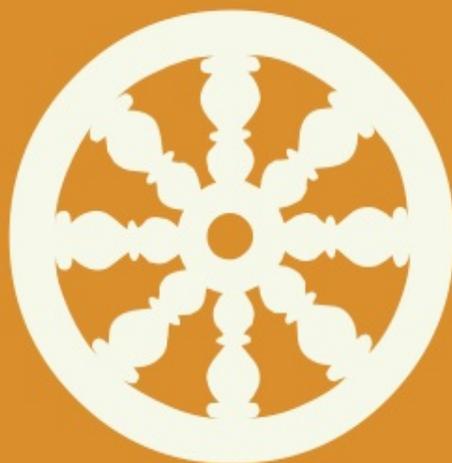


Wheel Publication No. 296/297

The World's True Welfare

The Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva

Venerable Vīdāgama Maitreya
(Trans by F. M. Rajakaruna)
(intro by Ānanda Kulasuriya)



The World's True Welfare

The Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva:
A didactic poem of the 15th
century
from Sri Lanka

by

The Venerable Vīdāgama Maitreya

Translated from the Sinhalese by

F. M. Rajakaruna

Introduction by

Prof. Ānanda Kulasuriya

Buddhist Publication Society
Kandy • Sri Lanka

The Wheel Publication No. 296/297

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First Edition: 1982

BPS Online Edition © (2009)

Digital Transcription Source: Buddhist Publication Society

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Translator's Preface

The idea of translating the *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva* into English was born as a result of a discussion I had with two friends about eight years ago. They were both businessmen, but the subject discussed was not the markets, the foreign exchange, or the next business deal, but was on education. Someone casually remarked on the small book of Sinhala verses, the *Sirith Mal Dama*, a code and guide to the small schoolgoers, how they had to conduct themselves at home, on the way to school and back, verses from which they had to recite at home and in class. Next came the withdrawal from school use in Sri Lanka, of the *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva*, a book of verses used in higher grades, and verses from which were recited daily in one class or another.

I undertook to translate the *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva* into English, so that we could put it into the hands of parents and adults and through them reach the younger generation. The following day I went in search of a copy of the book, but none of the large book-sellers in the city had a copy to sell. I scoured the pavement "book-stalls" where I found a mildewed, dust-covered copy. I drew on my memory, for I had known all the verses by heart and found confirmation in print.

For refreshing my memory of the verses, I have referred to the Venerable Devundara Vachissāra Thera's edition of the text, provided with a paraphrase in modern Sinhala (Colombo 1966, M.D. Gunasena & Co.).

I wish to express my deep sense of indebtedness to the Venerable Nyanāponika Mahā Thera, who kindly took charge of the manuscript. But for his intervention and the tedious task of editing and revising the script, shared by his helpers, this work may never have reached the readers in the-present form.

I wish to make a further reference to the two *kalyāṇa mitrayo* (benevolent friends) who gave me the idea and the encouragement to do this work, the late Mr. N. S. de S. Wickremasinghe, and Mr. B. Darsin de Silva both of Balapitiya. To the first named, no longer with us, I offer the wholesome benefits that may accrue to me by this good work, and to the second, my good wishes for prosperity here, and more opportunity to join in the service to the Dhamma.

Lastly, I wish to state that I undertook this task with one intention. The Venerable Author's wish was to bring knowledge of some of the simpler teachings of the Buddha to those who did not understand Pali, the original language of the Buddhist canonical texts. It was now my own humble intention to take the Venerable Author's wishes a step further, by carrying his noble thoughts to a wider circle of readers who know neither Pali nor the Sinhala language.

F. M. Rajakaruna Colombo, Sri Lanka January 1981

Introduction



Moral maxims find artistic expression in many literatures. Such sayings are widely prevalent in oriental literature, so also in Pali and in Sanskrit where they were included in the category of *subhāsita* (lit. “well spoken,” “good counsel”) or *nīti* (lit. “right conduct or behaviour”) literature. They also constitute a well-known element in Western classical literature and were known to the ancient Greeks as “*gnomes*” (a term derived from a word meaning “an opinion”). From this derives the practice of referring to such writings as gnomonic literature. Sinhalese literature contains a fair number of such writings.

Literary works seeking to impart moral instruction or embodying the wisdom of the ages, were arranged by the ancients in a metrical pattern for the better aid of the memory. The Greeks who wrote gnomonic verse in the 6th century B. C. adopted the elegiac couplet while Sanskrit poets, down the ages, composed their verses in the *śloka* metre. Sinhalese authors generally employed the rhymed quatrain or *sivupada* in preference to the unrhymed *gī* metre. The aim of this poetry was less to excite the hearer by passion or move him by pathos, than to instruct the mind and improve his morals. For that reason, it was also known

as didactic poetry (the adjective in this expression being derived from a Greek word meaning “apt for teaching”). The term was used to describe the class of poetical works which dealt exclusively or almost entirely with moral maxims. It thus included all poetry that dealt in a sententious way with questions of human morals. Such poetry often took the form of persuasive sayings or exhortations which advised people what they ought to and ought not to do. Brevity was of their essence. A moral maxim of the kind indicated above would accord with the definition of a gnomic expression given by the Elizabethan critic, Henry Peacham, as “a saying pertaining to the manners and common practices of men which declareth with an apt brevity, what in this our life ought to be done, or not done.” That sums up adequately the basic characteristics of content, aim and literary form of this kind of writing.

The practice of introducing moral maxims into their poetical compositions was known to Sinhalese poets who included them amidst descriptions and narratives. They doubtless drew their inspiration from classical writers. Lengthy passages of good counsel were sometimes incorporated into Sinhalese poems. The substance was drawn, in the majority of instances, from the Jātaka literature and sometimes from other collections of Buddhist stories. The advice to a young girl in the *Kāvya Sēkaraya* of Sri Rāhula, and the remarks on proper and improper conduct contained in the *Guttīlaya* of Vāttāve are but two notable examples of such writings.

Such instances may be found in almost any Sinhalese poem. But the *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva* of Vīdāgama Maitreya Thera [1] is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, Sinhalese poem dealing exclusively with moral instruction.

The Author

The author of the *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva* was Vīdāgama Maitreya Thera or, as he was known in his own writings, Vīdāgama Methimi. The name of Vīdāgama calls to mind at least two famous names in the literary history and politics of late mediaeval Sri Lanka. Two monks who came from the same village and resided in the same monastery, and who, each in his own way, played a prominent role in the affairs of the time, came to be known as Vīdāgama Theras. [2] Both names are associated with the history of the city of Jayavaddana/Kōṭṭē. The elder of the two lived before the foundation of the Kōṭṭē kingdom. He gave sanctuary to the young prince Parākrama whom one of the latter's rivals, Vīra Alakesvara, was interested in eliminating from the political arena. When the young prince came of age, the Venerable Thera took the initiative in confronting him with his rival. The Elder was later instrumental in setting him on the throne. Although he is known to have been the head of the monastic establishment at Vīdāgama, the Ñāṇānanda Pirivena, and according to tradition to have been the preceptor of the young prince, he was not an author. [3] He died shortly after the prince ascended the throne as Sri

Parākamabāhu VI of Kōṭṭē. He is also said to have held the office of Saṅgharāja. [4] The second monk who hailed from Vīdāgama was our author.

Little is known for certain about the author's early life. More information is available regarding his life and activities as a member of the Order. He is nowhere mentioned as a pupil of the Elder Vīdāgama, Parākrama bāhu VI's teacher and mentor, although he had been his *protégé* in childhood. Since he resided in the same monastery as the Elder Vīdāgama, it is possible that he was a pupil of the latter.

It was not the practice of Sinhalese to disclose details of their personal life. Our author was no exception to the rule.

We are, however, fortunate in that the learned author's name and monastic residence are mentioned in his literary works. Having entered the Order, he took up residence at the Vīdāgama monastery near Rayigama, where he continued to live throughout his monastic career. He belonged to the Mahānetra-mūla (Mahānetra-prāsādamūla) fraternity. When he wrote his first work, his reputation as a literary figure was not very great. But by the time he composed his second work, he could say of himself that he was a scholar "well-versed in Sinhalese, Pali and Sanskrit, who possessed a competent knowledge of other sciences as well" [5] When his third work was completed, he had become the chief monk of his monastery. He received the enthusiastic praise of scholars, versed in the arts of poetry and drama, prosody, grammar and poetics.

Literary work

Four literary works are attributed to the author. In the order of composition in which they are customarily placed by scholars, they are:

1. *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva*
2. *Haṅsa Sandesaya*
3. *Kav Lakunu Miṇimal*
4. *Buduguṇa Alaṅkāraya*

The *Haṅsa Sandesaya* is given the second place on the ground that the king whose praises are sung in the poem is considered to refer to Parākramabāhu VI of Kōṭṭē. But it is quite likely that the monarch was the eighth, who bore the name, Vīraprākramabāhu, in which case it would be the last of the author's works. Literary scholars have referred to the fact that this work displays a greater maturity and richness of composition than the *Buduguṇa Alaṅkāraya*.

Literary Period

The fifteenth century was a propitious period for Sinhalese literature. It displayed a vitality unprecedented in the history of the language. It was a period in which Sinhalese poetry burst into flower with poets producing literary creations in new metrical patterns. The seeds of this movement were sown in the latter half of the fourteenth century when a new literary genre arose in the form of the

Sandesa (“message”) poems. This activity in the sphere of poetry took place after a lapse of about two centuries. The dominant literary figure of the period was the scholar-poet Śri Rāhula Sthavira of Toṭagamuwa, the author of several works, and a close associate of, and adviser to, the King. The King himself was a scholar in his own right and a great patron of the arts. Their combined efforts contributed, in no small measure, to the efflorescence that took place.

The poetry that emerged in the fourteenth century and flourished in the fifteenth was simpler in structure than the earlier type. This verse known as *gi*, was unrhymed and its metres were based on *mātrās* or “syllabic instants,” whereas the later verse belonged to the rhymed quatrain type and was intended to be recited to more or less fixed metrical schemes. This kind of poetry, though having affinities in vocabulary with that of the earlier period, adopted a language that was current and closer to popular usage and was therefore more readily intelligible than the *gī* poetry.

Apart from the *sandesas* or “message poems” which were of a similar character, the subject matter of poetry continued to be the Jātaka story in which the chief character, the *bodhisatta* or the Buddha-aspirant was identified with the Buddha in a previous life. Sometimes the compositions took the form of didactic verse, as in the present instance; or, as in the case of another work of our author, the subject matter was drawn from an incident in the life of the Buddha. This rhymed four-line verse which came into prominence during the period under survey, continued to be the most popular

metrical pattern until about the middle of the 20th century. It has not lost favour with contemporary poets among whose writings its influence is still perceptible.

Another side of the picture is represented by the secular poetry referred to earlier. The essence of such poetry of which the “message poem” was the model consists of sending a message to a deity or a religious dignitary through the agency of some non-human being; the latter in the case of Sinhalese poetry, is always a bird. Five of the eight poems belonging to the first wave of such compositions fall within the period under review. It is possible that a sixth, namely the second in order of composition was written in the same century.

The origins of this type of poetry are much earlier than the age in which Vīdāgama Thera flourished. Literary evidence of inspiration from Kālidāsa’s classic *Meghadūta* (“The Cloud Messenger”) is found among the earliest extant specimens of Sinhalese poetry, while a poem of the same genre is known to have existed in the *gī* period (8th–13th centuries A.C.). The Sinhalese *sandesa* poem of the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries follows the same conventional pattern. It provides examples of the poet’s genuine appreciation of the beauties of nature as reflected in the charm of a flourishing rural countryside rather than the expression of romantic appeal of solitude.

The *Lōvāḍa Saṅgarāva*, as its title indicates, is a collection of didactic verse for the World’s Good. It consists of rhymed

four-line stanzas written in easy and straightforward language, embodying the moral teachings of Buddhism. It is especially intended to explain to those unacquainted with the Pali scriptures, the fruits of actions (Sinh. *kam-pala* Pali *kamma-phala*). The workings of *Kamma* or morally significant action are to be understood here in the threefold sense of mental, verbal and physical action. The author's avowed purpose is to lead his readers away from the path of evil to that of moral virtue. Evil deeds bring in their wake evil results while good ones bring good results.

The poem, which comprises about 140 verses, an English translation of which here follows, has been inspired by a Pali poem of similar content and inspiration, the *Saddhammopāyana*, composed by the Mahā Thera Ānanda of Abhayagiri. Some of the stanzas in the Sinhalese poem appear to be translations while others may be considered adaptations of verses occurring in the Pali poem. The latter itself is based on Candragomi's *Śiṣyalekha*, a Sanskrit poem incorporating some of the basic teachings of Buddhism, intended for the education and edification of the faithful. It is useful to recall the fact, in order to note the continuity of a scholastic literary tradition, that there exists an early Sinhalese translation of the *Saddhammopāyana* by a monk named Ānanda. We find the work translated again into Eḷu (Sinhalese) by a Buddhist monk during the Buddhist revival of the 18th century. It is quite possible that our author had these sources at his disposal.

The most striking feature of the poem is its simplicity of diction and directness of appeal. The two elements in combination perhaps contribute to the powerful impact it makes on its readers or more correctly hearers. The choice of words in the original Sinhalese and the naturalness of their arrangement together with the fast-moving metre of 16 syllabic instants (*mātrās*) [6] which facilitate memorization and ready quotation, account for the popularity of the work.

A sense of urgency is conveyed through the poem as, for instance, when the reader is reminded constantly of the value of being born as a man. Human life is rare, difficult to obtain and too precious an opportunity to be lost. No time is to be wasted for the performance of good deeds. There are eight woeful states where one cannot do good (V.8). This sentiment is sustained throughout the poem.

The appearance of a Buddha is indeed a rare phenomenon; and so is life as a human being. Both conditions are required for one to be freed from this woeful round of birth and death. “Why, good men, do you not exert yourselves?” asks the author (V.19). For “sooner shall the head of a (blind) turtle that comes up to the surface from the ocean’s bed, once in a hundred years, find the single hole of a drifting yoke-pole, than a being who has been born in the lower realms gain birth in this world of men” (V.18).

Influence and popularity of the work

Since it was first composed, this little poem has exerted

much influence on both young and old. It continues to be an important factor in the moulding of the character of young people and has remained a basic component of the curriculum. It is popular among the older generation not only because of its forceful diction and directions of appeal, but because it creates in the minds of adult readers an awareness of the realities of life. A consideration of the intellectual and emotional climate of the times in which the author lived would help to understand better the influence and popularity of the poem.

At the time the poem was written in the 15th century and perhaps even earlier, many un-Buddhistic ideas and practices had crept into the social life of the people. Worship of the gods, a practice consciously fostered by brahmin priests from South India, some of whom had gained the king's confidence, had begun to exert a powerful influence on the royal court. This practice stemmed from an attitude of mind which placed greater reliance, in the face of problems, on some external agency such as a Hindu god or local divinity than on individual effort. In times of insecurity and social and political crises, people were encouraged to invoke the blessings of the gods and to seek their intercession in finding solutions to their difficulties.

The practice of worshipping gods of the Hindu pantheon such as Siva, Brahma, Visnu and Agni, had become fairly widespread among the broad masses of the people, to judge from the utterances of our author himself. And if one were

to read between the lines of Vīdāgama Maitreya Thera's *Buduguna-Alaṅkāraya*, it had begun to exert a dominant influence on their minds and hearts. Those divinities had undoubtedly gained many votaries. It is not unreasonable to think that the observance of the daily ritual of *ti-saraṇa* (three refuges) and *pañca-sīla* (five precepts) was being steadily undermined and relegated to the background. The worship of the Buddha, as guide and teacher, and the fostering of Buddhist modes of thinking in daily life were neglected, if not deliberately ignored. Intellectual and emotional attitudes which encouraged freedom of thought, self reliance and discipline based on the practice of Buddhist virtue, were giving way to a fatalistic view of life, based on blind irrational faith in some unseen power. What was more, such practices received the approval, if not the encouragement, even of members of the Sangha.

In that context, the writings of Vīdāgama Maitreya were a protest against the prevailing practices of which he disapproved. In another sense, his voice was a call to his audience to restore to its rightful place the worship of the Buddha, and to hear and put into practise his noble teachings. The author did not want brahmin practices and the worship of gods to contaminate Buddhist devotion. He expected no royal favours and thus indirectly condemned those of his fellow monks who sought them.

Although our author lived and wrote in an age when poetry thrived and poets received the unstinted patronage of kings, he was not concerned with practising the poetic art. There is

no doubt that he would have shunned the title of "Poet." He exhorted his audience fervently to give themselves up to the Buddha, in the fullest devotion of their hearts. His declared aim, as it was remarked earlier, was to bring home to his numerous listeners the basic truths of Buddhism as exemplified in the workings of kamma. To achieve that end he chose the medium of verse.

In this task, the present poem has played a leading role. Its popularity remains undiminished. It brings the large audience to which it is addressed face to face with the realities of life. Such episodes as the one referred to above, drawn from traditional lore and expressed in colourful turns of phrase serve to demonstrate truths valid not only for the author's time but for all time,

No originality is claimed for the ideas contained in the poem either by the author or his critics. But the manner of putting them across is uniquely the author's. Those ideas that he has taken from other sources he invests with a vigour of his own. If the reader feels that in these verses he hears the voice of the preacher and moralist rather than that of the poet and literary artist, he is correct in his judgement. For that is what the author really is, a preacher more than a poet. In that role his performance is commendable. The passage of time has not impaired the relevance of what he says.

—Ānanda Kulasuriya

The World's True Welfare

Homage to the Exalted One, the Holy One, Fully Enlightened!

1. GREAT OCEAN OF VIRTUE, thou, source of ultimate bliss,
The physician, thou, to all the ills of beings,
The solar light, which night of false beliefs casts out,
Thou supreme sage, to thee in joy I obeisance make.
2. To the Law, discovered in fullness by the Lord,
But preached in a way to reach the grasp of all,
So that each, according to his gifts, can understand;
Which says: "Come and behold" in reverence I bow.
3. With my hands held clasped on my brow,
I salute the order of well conducted monks,
That liveth in the lineage of Sariputt and Mogallan
Whose feet have been adored by Brahma gods.
4. My salutation offered in reverence deep
To the blessed tamer of men, the Order and the Law,
In service to those that ignorant are
Of the ancient and archaic Pali tongue
The results of actions good and bad
In lucid Sinhala I sing.
5. In the past, not far remote,

Some sixty monks they say,
Listened to Dhamma truth
Sung in Sinhala verse
On the nature unwholesome of aggregates all,
And earnestly did ponder and dwell
Thereon, and with misgivings naught,
Reached Nibbāna's bliss.

6. Hence, treat it not lightly
Though in Sinhala 'tis told.
If this glorious teaching, in joy
Is in its profound depths well absorbed,
With deference due, of aims sincere
And minds clean and intents pure,
Ensure it certainly will bring
Life in deva worlds and bliss supreme.
7. Listen not to the Teaching,
Being seated even low,
Where standing the preacher speaks;
Do not be perched on seat that's higher;
This above all: be not of confused mind.
Listened to with attentive mind,
The Law will to heaven or freedom lead.
8. The exhortation of the Sage
Ever was for man to be
Diligent in wholesome acts engaged:
The dissolver of worldly woes
in the cycle of births and rebirths,

The winner of emancipation, bliss;
But eight there be of states
Where these acts cannot be done.

9. If born in the horror-giving states of woe
One hundred and thirty-six as known,
In the nether world's long enduring woes
With horrors untold, and where
Opportunities never are
For any wholesome deeds;
10. Or if born in animal worlds
Resulting from previous actions bad,
Where fear, never-ending, rules
The passion-driven minds;
Calmness or serenity never hath place
In the lower animal mind.
How then can wholesome thoughts
Arise in such dire states?
11. Those who indulge in unwholesome acts
As clearly defined in the Law
Being born in states of lower beings
With no access to food of any kind,
Even body excretions, no water
To drink, unable to quench their parched throats
Though drowned in the deep celestial river
Such beings are debarred from wholesome acts.
12. A man, though born to luxury,
Enjoying fabulous wealth and every joy,

In regions where the Laws of the Sage
Are unknown, and never were heard,
Where wholesome actions never are done,
But bad, never can opportunity find
For actions wholesome, pure.

3. Those beings, misled by ignorant guides
Who omit all wholesome acts
But commit all evil actions dark,
When reborn in human form, deaf,
Dumb, and blind of eye,
"Behold, such beings for wholesome acts,
Even small, will miss all chance."
4. Four Brahma worlds there be, of only mind
And no form; and one of form,
No mind; these are planes,
Where good beings after death are born,
But chances of wholesome action offer never
5. To those followers of false beliefs;
Which verily form the fortress strong
In saṃsāra's city; or like a stubborn stump
Of an ever-leaving parasitic evil's plant,
Like poisoned pikes in Nibbāna's path
And roads that lead to happy states,
Never to such, will joy of good results accrue.
6. In times when no Buddhas on earth appear,
All world-systems in the universe's expanse,
And saṃsāra, in darkness would be;

All beings wilt; of actions good and bad
In ignorance live, with higher planes
And Nibbāna's bliss ever closed to man.

7. If you are not deaf, and listen with
Understanding to the Buddha's Law,
Yet still abstain from acting well;
You do so, not because the time is wrong
For doing what will make you right,
But because you choose the other path.
You should make good effort now.
For there are only those eight occasions
Where merit cannot be acquired. [7]
8. A turtle in the ocean expansive and deep,
Surfacing once in a hundred years,
Does more chances have to pass his head
Through drifting floating yoke,
Than being released from states of woe
A chance of regaining birth as man.
9. Between intervals of infinite length
Do Buddhas on earth appear;
After much suffering doth one
A birth as human being achieve;
Conditions, essential two, these be,
To procure, realise Nibbāna's bliss;
Then wherefore, good people,
Do you not strive to achieve this end?
10. Those that would commit

The fivefold evil acts,
Suffer here on earth,
And worse, in realms of woe;
Hence acquire ye benefits
Of wholesome acts on earth,
Waste not this chance,
Of this rare human state.

1. Like those that would relishingly eat
Of mangoes poisonous and wild,
What use is there in pleasing the mind
In any measure, with pleasure of senses five?
For death stalks even now, behind:
Be diligent and skilful in wholesome acts.
2. A surer way there never is, to end the woes,
That never ending follow this cycle of births,
Than a life of diligence, aware every moment,
Devoted only to wholesome acts;
Even as the one, his head on fire,
Tarrys not quick relief to find.
3. Even as stone with effort skywards cast,
Returns but to this earth, anon,
And remains not in space between,
Even so, to those who will not
With joyous mind, understanding, free,
Engage their time in wholesome acts,
No place deserving, more
Than the unwholesome realms of woe.

24. Think not as permanent this body of yours,
This aggregate of rotting unwholesome parts;
Its impermanence is paralleled be sure
By the swift lightning's flash.
Never allowing this body, the mind
To seek for evil, but strive for ever,
With diligence, wholesome acts to pursue.
25. The archer poised, in darkness
Shooting at a hair from far,
Would miss the aim, if ill-timed
With swift lightning's flashing glow;
Endowed with a body, impermanent
And evanescent as the lightning's flash,
Neglect to pursue the wholesome acts
And you'll miss in future the happy states,
And above all, Nibbāna's consummate bliss.
26. Nowhere is any sanctuary found
That's inaccessible to certain death;
Happiness here is but limited withal
By resulting energy of actions past—
What occasion then, is there for man
For laughter, jesting, dancing and joy?
And forgetting the words of the Enlightened One—
The remover of worldly woes?
27. For those abhorring saṃsāra's woes,
There never can be a time as this, the present.
They that have the values realised

Of morality and giving, delay they never wilt
To them one hour's time-span
Is as good as a thousand years.

28. Be daily aware of death's approach
And hence be diligent in wholesome acts.
What proof is there—presumptuous thoughts—
That the morrow will not bring death?
Who can with death, of legions many,
Bargain with time and assurance give?
Why then does man, if things thus be,
Indolent refrain from wholesome acts in life?
29. What need to gorge with food and drink
This body, and bedeck it always in finery?
For, where can you from hence, this body take
But leave it here? Be not indolent,
Rather active in wholesome actions be,
For this alone can you from life's ocean save.
30. If you wish that ferried you were
Across dread saṃsāra's ocean deep,
And ensure the reaching at the shores
Of Nibbāna's steady strand and firm,
Avoid all evil acts and with diligence learn,
By listening to the dispensation of the Sage;
Strive hard, relenting never, engaged in acts
That wholesome be, with evil barred.
31. Prepare thy mind always, for wholesome deeds alone;
For is not such mind the ready field

For insight and truth to root, and light Nibbāna's way?
Why are words well-meant for spiritual gains
Never with awareness heard?
Waiting, are ye, for realisation's light
To flash when born in states of woe?

32. The birth of Buddha, giver of Nibbāna's bliss,
Occurs on earth, in millions of years but once;
This period, the present, on earth,
Is one with such a Blessed One:
Fail to grasp the truth right now,
And chances of a possible next are slight.
33. Think of service to self, and others too, alike,
Let thoughts of loving kindness embrace all beings;
Without this basic need, compassion,
saṃsāra's lengthy sojourn cannot end:
How then, can you Nibbāna's city e'er reach?
34. The humble cur, that licks the bone,
Cast oft, bloodless, without flesh,
Hath his hunger unappeased,
With no nutriment absorbed.
Think but likewise of sensual pleasures,
No abiding happiness is there,
Though obvious not, being illusion-veiled,
'Tis unwholesome withal, and begets but woe.
35. A hawk on wing, meat tight held in beak,
Would assuredly be killed by other hawks,
If meat he did not drop;

Those that would cling to pleasures
Of senses five with greed, likewise
Will for ever be visited and plagued,
By five-and-twenty horrors and woes.

36. The Teaching of the Sage, we have it,
Sweet of word and deep of sense;
With perfect hearing thou art blest, no deafness sore;
Nothing there is thou couldst not do,
By way of wholesome acts;
The thing that thou couldst ill-afford
Is to suffer pain in states of woe.
37. Indulgence in evil deeds is honey-sweet in the act,
But when resultant suffering comes
It is as painful as a scorching fire;
full well the way to repel evil, sin;
Seal for good the three great in inlets—
Of thought, of speech, of body—
which evil ingress allow.
38. If Is better far for man to die
Living a life of righteous deeds
Than live for a period long
A life unrighteous led.”
Recall to mind the words of the Sage
Live a life sincere, of wholesome deeds
And reach Nibbāna’s goal.
39. When one single being, grieving only
On account of a mother bereaved,

Hath dropped such copious tears,
In innumerable births, that they exceed
The volume of waters of all oceans' aggregate;
How is it then, you still cling to saṃsāra's chains?

10. Just as the crab in pot
Over hearth now placed,
Sports in glee, in water cool,
Till the flames do rise,
Even so will it be with you,
If you wallow in sensual pleasures,
Not thinking what afterwards comes.
11. The lighted torch of rushes,
Held pointed windwards would
Assuredly burn the holder's hand,
Were it not soon dropped:
The ignorant who eagerly indulge
In pleasures five and praise them
Will suffer in the states of woe.
12. You who are so proud
Of this short span of life
Where happiness and joy
Are just the limited results
Of wholesome actions, in the past:
Do not thus court suffering in states of woe,
For you are like those bedecked in finery
Borrowed for a feast, and ever in debt
And in thralldom held by those that loaned.

13. Like unto the robber to torture led,
With blood-red garlands decked,
And with music of the beating drums,
Hemmed in by ruthless guards—
Thus are ye who, endowed with wealth,
Would cling to it and not to charity part;
In cases both: a mockery, a jest,
Devised by Māra, the evil one.
14. The robber from hilltop, pushed to death,
Fanned by cool breeze, in his swift descent,
For body heat and sweat, no comfort finds.
You, who by virtue of some wealth, ever did
Commit only evil acts, now passing through:
Decay and heading to certain death,
What avails you such happiness from wealth?
15. Seek for yourself and realise within
The evil results of sensual pleasures five,
Which so unrelenting allure the mind of man
Go forth to ascetic life, in able-bodied youth,
For would the man atop the tree, eating
its, sweet luscious fruits, remain,
Not descent, till the roots below are hewn?
16. Teachings of the Enlightened One
'Have ever been true; never of fallacies found.
Learn from these, that the body is not lasting;
That life itself is as a dewdrop hung
Pendent on a grass blade's tip.

Hence wholesome actions should
With no delay be done.

17. Harken unto these my words,
Productive of weal in this life and the next:
If living in happiness, misnamed as such,
You commit but only evil acts,
And resulting, are born as ghost
Or demon or even lower form,
No chance will you have for wholesome acts,
But shall in hunger ever roam.
18. Those beings, who with greedy minds
Did unwholesome acts commit,
Would arraigned before Yama.
Be, in public audience charged:
Thence can you never live
In leisure and in ease,
But suffer torture in the states of woe.
19. Those who in constant pleasure and luxury live,
Though advised by the wise to lead a righteous life:
And who themselves have seen with eyes thereon,
The difference in men who only did
Wholesome acts, and those that unwholesome do,
Yet would not believe and turn to good:
To them the reward: endless suffering
If fallen into states of woe.
20. Not knowing wholesome actions good,
From unwholesome ones being folly-driven,

Some kill the living beasts.
“‘Tis delicious,” eating the flesh they say;
Such pleasers of palate, such gourmets,
Can never the states of woe evade.
Hence forsake, right now
This relish for animal flesh,

51. Feeding on delicious foods,
Flavoured to epicure’s gluttonous needs;
Sweet balms and unguents,
Of fragrant sandal, rubbed on skin;
The body bedecked in finery,
With ornaments worn to taste;
Men but act the part of puppets:
Now on stage; next, tossed aside.
52. Search but for Truth, with wisdom thine own,
On what hath been said, over and over again,
Of the non-lasting nature of the body and form;
In no-wise wholesome, in firmness the least,
An aggregate of rotting two-and-thirty parts;
Thought wisdom clear, thou canst this discern:
Futile would birth in this human world be,
If wholesome actions were not fulfilled;
Realisation full, will come too late,
If born in hopeless realms of woe
Totalling one hundred and thirty six.
53. Though born together now in this world,
As wished in previous births, long past,

Knitted together in affection and love,
And living as one, in association close
life departs, in utter loneliness engulfed,
Deserted by the very household, one would be;
All bonds of affection, love, so far professed,
Would fall apart shattered, cast away:
Only the results of wholesome actions done
Would constant company keep, and assure future weal.

54. Endowed with a body careless and foul,
They play about, carousing and dancing off.
Though a man live attached to his spouse,
Enjoying the pleasures of married life,
When dreaded death, knowing his time, comes around,
To claim him as his, and to take him along,
Can vows or promises defer the date
And keep him here on earth a little more?
Therefore it behoves us all, everyone, to do
Wholesome actions, that good results accrue.
55. Why wouldst thou not in Buddha take refuge,
And diligent be, in wholesome actions pure?
Dost thou await time at which death comes,
To be escorted by Yama to the realms of woe?
Were it not better far, in wisdom, to live a virtuous life,
And fulfil wholesome actions all the while?
Oh relatives, that would weep for parting loved one,
Can greater folly there be? Can weeping, Death
prevent?

56. Though ye should weep, be overcome with grief,
No more shall ye see the departed one;
Why not prepare the mind, to actions wholesome, the
while?
Than rather wealth accumulate and hoard in vain?
Why use this rotting body, you'll leave behind,
Only for gaining pleasures, sensual, of the flesh?
Oh harken to my words, be cleanser of defilements,
Be victor and win the citadel of bliss.
57. Being impaled on, and suspended from,
The bait-hook of saṃsāra are living beings;
The bodily pleasures you eke out,
Subject to certain decay all the while,
Which hover around you and oppresses,
Are like a dance-show seen performed
Spotlighted by the transient lightning's flash:
This truth well-grasped, delay not in actions good.
58. Think never as beyond possibility's range,
Performance of action wholesome and good.
All charity, antidote to grasping, giving away,
Partake with equal joy and with others share
Results of wholesome acts by others done;
Good results accrue in equal measure
As much to you as to the doer do,
Good deeds can lead you, too,
To divine states and finally Nibbāna's bliss.
59. Food in various flavours dressed

Is eaten but hunger to appease,
Sweet smelling unguents on body rubbed .
Do but bad odours and stinks dispel,
Medicines these are to fight the ills
The human body is heir to—
How then can you name them ever
"happiness" or "pleasures," when they are not?

50. Thinking of your comforts as the highest
You often swell with pride;
But illusions are they, as empty, as void
As sweet perfumes rubbed in a dream;
Practise charity in spirit and deed;
And in virtue and morality live;
Unrighteous living leads man
From happiness "light," to "darkness," woe.
51. The log of wood, set ablaze,
Is thereafter called a fire, not wood;
Even so did the great Sage speak,
In reference to this human form,
As the fountainhead of all suffering and of pain.
Hence know this as fact you all:
Not a body, is this, but just a mass of suffering.
52. If one lives long, this body
Through decay will finally break up.
If not long lived, one will drift soon
To the cavernous mouth of death.
A pleasure found between a slow

And certain death, to call that
Real happiness, who would dare?

53. News of robbers' attack, nearby home
Would keep one awake, on vigil,
In fear and doubt, to save his own.
Seeing that all living beings
As a matter of course are claimed by death,
Whatever withholds you now
From performing wholesome deeds?
54. The greedy crow, lured by taste of flesh,
Perched on putrid elephant's carcass adrift
On river, did himself die, marooned on ocean's
expanse;
If ye would likewise cling with greed,
To wealth and luxury you've amassed,
Then hopeless are you to cross,
saṃsāra's fathomless fear-filled seas.
55. Ye that wouldst run deserting wife and child,
To hide in jungles remote and wild,
On news of foreign invaders' march,
Seeing that horrid decay and death
With no uncertain trend advance on you
Why wouldst thou delay in doing actions pure?
56. Like unto the man, caught in swirling current,
Drifting down-river with fear and sorrow overcome
But would not board the rescuing boat
To pick him up that's to him rowed—

Why wouldst thou to the bliss-giving Law adhere
Instead of heading for the realms of woe and suffering?

57. Behold the suffering that men undergo,
For a petty pittance, for a livelihood,
As soldiers trained in archery
And the battle-arts of armed men,
If one would lead a righteous life
Trained in morality, with joyous devoted mind,
He assuredly can, for millions of years to come
Pleasures in celestial spheres enjoy.
58. Overcome by decay, the time will come
When thou can't not with ease erect stand,
Or from standing, change such pose to sit;
Then frail of limb, there will no longer be
Beauty nor looks in this form;
Hence to wholesome deeds and charity
Shouldst thou this time devote.
59. Your children and your wife
Thought of as your own
Are born and live, just as results
Of actions in the past performed,
And the same kamma keeps them here,
Whether for long a time or short;
But for you, only the clinging thoughts
Remain: "They are my own."
70. Not devoting time to disciplining self,
You are engrossed in showering attention

And love, and fondling your children dear
And darling wife: but what are they?
Shells and toys for play in childhood used.

71. It is an occurrence, common sear on earth,
For mortal beings struggling hard
To earn and accumulate riches and wealth,
And then to states of woe depart;
Provide, care for, and maintain withal
Wife and offspring—all sorrows cause;
But never are diligent in nor devoted to
The practise of morality, which emancipation brings.
72. Though you be without a morsel,
The pangs of hunger to appease,
Or without one wrap of clothing,
Your bare nudity to cover;
Think of the suffering in states of woe unmeasured;
Then dally not any longer, but diligent be,
Hesitant not in wholesome deeds and pure.
73. If thou must ever destroy and kill
Let your victims be mind-defiling thoughts
Of clinging, hate and ignorance;
And choose to live environed by
Men who in virtue happiness find.
Speak then only words of advice
That should enlightenment sure award;
If thou should'st listen, listen then,
To words from the Law, propounded by the Sage.

74. If you would ever eulogise at all,
Praise then, the virtues of the Enlightened One;
If development you wish, then let it be
The developing of the mind, from evil freed;
If giving you would do, to charity give away,
And share with others results of good deeds done,
If conqueror or victor you'd wish to be,
Then conquer and assure the type of life
You wish in future births to come.
75. However much you listen to the Dhamma
No wrong is done by doing so.
If complete renunciation is your wish,
First you should renounce your evil ways.
If you would wish to purify your mind,
You should perfect and keep secure your virtue,
If you would understand these facts,
The time to do so is just now.
76. This tree, saṃsāra, many branches has,
Which in turn bear many a poisonous fruit,
Being the sorrows and suffering that life entails:
The branches are the many hundreds
Of evil acts that challenge living beings;
Which, if not overcome, but weakly yielded to,
Produce results of severe sufferings, grave:
Hence, give ear, with serenity and joy,
With mind composed and wavering never
To results of the ten unrighteous acts men do.

77. Learn this Law, the Enlightened One has taught,
Thereby bring up the mind to calm and peace,
And forsake all actions despicable, base;
Those that take the lives of other beings,
Whatever the mode employed be,
Will suffer unending pains and sorrow,
In the four great states of woe.
78. Frogs who become a prey in snakes' mouths,
Relishingly eat of wriggling worms:
Behold those mortals trembling with fear
In the mouth of certain decay and death,
They still take lives of other beings!
79. Whether it be by force
Or by deceitful action,
Be it with one's own hands,
Or by your instructions given—
What belongs to another,
Ungiven, is by theft acquired.
The resultant force of this evil act,
From one state of woe to another he takes.
80. Innumerable are examples of the suffering of men
Who for greed and pleasure committed theft.
If seeing such suffering here on earth
One would not yet from theft desist,
When comes that time again
For him, to live in happiness and peace?
81. The adulterer caught in the act,

Or proven as such, no mercy receives;
And if tortured and done to death,
No questions are asked, nor justice claimed;
Hence think not as light nor trivial treat,
The evil results of the adulterous acts:
The sweet-rosy path of adultery
Leads but to the states of woe.

32. Hearken with clarity of mind
To the words that I speak;
The utterance of falsehood,
Be it but for only once
Is to seal off and barricade
The path to happy states;
Escape one never will,
Without suffering in states of woe.
33. The utterance of words in rashness done,
Not pre-thought, in ignorance of evil and good,
Is like a string of weapons sharp,
Round one's neck in vanity worn;
Speech that aims to man from man divide,
Are word: the evil results of which
Can never be known in present birth.
34. Harsh, unpleasant words that offend,
Like iron spikes in listeners' ears, avoid;
With joy of mind, pleasant words
And sweet speech employ, if you must speak.
A heinous crime it is, to use harsh speech;

The venom of its resultant evil effects
Leaves not till future suffering absolves.

35. From the remotest time of civilised man,
The wisest have deplored and avoided use
Of frivolous talk, productive never,
But surest procurer of evil and woe;
Not in fun though it be, should one
Indulge in such profitless talk;
A pleasant royal highway it is,
That lures one to states of woe.
36. If at sight of opulence and wealth
In other beings, thoughts, greed-based,
Thus arise, "To him it should not be,
Why may it not to me accrue?"
The resulting evil force potent,
Of this one thought itself is enough
In after-births to cause to suffer.
37. To think of those you do not like,
And wish them dead is hatred sore;
Such wishes but drag you low, are feet
That lead you on to states of woe.
Never, never permit such thoughts
To rise in your mind, but dispel.
38. Two and sixty there be of views
That differ much from the path
To Nibbāna's eternal bliss,
As by the great Sage proclaimed:

Followers of any such teaching false,
False-believers are, to hold them true:
They form the seeds of poisonous fruits
Which cause and perpetuate saṃsāra's woes.

39. Those that follow such false beliefs
That teach not the disciplining of self,
Will burn in the conflagration's blaze
Which will the universe to ashes turn.
Having gone through suffering sore,
In the eight great states of woe,
Released, yet suffer again they will,
In realms uncharted, in outer universe.
40. A margosa seed planted in soil
Pregnant with all earth's nutriments sweet,
Negating earth's natural sweetness will bear
But fruits of bitter taste;
Likewise what words are said
And whatever actions that be done
By those that cling to false beliefs
Are productive of evil, and never of good.
41. Those that would commit be it even one
Of the ten unwholesome actions listed above
Or cause such actions to be done
By order, advice or instruction giv'n,
Or even by word approval grant
And endorse in thought, by agreement shown
In the commission of such evil act

Will at no distant far off date
Suffer the results thereof in states of woe.

2. These ten impure unwholesome acts,
Which bring in their wake sure sorrow and pain—
You escape by committing them never.
And if in this human world you lead a life
Undisciplined and defiant of the Law—
Like one falling from top of Mount Meru;
With never a stop or pause between—
You needs must fall and be submerged
In the bottomless sea of woes.
3. Even the all-knowing Omniscient One
Did not in full define, the hundred
And six and thirty realms of woe,
Consisting of eight major ones
With eight and twenty smaller others,
So great in suffering and pain
That even thoughts thereof doth terror bring.
4. The incessant pain and sorrow
A man in a day would suffer here on earth,
Whose body with spears sharp
Three hundred times wounded through,
Would be but one second's pain suffered,
In the untold tortures in woeful states;
Computed thus, would not the Himalayan range
Equal only the size of a mustard seed?
5. Ages ago, a woman but killed a goat,

The neck being cut and severed clean;
Reborn in realms of woes she suffered,
With flames of fire her body entwined,
Decapitations, too, as many times
As hairs on slaughtered goat she faced;
So it shall be for all wrongdoers:
The inexorable law of cause and effects.

१6. Once, in fun a man did steal
His friend's attire and did conceal,
But later confessed the same,
And the clothes to him restored.
Later born as a deva in celestial abode
This "Joker practical" was without attire.
Hence, in fun though it be
Take not what's not yours, unoffered.
१7. A man who adultery relished
And oft indulged in it through life,
Being born in "region of woe of molten lead"
In bubbling, boiling, molten lava immersed
He now comes out for breath of air,
In thirty thousand years but once.
Ye wise, who would of your welfare think,
Avoid such unwholesome deeds.
१8. Once a king, who with great enjoyment
Did utter a lie, wittingly, pre-thought,
Did therefore lose his iddhi powers,
And in this human form itself,

Did find himself in realms of woe,
And condemned there to suffer long.
Know ye, therefore, what evil results ensue
From utterance of falsehood, words untrue.

9. A man, who by tale-bearing did
Two monks divide, who were close friends,
Suffered aeons on end in realms of woe;
Was born thereafter in ghostly form,
With a face that was ever-rotting putrid flesh,
And doth still suffer in that form.
Hence, from now speak not words
That would one man from another divide.
10. A monk, a follower of the Enlightened Sage,
Yet did abuse the order of holy ones,
In words that were harsh and unkind too,
He was born in the realms of woe, suffered there,
For such a long time, lamenting still,
Now born in ghost form so he doth suffer.
Hence, oh beings, abuse not another being,
Nor use in speech; unpleasant words and harsh.
11. Frivolous speech that's unproductive, vain,
Leads one but to states of woe:
After periods of suffering or torture and horrors,
If perchance, he be born on earth as man,
His words, by hearers in human society
Will never for a moment credited be,
E'en though the words he speaks be true.

12. Those who, in envy, wish for themselves,
That which to others rightfully belongs,
Will suffer, being born in realms of woe;
If chance permits his birth again on earth,
Ne'er will his wishing-thoughts bear fruit;
Hence, never, ever from this time on
Permit such thoughts entry to thy mind:
13. Bear not thoughts of hatred to others,
Such thoughts unfeeling and harsh,
Beget no good, are evil withal,
Leading to suffering in states of woe,
Of diverse forms and repeated in turns,
And resulting in later births on earth,
To illness and bodily pains to be subjected.
14. Spurn false beliefs as poison, hence;
For believers in such are born
In states of woe, and after suffering there,
If reborn on earth will subject ever be,
To bodily illness, and deformity
With a mind obtuse, from wisdom divorced,
And where only impure thoughts arise.
15. Knowing patently with no doubts attached,
How birth after birth, defilements of the mind
Cause suffering without end to mankind here,
The Sage supreme did disclose the way,
To emancipation gain from saṃsāra's woes;
Which in accordance with, here I set forth,

The wholesome acts, as means thereto:
Hearken oh beings, for your weal it shall be.

16. Without ordering others to give
(Too lazy to offer the gifts yourself),
You yourself should make the offerings.
Your aim in giving only this should be:
The beneficent act and its resultant good;
Happy before giving, while giving, and thereafter too.
(The requisite states three, of the donor mind.)
Wherever born in after-life you be,
Will find yourself endowed with untold wealth.
17. In a house on fire burning within,
With flames blazing all around,
Only the household goods thrown out
Will ever, in future useful be;
This lesson, ye bear well in mind,
And in charity give, never miserly be:
For this cause alone can assurance make,
Of happy results in future lives.
18. If you possess not anything more
But the morsel of food held in hand,
About to reach the lips and feed yourself—
Give it as alms to the calling beggar,
Never will hunger's pangs you feel,
And never will feel future sufferings's pain
For the thought, "I have much, I'll keep enough,
The rest as alms in charity I'll give,"

Will never, never arise in the mind
Of him who looks to future bliss.

9. Believe not the words of those evil ones,
Who wholesome actions never do;
Cleanse well your mind of the defilements three—
Of desire, of ignorance and of hate.
Daily, in practise, observe the precepts five,
And weekly the eight, in happy frame of mind;
Thus can you enter the city of bliss,
And emancipation gain, all obstacles razed.
10. Strive always to eradicate
All thoughts of clinging, desire and greed,
With a mind alert, aware and wisdom-based.
Retain the morality of mind unsullied,
Even as the pure moonbeams clear.
Safeguard it e'en as the yak its tail:
Resulting from such moral living,
Emancipation in no long time attain.
11. The most wholesome action man can do,
The noblest, the Buddha has proclaimed,
Is the mental force generated through
Thoughts of loving kindness spread
By wishing all living beings to be free
Of sorrow and grief, and from illness.
Immunity full, good health, ne'er pain,
Lives of amity here, next—Nibbāna's bliss.
12. Behold ye how men on earth

Of benevolent things would not even think:
With mind enraged in anger and hate,
Pain they would on each other deal.
Meditate, thoughts of loving kindness
Project around on all living beings:
Surest means this will prove to be,
Of reaching happy planes and Nibbāna's bliss.

3. Like money-lenders who loan their gold
To patrons known, in trust, and usury gain—
Invite other beings to share of good results
Of wholesome actions that you perform.
The results of such deeds—wishing to share—
Return to the giver double or triple-fold,
Depending on how oft 'tis done:
Hence omit not this wish to share.
4. Learn well yourself this Law
That the Blessed One has taught;
Teach it to others in compassionate love
By the results of skilful act performed.
Bar for ever the roads to realms of woe
And assure life in realms of endless joy;
Next achieve the final goal of Nibbāna's bliss.
5. Raise your hands in joy, and salute,
As if you the living Buddha saw,
At sight of those who know his teaching well;
Hearken well with attention and love
To every word uttered, line by line,

And close the entrances to realms of woe.

- .6. The worshipping of the Buddha at sight
With respectful veneration unmixed,
From the time he comes within vision's range,
With complete lack of hauteur of mind,
The offering of food and offerings floral.
And lights, all result in reaching
Happy abodes and Nibbāna's bliss.
- .7. Wild flowers of the forests bloom
On every day, and everywhere;
Wherever you may be, offer them
In the name of the Blessed One.
For him it shall be, for him alone,
And productive of results wholesome be.
If one can't this afford to do,
This simple little act,
Whatever more can you do
To escape deep saṃsāra's woes?
- .8. The wise man a wholesome act performs
By a simple little ruse:
The wise surveying all beings on earth
And proclaiming the virtues of virtuous ones,
Discriminating not with prejudice base,
Whether to them he be partial or not.
- .9. Those that provide for and serve
The Buddha's order of holy monks,
Their parents, and their teacher-guides,

Those who are well advanced in years,
The elders too of the family group;
Others stricken by illness sore
And others yet, that live the ascetic life
Will be happy here and in the heavenly world.

20. If one would but value in his mind,
The virtues of the holy triple gem,
Which can rescue the worldly beings
Struggling in saṃsāra's endless-seeming sea;
And place them on the safe terrain
Of Nibbāna's shores, by happy thought thereof—
Never would again subjected be
To the sorrows and pains of repeated birth.
21. No help, can such as relatives give;
Nothing in reality matters, except the results
Of wholesome actions that you perform;
Nothing can they give that one can own,
Or use in a future birth that follows this;
But if one would trust in a future to be,
Recollect and always recall to mind
The virtues and values of the threefold gems,
This alone would qualify one for birth
In realms of happiness, with no other good acts done.
22. Greater by far in consequence is
The resulting effects in refuge sought,
In Buddha, and following his way of life,
Than covering the earth with precious gems,

And building thereon a mansion vast,
Equalling in size over all the brahma worlds,
Decked with pennons of beaten gold,
With arches and domes of precious stones.

13. You, who cannot grasp the law proclaimed
By the Buddha taught, and in accordance live
A life of morality simple, a life austere,
That provides endless, varied happiness to man,
And allows not birth in realms of woe;
To such as you, then, the only hope
For escaping saṃsāra's sorrows and pains,
Will be the threefold aid, no other;
The Teacher, his teaching, and order of holy monks.
14. Having learnt the Law, propounded so well,
Practise, and consummation reach
In performing wholesome acts;
The defilements of the mind and causes thereof,
Eradicate for ever; prevent their arising too;
And thus ensure a future life
In happy abodes, and gain Nibbāna's bliss
And repel any chance of future woe.
15. A beggar on the streets, begging around,
Long time ago, met Anuruddha, the saint,
Who at mealtime was on his begging round,
And offered him one spoonful of the food
That he had gathered for his meal;
Resulting on this wholesome deed,

Was he born a deva chief, Indaka by name.

Oh, you wise! Know now, the results of giving away,
Give of your wealth in alms, in charity give.

26. She was a lady of noble birth
Who ages ago but for one short day
The eight precepts well kept;
Born she was in deva abodes
And of beauty without peer,
Enjoying a life of heavenly pleasures untold,
In the company of Sakka the deva king;
Therefore protect this virtue with a firm resolve
And live not for a moment void of good.
27. Of all the wholesome acts that one can do
The noblest, effective most, can meditation be:
It alone can mind's defilements clean,
And mind's strength and culture raise.
Surest cause it is to ensure birth
In happier planes, and brahma abodes to gain.
Conquer the legions of the evil one,
And win freedom's bliss which is hard to gain.
28. Transferring of results of wholesome deeds,
By you performed, with unmixed joy of mind
Is like unto a golden stairway
Leading to the sixfold heavenly abodes;
It's the full moon bright, with its cooling beams,
That allays the heat of fearsome woeful states.
Hence share the results of wholesome deeds

That you perform with all you meet.

29. On the day that the monastery of Jeta Park
Was gifted as offering to the supreme Sage,
A poor man present, overcome with joy,
Fully approving and endorsing in mind
This wholesome act, wished its results to share:
And acquire did he, the wholesome results in greater
measure
Than did the guild-master [8] himself, that donor rare.
What matters hence, whether the doer of the deed
Does not or does, wish others the benefits share?’
30. Once when the Lord to an audience preached,
A humble frog entranced by the music of his voice,
Sat with mind composed and never moved,
When a stake, unwitting driven, his poor heart
Did penetrate, killing him there transfixed.
He was reborn in deva abodes with luxury and joy.
31. A poor man once, in great devotion,
To the supreme Sage offered at a relic shrine
But one common flower of a humble weed;
Five hundred lives was he born on earth,
And ruled as ‘universal monarch of the wheel.’
32. A man who saw the Buddha Vessabhū,
And to him obeisance paid but once,
For one-and-thirty aeons able was he
To avoid birth in states of woe,
And enjoy affluence and joy on earth,

And happiness in turn in deva abodes.
Oh beings, what debars you from such
Simple wholesome acts, let alone other greater ones?

33. If you would preach, explaining the Law,
Defining clearly the evil and the good,
Expecting not any material gains or gifts
For service such, but the compassionate mind:
"My aim in this shall only be
To guide my listeners in their assay
To overcome the woes of saṃsāra's deep—
The happiness you gain in consequence of this
Will be great beyond all measures.
34. If one attends on those disciplined,
Those homeless ones and ascetics in morality pure—
Others that see, will always him befriend.
The wise by attending on the holy ones
Do reap the benefits of these wholesome acts;
Those who would know the good from the bad,
Would realise this as a noble wholesome act.
35. If those that in wholesome deeds engage,
Would joyfully speak of their values to others,
The merit thereof would be multiplied;
Whenever such beings are born on earth
Their fame would spread far and wide
Like the risen full moon: know this as fact.
36. A man who sought refuge in the Triple Gem
For thirty-one aeons the realms of woe escaped,

Was born to much prosperity and wealth on earth
And finally reached certain emancipation's bliss.
Why dost thou not the Three Refuges seek?
Why suffer the sorrows and pangs on earth?

37. It is only through delusion and ignorance
That you think not of the virtues of the Blessed One,
The only refuge to you without hope.
If with mind calm and serene you think
On his virtues, doubt not
Happiness in various forms results.
38. If all beings would bear in mind
The many great virtues of the Blessed One,
The noblest being of the threefold world,
And recall with wisdom clear, these thoughts—
saṃsāra's ills never harshly fall on them,
And all blessings will to them accrue.
39. By the great good effects of this effort,
This presenting of the collection of thoughts
That I have writ for the benefit of the world
For beings ignorant of evil and good:
May all beings keep the happiness they gain
And reach Nibbāna, the eternal bliss.
40. May this book of verses composed
In joyous and compassionate mind
To guide the readers, to Nibbāna's light
By Thera Maitriya of Vīdāgama,
In the ancient Vīdāgama monastic halls,

Last for long years to come.
And illumine the minds of men!

Notes

1. Thera = Elder Monk.
2. An undated collection of moral maxims, the *Dahamgātaya*, is sometimes cited as the oldest existing such work. See C.E. Godakumbura: *Sinhalese Literature*. Colombo, 1955 PP.209-210.
3. The first Vīdāgama Thera's name is sometimes mentioned as the author of one of the versions of the *Attanagalu Vaṃsaya*. This was the second of the two Sinhalese translations of the Pali *Hatthavanagalla-vihāra-vaṃsa*, and is associated with the Vīdāgama fraternity. It is not impossible that the Elder Vīdāgama was its author though it is more likely that it was written by a younger monk of the same fraternity.
4. JRASCB Vol. XXII. No.63 (1910) p.39.
5. *Dat neka Sat helu saku magada ā risin
Kit yasa kot beṇda digu yataga saha tosin.* (*Haṃsa-Sandesaya*)
6. Other metres of 26 and 18 syllabic instants are also used, though the majority of stanzas are composed in this metre.
7. The eight wrong moments (*akkhaṇa*), or inopportune

times, are: when a Buddha has appeared and his Teaching is taught but a person has been born (1) in hell, (2) as an animal, (3) as a ghost, (4) among long-lived deities, (5) among unintelligent barbarians, not visited by followers of the Buddha, monastic or lay; or though born in the middle countries, a person (6) has wrong views, or (7) is stupid and dull, or, though he may have favourable qualifications, no Buddha has appeared at that time, and his Teaching is not taught. The ninth opportune time is when the above personal and environmental obstacles are absent. See *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, *The Eights*, No. 29.

8. Anāthapiṇḍika, the donor of the Jetavana monastery.

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--------------------------------------|----|
| Title page | 2 |
| Translator's Preface | 4 |
| Introduction | 7 |
| The Author | 9 |
| Literary work | 11 |
| Literary Period | 11 |
| Influence and popularity of the work | 15 |
| The World's True Welfare | 19 |
| Notes | 59 |