As rust, arisen out of iron, eats itself away, even so do his own deeds lead the transgressor to a state of woe.

244 Easy is the life of a man who is shameless, who with the boldness of a crow is back-biting, forward, arrogant and impure.

245 Hard is the life of a modest man who always seeks purity, who is detached, humble, whose living is clean, and reflective.

246–247 Whoso destroys life, utters lies, takes what is not given, resorts to others' wives, and is addicted to intoxicating liquor, he, in this very life, would dig up his own root (his own happiness).

248 Know thus, O good man: 'not easy of control are evil things'. Let not greed and hate drag you to suffering for a long period.

- 251 There is no fire like lust. There is no grip like hate. There is no net like delusion. There is no stream like craving.
- 252 Easily seen are the faults of others; but one's own faults are hard to see. Like chaff, one winnows others' faults; but one's own, one conceals as a crafty hunter hides himself.
- 256–257 He is not just who decides a case partially. The wise man should investigate both right and wrong impartially. He, who guided by the law, decides right and wrong impartially—that wise man is verily one who is established in the law.
- 258 One does not become wise merely by speaking much. One who is secure (peaceful), free from hate and fearless is called a wise man.
- 259 One does not become versed in the Dhamma by speaking much; whosoever having heard the Dhamma, does not neglect it but realizes it, he indeed, is versed in the Dhamma.
- 260 He is not a Thera (an elder) merely because his head is grey. Ripe he is in age, 'a man grown old in vain' is he called.
- 261 He in whom there is truth, righteousness, non-violence, restraint and control, that wise man who has put aside impurities is truly called a Thera (an elder).
- 262 Not by mere (specious) talk, complexion and beauty

does a man become of good disposition, if he be jealous, miserly and deceitful.

264 Not by shaving his head does an undisciplined man who utters falsehood become a recluse. How can he be a recluse who is full of longing and greed?

267 He who has transcended both merit (good) and demerit (evil), he who leads the noble (pure) life, and lives with understanding in this world, he, indeed, is called a bhikkhu.

268–269 By observing silence the foolish, untaught man does not become a sage (muni). But the wise man, who as if holding a pair of scales, takes what is good, and leaves out what is evil, is indeed a sage. For this reason he is a sage. He who understands the world (both within and without) is called a sage.

270 He is not a noble man, a saint (ariya) if he harms living beings. He who cultivates lovingkindness towards all beings is called a saint (ariya).

273 Of paths the Eightfold Path [7] is the best; of truths the Four Words; [8] Detachment (Nibbāna) is the best of mental states and of bipeds (men) the Man of Vision.

274 This alone is the Path; there is no other for the purification of insight. Follow this Path, and you will confound Māra (the Power of Evil).

275 Following this Path you shall make an end of suffering. Declared unto you is the Path by me having

learnt the process of the removal of the arrow (of lust).

276 You yourselves should strive; the Buddhas are but the pointers to the Path. Those who enter the Path and cultivate meditation, free themselves from the bonds of Māra (the Power of Evil).

277 'All conditioned things are impermanent (anicca)', when one sees this in wisdom, then one becomes bored with this unsatisfactoriness. This is the Path to Purification.

278 'All conditioned things are subject to suffering (dukkha)', when one sees this in wisdom, then one becomes bored with this unsatisfactoriness. This is the Path to Purification.

279 'All conditioned things (dhammā) are without self (anattā)', when one sees this in wisdom, then one becomes bored with this unsatisfactoriness. This is the Path to Purification.

280 Who strives not when it is time to strive, who though young and strong is indolent, who is low in mind and thought and lazy, that idler never finds the way to wisdom.

281 Watchful of speech, and well controlled in mind, let him do no evil with the body; let him purify these three ways of action and attain the path declared by the Sages.

288 Sons are of no protection, nor father, nor kinsmen; for one who is seized by death, there is no refuge in kinsmen.

- 289 Understanding this fact let the wise man, restrained by morality, quickly clear the path that leads to Nibbāna.
- 290 If by giving up some slight happiness, one sees greater happiness, then let the wise man renounce the smaller happiness in view of the greater happiness.
- 291 He who desires his own happiness by causing suffering to others is not freed from hatred, being himself entangled in the tangles of hatred.
- 292 What should be done is left undone; what should not be done, is done; the taints, the defiling impulses (āsavas) of such arrogant and heedless people increase.
- 309 Four misfortunes befall a heedless man who associate with others' wives: acquisition of demerit, lack of sleep, blame as the third, and a state of woe as the fourth.
- 311 As a blade of kusa grass mishandled, cuts the hand, so also the life of a recluse wrongly handled drags him, to a state of woe.
- 314 An evil deed is better left undone since an evil deed is followed by remorse; better is that good deed done which being done, one does not repent.
- 318 They imagine as wrong what is not wrong; what is wrong they see Brāhmaṇa: as not wrong. Beings holding such false views go to a state of woe.
- 319 Knowing wrong as wrong and right as right, beings, embracing right views, go to a happy state.

- 320 As an elephant in the battlefield bears an arrow shot from the bow, so shall I endure abusive speech, (aimed at me). Indeed, most men are ill-natured.
- 326 Formerly this mind wandered about where it liked, wherever it willed, as it pleased; today, with wisdom (meditation) I shall control it as a mahout controls an elephant in rut.
- 327 Take delight in mindfulness, mind your mind, draw yourself out of the mire (of passions) as would an elephant sunk in mud (comes out of it).
- 328 If you find an intelligent friend (who is fit) for company, who is of good conduct and prudent, then live with him happily and mindfully overcoming all obstacles.
- 329 If you do not find an intelligent friend (who is fit) for company who is of good conduct and sagacious, then live along like a Brāhmaṇa: king who has renounced his conquered country, or like a Matanga elephant (roaming at will) in the forest.
- 330 It is better to live alone; there is no fellowship with a fool. Let one live alone committing no evil, being carefree, like a Matanga elephant (roaming at will) in the forest.
- 331 Friends are desirable when a need has arisen; happy is contentment with whatever there might be; merit done is pleasant (consoling) when life's end is approaching; happy is the giving up of all sufferings (Arahatship).
- 332 In this world, happy it is to attend on the mother, to

attend on the father too, is happy; happy is it to attend on the recluses, and happy, is it too, to attend on the Noble Ones (the Arahats).

333 Happy is age-long virtue; happy is well-established confidence; happy is the acquisition of wisdom; happy is abstinence from evil.

334 The craving of the heedless man grows like a Maluva (all entangling) creeper. He runs hither and thither (from one life to another) like a monkey in the forest looking for fruit.

335 Whosoever in this world is overcome by this base craving, this clinging (to sense objects), his sorrows grow like Birana grass after rain.

336 But whosoever in this world overcomes this base craving so hard to subdue, his sorrows fall away from him like water drops from a lotus leaf.

338 As a tree cut down begins to grow up again if its roots remain uninjured and firm, even so when the roots of craving remain undestroyed, this suffering arises again and again.

343 Man enmeshed in craving is terrified like a hare in a snare. Therefore let the bhikkhu who wishes his detachment abandon craving.

345–346 What is strong is not the shackle made of iron, wood or hemp, but that attachment to gems and ornaments, that longing for wife and children is really the

strong shackle—so the wise say—Even this which binds beings down, which is yielding yet hard to loosen, the wise cut off, and abandoning sense pleasures, free from longing, they renounce.

348 Give up attachment to the past (aggregates), [9] give up attachment to the future, give up attachment to the present. Crossing to the further shore of becoming, with mind released everywhere, no more shalt thou come to birth and ageing.

360 Restraint of the eye is good. Restraint of the ear is good. Restraint of the nose is good. Restraint of the tongue is good.

361 Restraint of the body is good. Restraint of speech is good. Restraint of the mind is good. Restraint everywhere (i.e. in the eye, ear, etc.) is good. The bhikkhu [10] restrained everywhere is freed from all suffering.

362 He who is controlled in hand, controlled in foot, controlled in speech, possessing the highest control (of mind), delighted within, composed, alone, contented, he is called a bhikkhu.

363 Sweet is the speech of the bhikkhu who has tamed his tongue, who speaks wisely, who is not puffed up, and who expounds the meaning of the text.

365 One should not despise what one had received, and one should not envy (the gain of) others. The bhikkhu who envies others does not attain mental calm.

- 368 The bhikkhu who abides in lovingkindness, who takes delight in the Teaching of the Buddha, attains the Happy Haven of Peace (Nibbāna) which is the calming of conditioned things.
- 372 There is no concentration to him who is without wisdom; there is no wisdom to him who does not concentrate. In whom there is concentration and wisdom, he indeed, is near to Nibbāna.
- 373 To the bhikkhu who has entered an empty abode, whose mind is calmed, and who sees with insight the Dhamma (Truth), there comes supreme joy transcending that of men.
- 379 O bhikkhu, do censure yourself; do examine yourself. Self-guarded and mindful, O bhikkhu, you will live happily.
- 380 Oneself is one's protector; oneself is one's refuge. Let one, therefore, take care of oneself as a trader of horses would a good horse.
- 382 The monk, who, while still young, applies himself to the teaching of the Buddha, illumines this world like the moon freed from a cloud.
- 387 The sun shines by day; the moon shines by night; in his armour shines the warrior king; in meditation shines the brāhmaṇa. **[11]** But all day and night, the Buddha shines in his splendour.
- 391 He who does no evil through body, speech and mind,

he who is restrained in these three respects—him I call a brāhmana.

393 Not by matted hair, not by lineage, not by birth does one become a brāhmana; but in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is pure, he is the brāhmana.

394 What is the use of thy matted hair, O fool, what is the use of thy antelope skin garment? Within thee are full (of passions) but thou makest clean the outside.

401 Who, like water on a lotus leaf, or like a mustard seed on the point of a needle, does not cling to sense pleasures—him I call a brāhmana.

403 He whose wisdom is deep, he who does possess insight, who is skilled in knowing the right path and the wrong, who has attained the highest end (Arahatship)—him I call a brāhmana.

405 He who has laid aside the cudgel of violence towards beings, feeble or strong, he who neither kills nor causes to kill—him I call a brāhmana.

406 He who is friendly among those who are hostile, composed among those in weapons, unattached among those who are attached (to their own mind and body)—him I call a brāhmana.

407 Whose lust and hatred, pride and detraction have fallen off like a mustard seed from the point of a needle—him I call a brāhmana.

- 410 He who has no longings in this world or in the next, who is free from desires and released—him I call a brāhmana.
- 412 Who here (in this world) has transcended the ties of both good and evil, who is sorrowless, free from defilements and pure—him I call, a brāhmana.
- 413 Who is free from blemish stainless like the moon, who is pure, absolutely serene and clear, and who has destroyed the craving for becoming—him I call a brāhmana.
- 420 He whose destiny neither gods nor demigods (*gandhabba*) nor men do know, he who has destroyed all defilements, and is accomplished (Arahat)—him I call a brāhmana.
- 423 The sage who knows (his) former lives, who perceives heaven and hell, who has reached the end of births, **[12]** and attained to super-knowledge, who has completed his task by living the holy life—him I call a brāhmana.

Notes

1. Narada Thera, Forward to *Dhammapada*, Colombo, 1946.
2. Deathless here means Nibbāna (see note no. 12). The Pāli word *Appamāda* is translated as diligence. It is difficult to give an exact English equivalent for the word *appamāda*. Literally, it means ever present mindfulness or watchfulness in avoiding all evil and in doing all good.
3. This does not mean that the diligent are immortal. All beings are mortal. The idea implied herein is that the diligent, who realize the decayless and deathless state of Nibbāna are beyond birth and death. The negligent are regarded as dead in the sense that they are not intent in doing good, and are subject to repeated births and deaths.
4. The fact that there is an escape to the diligent, but not to the negligent.
5. Devaputta Māra, the 'evil one', the Tempter, who is depicted in temple paintings. Māra being known as the Tempter, the term is also used to denote passions (*kilesa*). Māra is the Buddhist personification of all that is evil, i.e., of all that binds to the round of repeated births and deaths, *saṃsāra*. For a very vivid description of Māra, see *Dictionary of Pali Proper Names*, G. P. Malalasekara, vol.

ii. p. 611.

6. The Aggregates (khandha) are five in number: The Aggregate of Matter; of Feeling or Sensation; of Perception; of Mental (Volitional) Formations; of Consciousness (*rūpa, vedanā, saññā, saṅkhāra, viññāna*).
7. The Eight Factors of the Path are:

Wisdom Group (*paññā*)

1. Right Understanding,
2. Right Thought,
3. Right Sp(see note no. 6)eech

Virtue Group (*sīla*)

4. Right Action,
5. Right Livelihood,
6. Right Effort

Concentration Group (*samādhi*)

7. Right Mindfulness,
8. Right Concentration.

8. The Four Words: They are the Four Noble Truths:
1. Suffering,
 2. The Cause of Suffering,
 3. The Cessation of Suffering,
 4. The Path leading to the Cessation of Suffering.

For a very comprehensive account of the four Noble

Truths see *The Buddha's Ancient Path* by the present writer.

9. See note no. 5

10. *Bhikkhu*: There is no English equivalent which conveys the exact meaning of the Pāli term *bhikkhu*. It may be rendered as Buddhist monk. A *bhikkhu* is not a priest who acts as a mediator between God and man, administers sacraments and pronounces absolution. Having renounced mundane pleasures he lives a life of voluntary poverty and complete celibacy with the high aim of attaining deliverance from suffering. There are two ways of leading the life of a *bhikkhu*. One is that of full time meditation (*vipassanā dhura*, and the other is part time study and teaching (*gantha dhura*). It is obligatory on every *bhikkhu* to take up either of these ways according to temperament, age and environment.

11. *Brāhmana*: The term 'brāhmana' does not here stand for any race, caste class or clan. The word is used by the Buddha in the sense of one who has put aside all evil (*bāhita pāpoti brāhmano*), and, denotes an Arahāt.

12. Cessation of repeated (*saṃsāric*) existence; realization of Nibbāna (Nirvāna). Nibbāna is the absence of suffering, and therefore an affirmation of happiness. Final deliverance from suffering is brought about by the destruction of lust, hate and ignorance (*rāga, dosa, moha*) from which all ill originate. Nibbāna is not mere annihilation or nothingness. It is a permanent supramundane state. It stands above, or rather outside

the law of cause and effect, not however, as an absolute, as God, but only as exhibiting the end of all relations. Nibbāna is, but ineffable, it is beyond words, for words are cosmic-born and know only cosmic qualities. It is not something to be theorized about, it could be realized by following the Noble Eightfold Path expounded by the Buddha (see note no. 6).

THE BUDDHIST PUBLICATION SOCIETY

The BPS is an approved charity dedicated to making known the Teaching of the Buddha, which has a vital message for all people.

Founded in 1958, the BPS has published a wide variety of books and booklets covering a great range of topics. Its publications include accurate annotated translations of the Buddha's discourses, standard reference works, as well as original contemporary expositions of Buddhist thought and practice. These works present Buddhism as it truly is—a dynamic force which has influenced receptive minds for the past 2500 years and is still as relevant today as it was when it first arose.

For more information about the BPS and our publications, please visit our website, or write an e-mail or a letter to the:

Administrative Secretary

Buddhist Publication Society

P.O. Box 61 • 54 Sangharaja Mawatha

Kandy • Sri Lanka

E-mail: bps@bps.lk • web site: <http://www.bps.lk>

Tel: 0094 81 223 7283 • Fax: 0094 81 222 3679

Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Selections from The Dhammapada | 2 |
| The Buddha | 4 |
| About the Dhammapada | 9 |
| Selections from The Dhammapada | 13 |
| Notes | 39 |