

A
Dhammapada
for
Contemplation

A rendering by
Ajahn Munindo



Aruno Publications

A Dhammapada for Contemplation
by Ajahn Munindo

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Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jinati

‘The gift of Dhamma surpasses all other gifts.’

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Dedication

We would like to acknowledge the support of many people in the preparation of this book, especially that of the Kataññutā group in Malaysia, Singapore and Australia for bringing it into production.

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PREFACE

To the first edition (2000)

It is my hope that this *Dhammapada for Contemplation* will delight those who come across it and serve to encourage further viewings from different perspectives. I trust that whatever glimpses of truth may be gained, however briefly, will encourage all travellers to continue faring on.

Any gratitude arising from the reading should be directed towards the earlier translators on whose work I have been wholly dependent: Daw Mya Tin and the editors of the Burmese Pitaka Association (1987), Ven. Narada Thera (B.M.S. 1978), and Ven. Ananda Maitreya Thera (Lotsawa 1988); also to the many friends whose contributions have added richness and depth, especially Ajahn Thiradhammo, Sister Medhanandi, Bani Shorter and Thomas Jones.

Responsibility for any defects that may remain rests with me.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland, UK
16th January 2000

PREFACE

To the second edition (2006)

Over five years have passed since we printed the first edition of this *Dhammapada for Contemplation*. I am happy that the first edition was met with so much appreciation. Now, on the occasion of celebrating 25 years since the establishing of Aruna Ratanagiri Monastery here on Harnham Hill, it is a joy to have an opportunity for a reprint. It has also been an opportunity to re-craft some of the verses.

I am indebted to Thanissaro Bhikkhu for his new translation of *The Dhammapada* (Dhamma Dana Pubs. Barre, Ma.1998) which was usefully consulted. I am most grateful to all those who offered comments on this new edition.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland, UK
16th April 2006

PREFACE

To the third edition (2010)

This year Luang Por Sumedho has announced he will return to Thailand after thirty-three years in Britain. Some of those whose lives have been changed by receiving Dhamma teachings from Luang Por wish to express their gratitude by reprinting my rendering of the Dhammapada. I am delighted to support this.

I have taken the opportunity to make a few minor corrections and alterations, otherwise the text of this *Dhammapada for Contemplation* remains the same as previous editions.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland, UK
26th May 2010

PREFACE

To the fourth edition (2015)

We continue to receive requests for copies of this *Dhammapada for Contemplation* and are grateful to our good friends in Malaysia for making a reprint possible.

As well as using resources mentioned above in earlier editions, in adjusting some verses I have had the benefit of translations by Bhikkhu Thanissaro and Acharya Buddharakkhita (see www.accesstoinight.org).

For those who are interested, these are the verses I have significantly reworked: 1, 2, 36, 78, 95, 123, 141, 183, 198, 223, 231, 232, 233, 244, 331, 332, 333, 383, 384, 421. Otherwise, the text of this rendering of the Dhammapada remains mostly the same as previous editions.

As before, I encourage readers to refer to other versions of the Dhammapada, particularly those mentioned as resources for this book.

Bhikkhu Munindo
Aruna Ratanagiri Buddhist Monastery
Northumberland, UK
Winter Retreat 2015

INTRODUCTION

The book you hold is a sparkling basket of light, full of illumination of the human situation. It is a version of the Buddhist classic, the Dhammapada; not a line-by-line translation but a free rendering that aims to communicate the living spirit of the text, unencumbered by rigid adherence to formal exactness. The intention of the author, Ajahn Munindo, was to present a contemporary version of the text for readers to use in their investigation of the Way. Hence its title is *A Dhammapada for Contemplation*, indicating that the work is not to be considered as a definitive translation, but as an invitation to encounter and to contemplate the Buddha's wisdom.

It is a life of contemplation that is the context for this rendering. Ajahn Munindo, who was born in New Zealand, was ordained as a bhikkhu or monk of the Theravadan tradition in Thailand twenty-five years ago. He now resides in a small spiritual community in Northumberland, England, where he lives under a code of discipline going back to the Buddha, which encourages simplicity and right attention. Transplanting this

Buddhist monastic way of life from the eastern countries where Buddhism has been long established into the West has meant a process of translation involving language, practices and rituals, such that the Theravadan tradition, along with others, is now established within the Western cultural ambience. *A Dhammapada for Contemplation*, therefore, although a free rendering by scholarly standards, aims to communicate a precise translation of values — the spiritual values of the living Buddhist tradition.

Thomas Jones Ph.D.
Cambridge, April 2000

A
Dhammapada
for
Contemplation

Namo tassa
bhagavato arahato
samma sambuddhassa

Homage to the Blessed,
Noble and Perfectly Enlightened One.

THE PAIRS

1.

All states of being are determined by the heart.
It is the heart that leads the way.
Just as the wheel of the oxcart follows
the hoof print of the animal that draws it,
so suffering will surely follow
when we speak or act impulsively
from an impure heart.

2.

All states of being are determined by the heart.
It is the heart that leads the way.
As surely as our shadow never leaves us,
so well-being will follow
when we speak or act
with a pure heart.

3.

When we hold fast to such thoughts as,
“They abused me, mistreated me,
molested me, robbed me,”
we keep hatred alive.

4.

If we thoroughly release ourselves
from such thoughts as,
“They abused me, mistreated me,
molested me, robbed me,”
hatred is vanquished.

5.

Never by hatred is hatred conquered,
but by readiness to love alone.
This is eternal law.

6.

Those who are contentious
have forgotten that we all die;
for the wise, who reflect on this fact,
there are no quarrels.

7.

As a stormy wind can uproot a frail tree,
so one who holds heedlessly to pleasure,
who indulges in food and is indolent
can be uprooted by Mara.

8.

As a stormy wind
cannot move a mountain of rock,
so one who contemplates
the reality of the body,
who develops faith and energy,
is unmoved by Mara.

9.

Wearing the robe of a renunciate
does not in itself render one pure.
Those who wear it and yet lack diligence
are heedless.

10.

Being possessed of self-restraint,
honest and diligent in conduct;
such a one is worthy
of the renunciate's robe.

11.

Mistaking the false for the real
and the real for the false,
one suffers a life of falsity.

12.

But seeing the false as the false
and the real as the real,
one lives in the perfectly real.

13.

Like rain leaking through
a poorly-thatched roof,
the unruly passions
seep into an untamed heart.

14.

As rain cannot penetrate
a well-thatched roof,
so the passions
cannot enter a well-trained heart.

15.

When we see clearly
our own lack of virtue
we are filled with grief;
here and hereafter we grieve.

16.

When we appreciate fully
the benefit of our own pure deeds
we are filled with joy;
here and hereafter
there is a celebration of joy.

17.

Here and hereafter
those who perform evil
create their own suffering.
Mental preoccupation
with the thought, "I have done wrong"
possesses their minds,
and they fall into chaos.

18.

Here and hereafter
those who live their lives well
abide in happiness.
They are filled
with a natural appreciation of virtue,
and they dwell in delight.

19.

Though one may know
much about Dhamma,
if one does not live accordingly –
like a cowherd
who covets another's cattle –
one experiences none of the benefits
of walking the Way.

20.

Knowing only a little about Dhamma
but wholeheartedly according with it,
transforming the passions
of greed, hatred and delusion,
releasing all attachments to here and hereafter,
one will indeed experience for oneself
the benefits of walking the Way.



AWARENESS

21.

Appreciative awareness leads to life;
heedless avoidance is the path to death.
Those who are aware are fully alive,
while those who are heedless
are as if already dead.

22.

The wise, being fully alive, rejoice
in appreciative awareness,
and abide delighting
in this ability.

23.

The Awakened Ones, firm in their resolve,
vigorously apply themselves,
and know freedom from all limitation:
liberation, true security.

24.

Those who are energetically
committed to the Way,
who are pure and considerate in effort,
composed and virtuous in conduct,
steadily increase in radiance.

25.

By endeavour, vigilance,
restraint and self-control,
let the wise make islands of themselves
which no flood can overwhelm.

26.

Those who are foolish and confused
betray themselves to heedlessness.
The wise treasure the awareness
they have cultivated
as their most precious possession.

27.

“Do not become lost in negligence,
do not become lost in sensuality.”

Heeding such counsel,
the contemplative discovers
profound release.

28.

Those Awakened Ones
who have tasted freedom
from all distraction
by cultivating awareness
view all who are suffering
with compassionate perspective,
as one on a mountain top
is able to view the plains.

29.

Aware among those who are heedless,
awake among those who sleep,
the wise go forward like strong young horses,
leaving the exhausted behind.

30.

By way of diligent awareness
the god Magha won his realm.
Diligence is ever rewarded,
negligence is ever scorned.

31.

The renunciate who delights in vigilance
and shuns heedlessness
advances like a grass fire,
consuming obstructions great and small.

32.

The renunciate who delights in vigilance
and shuns heedlessness
is protected from regression:
such a one approaches liberation.



THE MIND

33.

Just as a fletcher shapes an arrow,
so the wise develop the mind,
so excitable, uncertain
and difficult to control.

34.

As a fish which on being dragged
from its home in the water
and tossed on dry land
will thrash about,
so will the heart tremble
when withdrawing from the current of Mara.

35.

The active mind is difficult to tame,
flighty and wandering wherever it wills:
taming it is essential,
leading to the joy of well-being.

36.

The protected and guarded mind
leads to ease of being.

Though this mind is subtle,
elusive and difficult to see,
one who is alert should tend
and watch over it.

37.

Wandering far and wide on its own,
without form,
the mind lies in the heart-cavern within.
To bring it under control
is to be freed from the bonds of ignorance.

38.

In one whose mind is unsteady,
whose heart is not prepared
with true teachings,
whose faith is not matured,
the fullness of wisdom is not yet manifest.

39.

There is no fear
if the heart is uncontaminated
by the passions
and the mind is free from ill-will.
Seeing beyond good and evil,
one is awake.

40.

Seeing this body to be as fragile as a clay vessel,
and fortifying the heart like a city wall,
one can confront Mara
with the weapon of insight.
Having the advantage of non-attachment,
one protects what has already been gained.

41.

Certainly this body will soon lie lifeless:
cast aside on the ground,
devoid of consciousness
and as useless as a burnt-out log.

42.

More than a thief,
more than an enemy,
a misdirected heart
brings one to harm.

43.

Neither mother, father
nor any member of a family
can give you the blessings generated
by your own well-directed heart.

IV

FLOWERS

44.

Who is it
that can truly see as they are
this earth, this body,
the hell realms and the heavenly realms?
Who can discern
the well-taught Path of Wisdom,
in the way the eye of a skilled florist
can select perfect blooms?

45.

It is those who knowingly walk the Way
who can see as they truly are
this earth, this body,
the hell realms and the heavenly realms.
They are the ones who can discern
the well-taught Path of Wisdom.

46.

Know the body
to be as transient as foam, a mirage.
The flower of sensual passion
has a hidden barb.
See this and pass beyond death.

47.

As a flash flood
can sweep away a sleeping village,
so death can destroy
those who only seek the flowers
of casual sensual pleasures.

48.

To be frustrated and ungratified,
yet still only seek the flowers
of casual sensual pleasures
brings one under the destroyer's sway.

49.

As a bee gathering nectar
does not harm or disturb
the colour and fragrance of the flower,
so do the wise move
through the world.

50.

Dwell not on the faults
and shortcomings of others,
instead, seek clarity
about your own.

51.

As a beautiful flower
without fragrance is disappointing,
so are wise words
without right action.

52.

As a beautiful flower
with a delightful fragrance is pleasing,
so is wise and lovely speech
when matched with right action.

53.

As many garlands can be made
from a heap of flowers,
so too, much that is wholesome can be done
during this human existence.

54.

The fragrance of flowers or sandalwood
blows only with the prevailing wind,
but the fragrance of virtue
pervades all directions.

55.

The fragrance of virtue
surpasses by far
the fragrance of flowers
or sandalwood.

56.

The aroma of sandalwood
and the scent of flowers
bring only little delight
compared to the fragrance of virtue,
which suffuses even the heavenly realms.

57.

It is not possible for Mara to find
those who abide in appreciative awareness,
who by perfect knowledge are freed
and live in virtue.

58-59.

Just as a sweet-smelling and beautiful lotus
can grow from a pile of discarded waste,
the radiance of a true disciple of the Buddha
outshines dark shadows cast by ignorance.

V

THE FOOLISH

60.

The night is long
for one who cannot sleep.
A journey is long for one who is tired.
Ignorant existence is long and tedious
for those unaware of Truth.

61.

Having found no companion
who has travelled at least as far as ourselves,
it is better to go alone
than to accompany those
who remain irresolute.

62.

“This is my child, this is my wealth”:
such thoughts are the preoccupations of fools.
If we are unable to own even ourselves,
why make such claims?

63.

The fool who knows he is a fool
is at least a little wise;
the fool who thinks that he is wise
is assuredly a fool.

64.

Like spoons unable to taste
the flavour of the soup
are the fools who cannot see truth,
even though they live
all their lives among the wise.

65.

Like the tongue that can appreciate
the flavour of the soup
is one who can clearly discern the truth
after only a brief
association with the wise.

66.

By heedlessly performing evil,
unwary fools produce their own bitter fruits.
They behave like their worst enemy.

67.

A deed is not well-done
when upon reflection remorse arises:
with tears of sorrow
one harvests its fruit.

68.

A deed is well-done
when upon reflection no remorse arises:
with joy one harvests its fruits.

69.

Fools perceive evil acts
to be sweet as honey
until they have seen the consequences.
When they behold their fruits,
fools suffer indeed.

70.

Even after months of rigid asceticism,
subsisting on a frugal diet,
a fool is not to be compared in value
to the person who simply sees the truth.

71.

Fresh milk does not immediately
turn into curd,
and evil acts do not immediately
show their fruits;
however, fools do suffer from the consequences
of their foolishness
as they would be burned
by standing on coals hidden in ashes.

72.

Fools are those who use foolishly
whatever gifts they have,
destroying their accumulated good fortune.

73-74.

The conceit and craving of fools grows
as they claim for themselves
undue authority, recognition and reward:
their falsity affects their longing,
they wish to be seen
as powerful and discerning.

75.

Like the tongue that can appreciate
the flavour of the soup,
is one who can discern clearly the truth
after only a brief
association with the wise.

VI

THE WISE

76.

Only blessings can arise
from seeking the company
of wise and discerning persons,
who skilfully offer
both admonition and advice
as if guiding one to hidden treasure.

77.

Let the wise guide beings away from darkness,
give direction and advice.
They will be treasured by the virtuous
and dismissed by the foolish.

78.

Do not seek the company of misguided friends;
beware of degenerate companions.
Seek the company of well-guided friends,
those who support insight.

79.

Surrendering oneself to Dhamma
leads to serene being.

The wise perpetually delight in the truth
taught by the Awakened One.

80.

Those who build canals
channel the flow of water.
Arrowsmiths make arrows.
Woodworkers craft wood.
The wise tame themselves.

81.

As solid rock
is unshaken by the wind,
so are those with wisdom undisturbed,
whether by praise or blame.

82.

On hearing true teachings
the hearts of those who are receptive
become serene,
like a lake, deep, clear and still.

83.

Virtuous beings are unattached.
They do not indulge in heedless speech
about sensual pleasures.
They experience both joy and sorrow
but are possessed by neither.

84.

Neither for one's own sake
nor on behalf of another
does a wise person do harm
– not for the sake of family, fortune or gain.
Such a one is rightly called
just, virtuous and wise.

85.

Few are those who reach the beyond.
Most pace endlessly back and forth,
not daring to risk the journey.

86.

Although it is difficult to cross over
the storm-swept sea of passion,
those who live in accordance
with the well-taught Way
arrive at the beyond.

87-88.

With an image of liberation as the goal
the wise abandon darkness
and cherish light,
leave petty security behind
and seek freedom from attachment.
To pursue such release is difficult and rare,
yet the wise will seek it,
detaching themselves from obstructions,
purifying heart and mind.

89.

Freeing themselves from longing,
unhindered by habitual grasping,
those who align themselves with the Way
delight in non-attachment
and, while still in the world,
are radiant.

VII

THE AWAKENED ONE

90.

There is no tension
for those who have completed their journey
and have become free
from the distress of all binding ties.

91.

Alert to the needs of the journey,
those on the path of awareness,
like swans, glide on,
leaving behind their former resting places.

92.

Just like birds that leave no tracks in the air,
there are those whose minds do not cling
to temptations that are offered to them.
Their focus is the signless state of liberation,
which to others is indiscernible.

93.

There are those
who are free from all obstructions;
they do not worry about food.
Their focus is the signless state of liberation.
Like birds flying through the air,
trackless they move on their way.

94.

Like horses well-trained by their owners
are those who have rightly tamed their senses;
having freed their hearts
from pride and pollution
they generate all-pervading delight.

95.

There are those who discover
they can completely abandon
confused reactions
and become patient as the earth;
unmoved by anger,
unshaken as a pillar,
unperturbed as a clear and quiet pool.

96.

Those who arrive
at the state of perfect freedom
through right understanding
are unperturbed
in body, speech or mind.
They remain unshaken
by life's vicissitudes.

97.

Those who know the uncreated,
who are free and stilled,
who have discarded all craving,
are the most worthy beings.

98.

Whether in a forest,
a town or open country,
delightful is the dwelling place
of one now fully free.

99.

Beings free from addiction to sensual pleasures
know a unique form of delight.

They seek quiet in forest retreats
which worldly beings would avoid.

VIII

THE THOUSANDS

100.

A single word of truth
which calms the mind
is better to hear than a thousand
irrelevant words.

101.

A single verse of truth
which calms the mind
is better to hear than a thousand
irrelevant verses.

102.

Reciting a single verse of truth
which calms the mind
is better than reciting
a hundred meaningless verses.

103.

One might defeat alone in battle
a thousand thousand men,
but one who gains self-mastery
is by far the greater hero.

104-105.

Self-mastery is the supreme victory –
much more to be valued
than winning control over others.
It is a victory
that no other being whatsoever
can distort or take away.

106.

To honour, even for a single moment,
one who has attained self-mastery
is of greater merit
than making countless offerings
to those who are unworthy.

107.

To honour, even for a single moment,
one who has attained self-mastery
is of greater benefit than a hundred years
spent habitually performing ceremonies
based on wrong understanding.

108.

Even if one should spend
an entire year
making gestures of offering
for the sake of self-gain,
all this is not worth one quarter the value
of offering veneration to a noble being.

109.

For one who always honours and respects
those of greater years
there are four blessings:
long life, beauty, happiness and strength.

110.

A single day lived
with conscious intention and virtue
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived devoid of discipline and right restraint.

111.

A single day lived
with conscious intention and wisdom
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived devoid of discipline and wisdom.

112.

A single day lived
with conscious intention and profound effort
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived in lazy passivity.

113.

A single day lived in awareness
of the transient nature of life
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived unaware of birth and death.

114.

A single day lived awake to the undying state
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived without recognizing deathlessness.

115.

A single day lived awake to profound truth
is of greater value than a hundred years
lived unawakened.

IX

EVIL

116.

Hasten towards doing what is wholesome.
Restrain your mind from evil acts.
The mind that is slow to do good
can easily find pleasure in evil-doing.

117.

If you perform an evil act,
then do not repeat it.
Avoid finding pleasure in its memory.
The aftermath of evil-doing is painful.

118.

Having performed a wholesome act
it is good to repeat it.
Enjoy the pleasure of its memory.
The fruit of goodness is contentment.

119.

Even those who perform evil
can experience well-being
so long as their actions
have not yet borne direct fruits.
However, when the results
of their actions ripen,
the painful consequences
cannot be avoided.

120.

Even those who live wholesome lives
can experience suffering
so long as their acts
have not yet borne direct fruit.
However, when the fruits
of their actions ripen,
the joyful consequences
cannot be avoided.

121.

Do not ignore the effects of evil,
saying, "This will come to nothing."
Just as by the gradual fall of raindrops
the water jar is filled,
so in time fools are corrupted
by evil-doing.

122.

Do not ignore the effect of right action,
saying, "This will come to nothing."
Just as by the gradual fall of raindrops
the water jar is filled,
so in time the wise
become replete with good.

123.

As a trader with valuable cargo avoids threats
and those who love life avoid poison,
so you should avoid evil actions.

124.

A hand without an open wound
can carry poison
and remain free from harm;
likewise, evil has no consequences
for those who do not perform it.

125.

If you intentionally harm
an innocent person,
someone who is pure and blameless,
the harm will come back to you
like fine dust thrown into the wind.

126.

Some are reborn as humans;
evil-doers are reborn in hell.
Doers of good are reborn in bliss
and the pure enter the trackless land.

127.

There is no place on earth
where one can hide
from the consequences of evil actions –
not in a mountain cave,
the ocean, nor in the sky.

128.

There is no place on earth
beyond the reach of death –
not in a mountain cave,
the ocean, nor in the sky.

X

AGGRESSION

129.

Having empathy for others,
one sees that all beings are afraid
of punishment and death.
Knowing this,
one does not attack or cause attack.

130.

Having empathy for others,
one sees that all beings
love life and fear death.
Knowing this,
one does not attack or cause attack.

131.

To harm living beings
who, like us, seek contentment,
is to bring harm to ourselves.

132.

To avoid bringing harm to living beings
who, like us, seek contentment,
is to bring happiness to ourselves.

133.

Avoid speaking harshly to others;
harsh speech prompts retaliation.
Those hurt by your words may hurt you back.

134.

If spoken to harshly,
make yourself as silent as a cracked gong;
non-retaliation is a sign of freedom.

135.

Just as a herdsman
drives cattle to pasture,
old age and death
direct living beings.

136.

Though while they perform their evil acts
they do not realize what they are doing,
fools suffer the results
of their own actions accordingly,
just as one is burnt when handling fire.

137-140.

To cause harm to the defenceless
soon brings suffering
to those who attack.
They will reap pain or poverty or loss,
illness, insanity or persecution,
abuse, distress or devastation,
and, alone, after death
they must confront their misdeeds.

141.

Not outer asceticisms,
nor self-humiliation,
nor physical deprivation of any kind
can purify one's heart
if it is still obscured by doubt.

142.

Flamboyant outer appearance
does not in itself constitute
an obstruction to freedom.
Having a heart at peace,
pure, contained,
awake and blameless,
distinguishes a renunciate,
a wayfarer, a noble being.

143.

A well-trained horse
gives no cause for restraint.
Rare are those beings who,
through modesty and discipline,
give no cause for rebuke.

144.

Let the dread of endless mediocrity
spur you into great effort,
like a well-trained horse
encouraged by the mere touch of the whip.
Relinquish the burden of endless struggle
with unapologetic confidence,
with purity of action, effort, concentration,
and by conscious and disciplined commitment
to the path.

145.

Those who build canals
channel the flow of water.
Fletchers make arrows.
Woodworkers craft wood.
The good tame themselves.

XI

OLD AGE

146.

Why is there laughter?

Why is there joy

when the world is on fire?

Since you are clouded in darkness

should you not seek the light?

147.

Gaze upon this once-decorated body –

it used to attract attention

but now it is only festering flesh,

a putrid thing.

It is neither sure nor substantial.

148.

This body wears out with age;
it becomes a host to disease
- vulnerable, fragile,
a decrepit, disintegrating mass,
which eventually ends in death.

149.

What pleasure does life hold
once one has seen
old bleached bones
discarded and scattered round?

150.

The physical body consists of bones
covered with flesh and blood.
Stored up inside it
are decay and death, pride and malice.

151.

Passed down by the wise
is the knowledge that
though what is externally impressive
loses its splendour,
and though our bodies will decay,
the truth itself outlasts all degeneration.

152.

While ageing fools put on weight
like oxen in their stalls,
their minds remain small.

153-154.

For many lives I have wandered
looking for, but not finding,
the house-builder
who caused my suffering.
But now you are seen and
you shall build no more.
Your rafters are dislodged and
the ridge-pole is broken.
All craving is ended;
my heart is as one with the unmade.

155.

Those who, while still young,
neither choose a life of renunciation
nor earn a good living,
end up like dejected old herons
beside a pond without fish.

156.

Those who, while still young,
neither choose a life of renunciation
nor earn a good living,
will end up bemoaning the past,
falling like spent arrows
that have missed their mark.

XII

THE SELF

157.

If we hold ourselves dear,
then we maintain careful self-regard
both day and night.

158.

It is wise
to set ourselves right
before instructing others.

159.

One's own self is the hardest to discipline.
You should act as you teach:
tame yourself
before trying to tame others.

160.

Truly it is ourselves
that we depend upon;
how could we really
depend upon another?
When we reach the state
of self-reliance
we find a rare refuge.

161.

As a diamond can cut through
the stone that once housed it,
so your own evil can grind you down.

162.

Committed evil-doers
behave towards themselves
like their own worst enemies.
They are like creepers
that strangle the trees
which support them.

163.

It is easy to do that which is
of no real benefit to oneself,
but it is difficult indeed to do that
which is truly beneficial and good.

164.

Like the bamboo
which destroys itself as it bears fruit,
so fools harm themselves
by holding to wrong views
and deriding those worthy ones
who live in harmony with the Way.

165.

By ourselves we do evil
and by ourselves we are made impure.
By ourselves we avoid evil
and by ourselves we are made pure.
The great matter of purity
is our own affair.
No other can be responsible.

166.

Knowing the Way for oneself,
walk it thoroughly.

Do not allow the needs of others,
however demanding,
to bring about distraction.

XIII

THE WORLD

167.

By renouncing unworthy ways
and by not living carelessly,
by not holding to false views,
we no longer perpetuate delusion.

168.

Do not show false humility.
Stand firmly in relation to your goal.
Practice, well-observed,
leads to contentment
both now and in the future.

169.

Live your life well in accord with the Way –
avoid a life of distraction.
A life well-lived leads to contentment
both now and in the future.

170.

The King of Death cannot find
those who look upon the world
as insubstantial,
as transient, a bubble –
illusive, only a mirage.

171.

Come, view this world.
See it as an ornate festive carriage.
See how fools are entranced by their visions,
yet for the wise there is no attachment.

172.

There are those
who awaken from heedlessness.
They bring light into the world
like the moon
emerging from clouds.

173.

One who transforms old and heedless ways
into fresh and wholesome acts
brings light into the world
like the moon freed from clouds.

174.

If birds are trapped in a net
only a few will ever escape.
In this world of illusion
only a few see their way to liberation.

175.

White swans rise into the air.
Adept yogis
transport themselves through space.
Wise beings
transcend worldly delusion
by outwitting the hordes of Mara.

176.

For one who transgresses
the law of truthfulness,
one who has no regard
for a future existence,
there is no manner of evil
that is impossible.

177.

Those who fail to value generosity
do not reach the celestial realms.
But the wise rejoice in giving
and forever abide in bliss.

178.

Better than ruling the whole world,
better than going to heaven,
better than lordship over the universe,
is an irreversible commitment to the Way.

XIV

THE BUDDHA

179.

The Buddha's perfection is complete;
there is no more work to be done.
No measure is there for his wisdom;
no limits are there to be found.
In what way could he be distracted
from truth?

180.

The Buddha's perfection is complete;
in him there is no craving
that could drag him down.
No measure is there for his wisdom;
no limits are there to be found.
In what way could he be distracted
from truth?

181.

Celestial beings treasure
the Awakened Ones
who have fully seen the Way,
who are devoted to meditation
and delight in the peace
of renunciation.

182.

It is not easy to be born as a human being
and to live this mortal life.
It is not easy to have the opportunity
to hear Dhamma
and rare for a Buddha to arise.

183.

Refrain from doing evil,
cultivate that which is good,
purify the heart.
This is the Way of the Awakened Ones.

184.

A renunciate does not
oppress anyone.
Patient endurance
is the ultimate asceticism.
Profound liberation,
say the Buddhas,
is the supreme goal.

185.

Not insulting, not harming,
cultivating restraint,
with respect for the training,
modesty in eating and contentment
with one's dwelling place,
devotion to mindful intent:
this is the teaching of the Buddha.

186-187.

Not in great wealth
is there contentment,
nor in sensual pleasure,
gross or refined.
But in the extinction of craving
is joy to be found
by a disciple of the Buddha.

188-189.

To many places beings withdraw
to escape from fear:
to mountains, forests,
parklands and gardens;
sacred places as well.
But none of these places
offer true refuge,
none of them can free us from fear.

190-191.

One who finds refuge in the Buddha
in the Dhamma and in the Sangha
sees with penetrating insight
suffering, its cause, its release
and the Way leading to true freedom.

192.

The Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha:
these are the true refuge;
these are supreme;
these lead to Liberation.

193.

It is hard to find
a being of great wisdom;
rare are the places
in which they are born.
Those who surround them
when they appear
know good fortune indeed.

194.

Blessed is the arising of a Buddha;
blessed is the revealing of the Dhamma;
blessed is the concord of the Sangha;
delightful is harmonious communion.

195-196.

Immeasurable is the benefit
obtained from honouring those
who are pure and beyond fear.
Beings who have found freedom
from sorrow and grieving
are worthy of honour.

XV

HAPPINESS

197.

While in the midst
of those who hate,
to dwell free from hating
is happiness indeed.

198.

While in the midst
of those who are troubled,
to dwell free from trouble
is happiness indeed.

199.

While in the midst
of those who are greedy,
to dwell free from greed
is happiness indeed.

200.

We dwell happily,
free from anxiety;
like radiant beings
in celestial realms
we rejoice in delight.

201.

Victory leads to hatred,
for the defeated suffer.
The peaceful live happily,
beyond victory and defeat.

202.

There is no fire like lust,
no distress like hatred,
no pain like the burden of attachment,
no joy like the peace of liberation.

203.

Hunger is the greatest affliction,
conditionality the greatest
source of despair.
The wise, seeing this as it is,
realize liberation, the greatest joy.

204.

A healthy mind is the greatest gain.
Contentment is the greatest wealth.
Trustworthiness is the best of kin.
Unconditional freedom is the highest bliss.

205.

Tasting the flavour of solitude
and the nectar of peace,
those who drink the joy
that is the essence of reality
abide free from fear of evil.

206.

It is always a pleasure
not to have to encounter fools.
It is always good to see noble beings,
and a delight to live with them.

207.

Tedious is the company of fools,
always painful, like being
surrounded by enemies;
but to associate with the wise
is like being at home.

208.

You should follow the ways
of those who are steadfast,
discerning, pure and aware,
just as the moon follows
the path of the stars.

XVI

AFFECTION

209.

There are those who pursue
that which should be avoided
and avoid that which
should be pursued.
Caught up in the senses
they lose their way,
and later envy
those who know the truth.

210.

To lose the company
of those with whom
one feels at home is painful,
to be associated with those
whom you dislike is even worse;
so do not abandon yourselves
either to the company of those
with whom you feel at home
or those whom you dislike.

211.

Beware of the attachment
that springs from fondness,
for separation from those
one holds dear is painful,
while if you take sides
neither for nor against fondness,
there will be no ties that bind.

212.

From endearment springs grief.
From endearment springs fear of loss.
Yet, if one is free from endearment
there is no grief
so how could there be fear?

213.

Becoming lost in affection
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in affection
brings fear.
Being free from affection
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

214.

Becoming lost in enjoyment
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in enjoyment
brings fear.
Being free in your experience of enjoyment
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

215.

Becoming lost in lust
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in lust
brings fear.

Not being lost in lust
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

216.

Becoming lost in craving
brings sorrow;
becoming lost in craving
brings fear.

Being free from craving
means sorrow ceases,
so how could there be any fear?

217.

Naturally held dear are those
who live with right action
and have found the Way,
and through insight
have become established in the truth.

218.

Those who long
for the undefinable,
with hearts filled with inspiration,
whose minds are freed
from sensual longing,
are called
“those bound for freedom”.

219-220.

Just as family and friends
joyfully welcome home
loved ones returned from afar,
so their own good deeds
welcome those who have done them
as they go from this life to the next.

XVII

ANGER

221.

Relinquish anger.
Let go of conceit.
Release yourself
from all that binds you.
The pure-hearted who cling
neither to body nor mind
do not fall prey to suffering.

222.

I say that those who contain anger
as a charioteer controls
a speeding chariot
are fully in charge of their lives;
others are merely keeping
their hands on the reins.

223.

Transform anger with kindness
and badness with that which is good,
meanness with generosity
and deceit with integrity.

224.

These three ways
lead to the heavens:
asserting the truth,
not yielding to anger,
and giving, even if you have
only a little to share.

225.

Awakened Ones do not cause harm.
They are rightly restrained
and they move to changelessness
where they grieve no more.

226.

All pollution is cleared
from the minds of those
who are always vigilant,
training themselves day and night,
and whose lives are fully intent
upon liberation.

227.

Since ancient times it has been the case
that those who speak too much are criticized,
as are those who speak too little
and those who don't speak at all.
Everyone in this world is criticized.

228.

There never was,
nor will there be,
nor is there now, anybody
who is only blamed
or wholly praised.

229.

Those who live impeccably,
who are discerning,
intelligent and virtuous –
they are continually praised by the wise.

230.

Who would cast blame on those
who in their being are like gold?
Even the gods praise them.

231.

Beware of clumsy movement
and be aware in your bodily conduct.
Renounce all devious action
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

232.

Beware of contrived utterance
and be aware in all that you say.
Renounce all cunning speech
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

233.

Beware of devious thinking
and be aware of all that you dwell upon.
Renounce all unruly thought
and cultivate that which is wholesome.

234.

Ably self-restrained
are the wise,
in action, in thought
and in speech.

XVIII

POLLUTION

235.

Resembling a withered leaf,
you have the messenger
of death at your side.
Although a long journey lies ahead,
you have still made no provision.

236.

Hasten to cultivate wisdom;
make an island for yourself.
Freed from stain and defilement,
you will enter noble being.

237.

It is time for you to come
into the presence of the Lord of Death.
There is no time for rest on this journey,
yet what provision have you made?

238.

Hasten to cultivate wisdom;
make an island for yourself.
Freed from stain and defilement,
you are released from birth and death.

239.

Gradually, gradually,
a moment at a time,
the wise remove their own impurities
as a goldsmith removes the dross.

240.

As iron is destroyed by the rust it produces,
so those who perform evil are corroded
by their own action.

241.

Lack of study leads
to forgetting the teachings;
neglect spoils the home;
laziness leads to loss of beauty;
heedlessness ruins attention.

242.

Sexual misconduct
diminishes those who perform it;
stinginess diminishes
those who could give.
Acts that diminish their doer
are stains indeed.

243.

But the worst stain of all
is ignorance.
Be purified of this
and you are free.

244.

Life is apparently easy
for one who lacks shame,
who is as impudent as a crow,
who is arrogant, aggressive,
intrusive and corrupt.

245.

Life is not easy for those
who have a sense of shame,
who are modest,
pure-minded and detached,
morally upright and reflective.

246-247.

Whoever destroys life,
disregards truth,
is sexually irresponsible,
takes what is not rightfully theirs,
and heedlessly indulges in drugs
destroys the very roots
of their own life.

248.

Whoever is intent on goodness
should know this:
a lack of self-restraint is disastrous.
Do not allow greed and misconduct
to prolong your misery.

249-250.

People are inspired to be generous
according to their faith and trust.
If we become discontented
with what we have been given,
our meditation will be filled
with endless mental affliction;
but if we are free from this discontent,
our meditation is full of peace.

251.

There is no fire like lust,
no obstruction like hatred,
no trap like delusion,
and no vortex like craving.

252.

It is easy to see the faults of others,
but it takes courage to look at one's own.
As with chaff,
one might winnow others' shortcomings
while hiding one's own;
as a stealthy hunter
might conceal himself from his prey.

253.

Those who always look for
the faults of others –
their corruptions increase
and they are far from freedom.

254.

No tracks are found in the air,
there is no liberation apart from the Way.
Most people tend to indulge in proliferation,
from which Awakened Ones are free.

255.

No tracks are found in the air,
there is no liberation apart from the Way.
There are no conditioned things
that are permanent,
and yet the Buddhas remain unperturbed.

XIX

THE JUST

256.

Making an arbitrary decision
does not amount to justice.
The wise decide the case
after considering arguments
for and against.

257.

By making decisions
based on truth and fairness
one safeguards the law
and is called righteous.

258.

Those who speak much
are not necessarily possessed of wisdom.
The wise can be seen
to be at peace with life
and free from all enmity and fear.

259.

Though one's knowledge
may be limited,
if understanding and conduct
rightly accord with the Way,
one is to be considered
well-versed in Dhamma.

260.

Having grey hair
does not make you an elder;
ripe in years maybe,
but perhaps pointlessly so.

261.

One who is truthful,
virtuous, impeccable in conduct,
free from all stains and wise
can be called an elder.

262 -263.

Those who are envious,
stingy and manipulative
remain unappealing despite
good looks and eloquent speech.
But those who have freed themselves
from their faults
and arrived at wisdom
are attractive indeed.

264.

Shaving your head
does not make you a renunciate
if you are still full of
recklessness and deceit.
How could someone possessed
by craving and lust
be considered a renunciate?

265.

You become a monk or nun
by letting go of all evil,
by renouncing all
unwholesomeness,
both great and small.

266.

You are not a monk or nun
because you depend
on others for food,
but by submitting yourself
wholeheartedly
to the training of body,
speech and mind.

267.

You become a monk or nun
by seeing through this world
with understanding,
by rising above good and bad
and living a life of purity
and contemplation.

268-269.

Silence does not denote profundity
if you are ignorant and untrained.

Like one holding scales
a sage weighs things up,
wholesome and unwholesome,
and comes to know
both the inner and outer worlds.
Therefore the sage is called wise.

270.

Those who still cause harm
to living beings
cannot be considered as attained.
Those who are attained
maintain a harmless demeanour
towards all beings.

271-272.

Do not rest contented
because you keep all the rules and regulations,
nor because you achieve great learning.

Do not feel satisfied because you
attain meditative absorption,
nor because you can dwell in
the bliss of solitude.

Only when you arrive
at the complete eradication
of all ignorance and conceit
should you be content.

XX

THE PATH

273.

The Eightfold Path
is the most honourable way,
the Four Noble Truths
the most honourable utterance,
freedom from craving
the most honourable state,
and the all-seeing Buddha
the most honourable being.

274.

This is the only Way;
there is no other
that leads to clear seeing.
Follow this Way
and Mara becomes disoriented.

275.

If you walk the path
you will arrive at the end of suffering.
Having beheld this myself,
I proclaim the Way
which removes all thorns.

276.

The Awakened Ones
can but point the way;
we must make the effort ourselves.
Those who reflect wisely
and enter the path are freed
from the fetters of Mara.

277.

“All conditioned things
are impermanent”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

278.

“All conditioned things
are inherently lacking”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

279.

“All realities are devoid
of an abiding self”;
when we see this with insight
we will tire of this life of suffering.
This is the Way to purification.

280.

If, while still young and strong,
you procrastinate
when you should act,
indulging in heedless fantasies,
the Way and its wisdom
will never become clear.

281.

Be careful in what you say,
restrained in what you think,
and impeccable in how you act.
Purifying these three ways of behaviour
will take you along the Way of the sages.

282.

To contemplate life leads to wisdom;
without contemplation wisdom wanes.
Recognize how wisdom
is cultivated and destroyed,
and walk the Way of increase.

283.

Clear away the forests of craving,
but do not attack and destroy the trees.
Clear the entire forest of craving
and you will see the Way to freedom.

284.

So long as sexual attraction
has not been cleared away,
if even the slightest trace remains,
the heart is held in dependence
like a suckling calf to a cow.

285.

Remove the bonds of affection
as one might pluck an autumn flower.
Walk the Way that leads to liberation,
explained by the Awakened One.

286.

It is a fool
who indulges in dreaming
about the most comfortable
place to live, saying,
“Here it will be warm,
there it will be cool” –
unaware of impending death.

287.

As a flood could sweep away
an entire village,
those who are caught up
in relationships and possessions
will be carried away by death.

288-289.

As you approach death
none of your fond attachments
will protect you.
See this, then with wise restraint
and unwavering effort,
hasten to clear your path to liberation.

XXI

VARIOUS

290.

It is wisdom
that enables letting go
of a lesser happiness
in pursuit of a happiness
which is greater.

291.

You fail
in the pursuit of happiness
if it is at the expense
of others' well-being.
The snare of ill-will
can still entangle you.

292.

To leave undone
that which should be done
and to do that
which should be avoided
leads to carelessness and conceit.
It will increase confusion.

293.

Confusion ceases
by maintaining
a meditation practice
focused in the body,
by avoiding that
which should not be done
and by mindfully doing
that which should be done.

294.

By removing craving and conceit,
eradicating wrong views,
and overcoming
the deluded attachments of the sense realm,
the noble being moves freely on.

295.

Having cleared
all the hindrances to the Path –
greed, rage, dullness and laziness,
worry, anxiety and doubt –
the noble being freely moves on.

296.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake,
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of the Awakened One.

297.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake,
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of reality.

298.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake,
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of the communion
of beings who have awakened.

299.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake,
dwelling both day and night
in contemplation of
the true nature of the body.

300.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
both day and night,
taking delight in compassion.

301.

Disciples of the Buddha
are fully awake
both day and night,
taking delight
in cultivating the heart.

302.

It is hard to live
the life of renunciation;
its challenges
are difficult to find pleasant.
Yet it is also hard to live
the householder's life;
there is pain
when associating with those
among whom one feels no companionship.
To wander uncommitted
is always going to be difficult;
why not renounce
the deluded pursuit of pain?

303.

A traveller possessed of virtue,
disciplined and committed to right conduct,
will be received with honour;
such a one can be recognized
and can travel with confidence.

304.

The good
are seen even from afar.
They shine like the distant
Himalayan peaks.
The untrained simply disappear
like arrows shot into the dark.

305.

With enthusiasm establish yourself
in solitary practice –
sit alone, sleep alone, walk alone
and delight as if secluded in the forest.

XXII

HELL

306.

Lying leads to sorrow.
Concealing wrong actions
leads to sorrow.
These two acts of deceit
take beings
to the same state of woe.

307.

Those who wear
the robes of a renunciate,
yet harbour evil
and are unrestrained,
go to a sorrowful state.

308.

It would be better for a renunciate
to swallow molten iron
than to live on offerings
deceitfully gained.

309.

Accumulated sadness,
troubled sleep,
blame and remorse
are an adulterer's lot.

310.

Brief is the delight
of the fearful adulterous couple,
for only painful consequences can follow.

311.

As *kusa* grass wrongly grasped
wounds the hand that holds it,
so the renunciate life
hurts those who train in it wrongly.

312.

Acts carelessly done,
practices corruptly performed,
the holy life lived perversely,
lead to little or no benefit at all.

313.

If anything is to be done,
do it well,
with energy and devotion;
the renunciate life led heedlessly
just stirs up the dust.

314.

Hurtful deeds
are better left undone
as they always lead to remorse.
Harmless deeds are better done
as no regret will follow.

315.

As a border city must be carefully protected,
so guard yourself both within and without;
build your defences wisely and in time.
If these things are not attended to
at the right moment,
great sadness will come.

316.

Distorted views
which create feelings of shame
about that which is not shameful,
or indifference
to that which is shameful,
can cause beings to descend into hell.

317.

Distorted views
which create feelings of fear
towards what is not actually threatening,
or indifference in the face
of that which is threatening,
can cause beings to descend into hell.

318.

Distorted views,
which give rise to seeing right as wrong
and wrong as right
cause beings to disintegrate.

319.

The clear seeing which knows
that which is flawed as flawed
and that which is pure as pure
can lead beings to transcend misery.

XXIII

THE ELEPHANT

320.

As an elephant in battle
withstands arrows,
I choose to endure
verbal attacks from others.

321.

Well-trained horses
can be trusted in crowds,
and are to be mounted by kings.
Individuals who have trained
themselves to withstand abuse
will be valuable everywhere.

322.

Impressive are horses or elephants
which have been well-trained;
but more impressive
are individuals
who have tamed themselves.

323.

It is not on a well-trained animal
that you can ride
to the land of liberation;
it is only on the vehicle
of a well-trained self
that you will arrive there.

324.

When captured and bound and in rut,
a wild elephant is restless, uncontrollable,
not eating its food.
It longs for its native forest home.

325.

It is a fool who overeats
and indulges in laziness,
then, feeling drowsy,
wallows in sleep like an oversized pig;
this forebodes perpetual suffering.

326.

My mind which was once
wild and unruly,
wandering as it wished,
I hold now in check
as the mahout with his hook
controls an elephant in rut.

327.

As an elephant
resolutely drags itself from a swamp,
uplift yourself with the inspiration
of cultivated attention.

328.

If you find a good companion,
of integrity and wisdom,
you will overcome all dangers
in joyous and caring company.

329.

But if you cannot find
a good companion
of integrity and wisdom,
then, like a king departing
a conquered land,
or an elephant wandering
alone in the forest,
walk alone.

330.

A harmless solitary life
lived at ease,
like that of the lone elephant in the forest,
is better than
the unnecessary company of fools.

331.

The timely company of friends is goodness.

Fewness of needs is goodness.

Having accumulated virtue
at life's end is goodness.

Having dispensed
with all suffering is goodness.

332.

Rightly serving one's parents is goodness.

Supporting renunciates is goodness.

Honouring awakened beings is goodness.

333.

Sustaining virtue into old age is goodness.

Sustaining sound faith is goodness.

The arising of insight is goodness.

Renouncing evil is goodness.

XXIV

CRAVING

334.

Uncontained craving
grows like a creeper in the forest.
Being lost in it,
one leaps around
like a tree-dwelling ape looking for fruit.

335.

Fostering habits
such as craving and clinging
is like fertilizing noxious weeds.

336.

As water falls from a lotus leaf,
so sorrow drops from those
who are free of toxic craving.

337.

Torrential rains can destroy crops.

Mara can destroy you.

Thus I implore you –

dig up the roots of all craving.

I give you my blessing

for this work.

338.

If the roots are not removed,

a tree grows again and again;

suffering returns to us

so long as craving remains.

339.

When the streams

of sensual pleasure run strong

they can generate

a torrent of longing.

340.

The streams of craving flow everywhere.
The wild creeper of craving
spreads and entangles.
Discerning this creeper with insight,
dig it out.

341.

Beings naturally experience pleasure;
but when pleasure is
contaminated with craving,
not releasing it creates frustration
and tedious suffering follows.

342.

Trapped in habits of craving,
people panic
like rabbits caught in a snare.
Their reactions reinforce the pain
of their entrapment.

343.

Trapped in habits of craving,
people panic
like rabbits caught in a snare.
If you wish to be free from entrapment,
craving itself must be removed.

344.

There are those who have begun
on the path to freedom,
yet out of desire return to being chained.

345-346.

Wisdom sees
that being held behind bars
or bound by chains
is less limiting
than infatuation with possessions
and obsession with relationships.
These bonds, though not so obvious,
are strong and hold us down.
To renounce attachment
to the world of the senses
is to be free from the prison of craving.

347.

Like a spider caught in its own web,
a being enwrapped in sensual craving
must be released from its own longings
before it can walk free.

348.

Let go of the past.
Let go of the future.
Let go of the present.
With a heart that is free,
cross over to that shore
which is beyond suffering.

349.

The bonds
of deluded habits and craving
are strengthened
by one who lets the mind heedlessly dwell
on objects of desire.

350.

But one who delights
in calming sensual thoughts,
who is alert
and cultivates awareness
of the loathsome
aspects of the body,
breaks through craving
and unbinds deluded habits.

351.

No more need is there to re-form
for those who have reached the goal;
they are free from fear and longing.
The thorns of existence have been removed.

352.

A master is one who has let go
of all craving and clinging to the world;
who has seen
the truth beyond forms,
yet is possessed of
a profound knowledge of words.
Such a great being can be said
to have finished the task.

353.

I do not declare another as my teacher,
since by myself have I arrived
at the wisdom that overcomes all,
realizes all, renounces all.
Wholly liberated am I from all craving.

354.

The gift of truth excels all gifts.
The flavour of reality
surpasses all flavours.
The delight of truth
transcends all delights.
Freedom from craving
is the end of all suffering.

355.

Riches mostly ruin the foolish,
but not those who seek the beyond.
Just as they dismiss
the well-being of others and cause harm,
fools also ruin themselves.

356.

Weeds cause damage in fields.

Lust causes damage to all beings.

Support those who are free from lust;
the gift will yield great benefit.

357.

Weeds cause damage in fields.

Hatred causes damage to all beings.

Support those who are free from hatred;
the gift will yield great benefit.

358.

Weeds cause damage in fields.

Confusion causes damage to all beings.

Support those who are free from confusion;
the gift will yield great benefit.

359.

Weeds cause damage in fields.

Envy causes damage to all beings.

Encourage those who are free from envy
and there will be great benefit.

XXV

THE RENUNCIATE

360.

It is good to restrain the eye.

It is good to restrain the ear.

It is good to restrain the nose.

It is good to restrain the tongue.

361.

It is good to be restrained in body.

It is good to be restrained in speech.

It is good to be restrained in mind.

It is good to be restrained in everything.

The renunciate who is restrained

in every way will realize

freedom from suffering.

362.

One who is rightly disciplined
in all actions,
who is composed,
contented and delights in
solitary contemplation –
such is a renunciate.

363.

It is pleasing to hear
the words of a renunciate
who is wise, not inflated,
whose mind is composed
and whose speech is contained
and clear in meaning.

364.

One who abides in Dhamma,
who delights in Dhamma,
who contemplates Dhamma,
who memorizes Dhamma
does not lose the Way.

365.

Bemoaning your own lot
or envying the gains of others
obstructs peace of mind.

366.

But being contented
even with modest gains,
pure in livelihood and energetic,
you will be held in high esteem.

367.

True renunciates
regard the entire body-mind
without any thought of 'I' or 'mine'
and are devoid of longing
for what they do not have.

368.

A renunciate who
abides in loving-kindness,
with a heart full of devotion
for the Buddha's teaching,
will find peace, stillness and bliss.

369.

Bale out the water from your boat;
cut loose from the defiling passions
of lust and hatred;
unencumbered, sail on
towards liberation.

370.

One who has
cut off coarse attachments,
cut off subtle attachments,
who cultivates the spiritual faculties,
is the one who finds freedom
from delusion.

371.

Be careful!
Do not neglect meditation,
nor allow the mind
to dwell on sensuality
lest you might heedlessly swallow
a red-hot ball of iron
and find yourself crying out,
“Why am I suffering?”

372.

Concentration does not arise
without understanding,
nor understanding
without concentration.
One who knows both
approaches liberation.

373.

A happiness transcending ordinary bliss
is experienced by those renunciates
who have entered into seclusion
with tranquil heart
and clear understanding of the Way.

374.

When those who are wise
dwell in contemplation
on the transient nature
of the body-mind
and of all conditioned existence,
they experience joy and delight,
seeing through
to the inherently secure.

375-376.

This, then, is the beginning
for a renunciate who takes up the training:
wisely control your faculties,
commit yourself to the instruction,
seek contentment;
cultivate the company of those
who support your aspiration
for energetic practice of the teachings.
The beauty of pure conduct
conditions whole-hearted well-being,
giving rise to complete
freedom from remorse.

377.

As old flowers fall
from a jasmine plant,
let lust and hatred
fall away.

378.

I call them the peaceful ones,
who are calm in body,
in speech and in mind,
and who are thoroughly purged
of all worldly obsessions.

379.

Scrutinize yourself.
Examine yourself.
With right attention
to self-assessment
you will live at ease.

380.

We are our own protection;
we are indeed our own secure abiding;
how could it be otherwise?
So with due care
we attend to ourselves.

381.

A monk, a nun, who cultivates
a joyous disposition
and is filled with
confidence in the Way
will find peace, stillness and bliss.

382.

While still a youth, a renunciate
fully devoted to the Way
lights up the world
like the moon emerging from clouds.

XXVI

GREAT BEING

383.

Diligently cut off
the stream of craving
and abandon sensual longings;
knowing the inherent limitations
of all that is formed,
realize the uncreated.

384.

All chains of confinement fall away
from those who see clearly
beyond the two.

385.

I say a being is great
who stands not on this shore,
nor the other shore,
nor on any shore at all.
Such a being is free from all ties.

386.

I say a being is great
who dwells secluded and at ease,
knowing the heart
free from all pollution,
having completed the task,
purified of all compulsive tendencies
and awake.

387.

The sun shines by day,
the moon shines by night.
But both all day and all night
the Buddha shines
in glorious splendour.

388.

Having transformed evil,
one is called a great being.
Living peacefully,
one is called a contemplative.
Having given up impurity,
one is called a renunciate.

389.

Non-retaliation

is the characteristic of great beings.

They do not give rise to anger.

Should they be attacked,

it is not in their nature to strike back.

390.

Suffering subsides to the degree

that you are free from the intention

to cause harm.

There is no real greatness

if there is no restraint of anger.

391.

One who refrains from causing harm

by way of body, speech or mind,

can be called a worthy being.

392.

Devotion and respect

should be offered to those

who have shown us the Way.

393.

One should not be considered
worthy of respect
because of birth or background,
or any outer sign;
it is purity
and the realization of truth
that determine one's worth.

394.

Your outer adornments
and pseudo-spiritual preoccupations
are irrelevant
if inwardly you remain in disarray.

395.

To be unconcerned
about outer appearance
but committed to
intense relentless practice
makes for greatness.

396.

No one is noble
merely because of what they inherit.
Nobility comes from cleansing oneself
of all pollutions
and attachments.

397.

Whoever has cut all that tethers
and found fearlessness,
who is beyond attachments
and defilements,
I recognize as a great being.

398.

Whoever severs the ties of hatred,
unbinds the ropes of craving,
undoes the locks of wrong view,
opens the doors of ignorance
and sees truth,
I recognize as a great being.

399.

Strength of patience
is the might of noble beings;
they can be shackled,
endure verbal abuse and beatings,
without resorting to anger.

400.

Those who are free from anger,
simply disciplined, virtuous,
well-trained
and have gone beyond rebirth,
these I call great beings.

401.

As water slides from a lotus leaf,
so sensual pleasures
do not cling
to a great being.

402.

Those who know the freedom
of having laid aside
the burden of attachment
to the body-mind
I call great beings.

403.

Those possessed of deep wisdom,
who see what accords with the Way
and what does not,
those who have attained
to the peak of possibility,
I call great beings.

404.

Those who are free from attachment
to the company of either householders
or fellow renunciates,
and so wander free from desires
or concern for security of any kind,
are great beings.

405.

Those who have renounced
the use of force
in relationship to other beings,
whether weak or strong,
who neither kill
nor cause to be killed,
can be called great beings.

406.

Those who remain
friendly amid the hostile,
at peace among the aggressive,
and who do not attach themselves
to that upon which others depend
are great beings.

407.

For a great being,
lust and ill-will,
arrogance and conceit
drop away,
even as a tiny seed would drop
from the tip of a needle.

408.

Those who speak truth
and give gentle encouragement,
contending with no-one,
these do I call great beings.

409.

The actions of a great being are pure.
Great beings never
knowingly take for themselves
that which belongs to another.

410.

The heart of a great being is free.
Great beings no longer pine
for things of this world
or any other world.

411.

The heart of a great being is free.
With accurate understanding
which is beyond doubt,
great beings have set their feet firmly
in the land of liberation.

412.

Whoever has transcended
all ties of good and bad,
is purified
and free from sorrow,
should be called a great being.

413.

Those beings who
are released from all longing
and, like the moon in a cloudless sky,
are pure, clear and serene,
I call great.

414.

There are beings
who travel the difficult path
across the dangerous swamp
of defiling passions,
traverse the ocean of delusion,
through the darkness of ignorance,
and go beyond.

They are sustained
by wise contemplation,
secure in freedom from doubt,
liberated;
such beings are great indeed.

415.

It is a great being
who, having restrained desires
for sensual pleasure,
lives the homeless life
and realizes freedom
from both sensual desire
and perpetual becoming.

416.

It is a great being
who, having restrained all craving,
lives the homeless life
and realizes freedom
from both craving
and perpetual becoming.

417.

It is a great being
who can see through all obvious delights
as well as subtle pleasures,
to be free from attachment.

418.

Those who cease
setting up like against dislike,
who are cooled,
who are not swayed
by worldly conditions –
these I call great beings.

419.

I say anyone who understands fully
the passing away and arising of beings,
who remains aware,
non-attached, awake,
who is conscious of
right action at all times,
is a great being.

420.

The condition after death
of great beings is indiscernible;
no trace of passion remains.
They are pure.

421.

Anyone who lives freed
from habits of clinging
to past, present or future,
attaching to nothing,
is a great being.

422.

A great being is fearless like a bull,
noble, strong, wise, diligent,
sees through delusions,
is clear, attentive and awake.

423.

To understand all dimensions
of past existence,
to see accurately into all realms,
to reach the end of rebirths,
to know with insight
that which must be known,
to free the heart from ignorance –
this is truly being made great.

A NOTE ON THE TEXT

A Dhammapada for Contemplation is a contemporary rendering of an ancient text; but what of the original Dhammapada? The Buddha lived and taught in India two and a half millennia ago. He wrote nothing, and his teachings were memorised and passed on orally by his earliest followers. An enormous body of material was preserved in this way, although different versions arose in the various Buddhist schools, which flourished in India after the Buddha's *parinibbana*. The collection of verses known as the Dhammapada was composed, probably sometime in the 3rd century BCE, in a language now known as Pali, by members of the 'Theravada', or 'School of the Elders'. We know of three other versions, written down later in other Indian languages, but they survive only partially, or as fragments rescued from archaeological finds, or as translations in Tibetan and Chinese. Those other versions mostly contain the same material, but there are many variations.

What we may think of as 'the' Dhammapada, then, is one version—the shortest and probably the earliest one—of a work with a lively history.

It was taken to Sri Lanka later in the 3rd century BCE by the Theravadins, in its original Indian language, and written down along with the rest of the Pali canon in the 1st century BCE; it comes down to us today as preserved and commented upon by the Theravada tradition. It was the first Buddhist text to be printed in Europe, in 1855, along with a Latin translation, and has been translated into English at least 30 times. It is without doubt the best-known early Buddhist scripture, and to this day Sri Lankan monks will memorise it before their ordinations.

The reason for this popularity is not hard to discover. The Dhammapada is essentially a compilation of sayings, pithy, poetic and direct, that speak to all, not just to monk or nun or scholar. About half of them are found in other parts of the Pali canon, and although they are roughly grouped into chapters sharing a particular theme, most seem to have been chosen for their individual qualities, as sayings and sequences of sayings rich in wisdom to be savoured. Many of the sayings are concerned with ethics, with what is good and foolish and in what each results. Some of these are not, in fact, especially Buddhist, but are found also in other Indian religious texts, such

as the great epic, the *Mahabharata*. That is, they belong to a wider tradition of wisdom, of which we have our own versions in the west.

Beyond this basic human wisdom, however, the sayings of the Dhammapada concern the Way to “freedom from all limitation: liberation, true security” (verse 23), which is the particular teaching of the Buddha. They do not present this teaching in the form of doctrine, but instead offer a myriad hints, approaches and directions of investigation, from descriptions of the “great beings” (chapter 23) who have reached the other shore of existence, to compelling comparisons of the paths of “appreciative awareness” and “heedlessness” (verse 21). The appeal of the Dhammapada is greatly enhanced, however, by the similes, metaphors and poetic images lavishly employed to illustrate the meaning of the sayings; for instance, the influence of the wise is described as a light “like that of the moon emerging from clouds” (verse 172). For good measure, the Dhammapada also includes the Buddha’s ‘Song of Victory’, the poem he uttered, it is said, just after he had gained enlightenment (verses 153-4).

The sayings and poems of the Dhammapada were written in verse consisting of four- and six-

line stanzas, with lines of eight or eleven syllables. Such forms belong to ancient Indian literary tradition, and lend to the text a distinctive rhythm. This rhythmic constraint necessitated the finding of words of the right number of syllables to fit the lines; the effect of which is a multiplicity and vigour in the language not found in the prose scriptures. There is therefore a formality in the Pali verse, which, like most poetry, is untranslatable. If we add to this untranslatability the demands of reproducing in English the epigrammatic and suggestive quality of the sayings, it is clear that a formally definitive translation of the Dhammapada is going to be difficult. For this reason, it is necessary to read the text in different translations, comparing the different emphases and resonances found in each, to come to a clear appreciation of the truth offered in each verse.

We could view the sayings of the Dhammapada as photographic negatives, as very old artefacts that miraculously contain within them the profound utterances of the Buddha. Such negatives can be used to make prints, in a modern language like English, which reproduce those ancient sayings. The attempts of scholarly translators to provide strictly objective, formally

accurate prints from those old negatives is worthy and necessary, but the objective method does not necessarily transmit all that it was hoped would be captured by the original photographs, those few words of verse. Ajahn Munindo, in his rendering of the text, offers a more personal printing from each negative; one that is designed to transmit, not the objective meaning of each saying, but something relevant and useful for a person in search of wisdom today.

His method was this: using several respected translations, he ascertained what to his mind was the spirit or essence of each saying. This he did with the aid of the traditional story associated with each verse, which gives an account of the occasion and significance of its utterance. These stories were without doubt composed later than the text itself, and have in general a legendary character like that of the *Jataka* tales, but nevertheless create an ambience, a mythic context, which gives access to an important dimension of what each saying means. Having thus ascertained the spirit of each verse, he sought an expression in contemporary language, which might transmit effectively its spiritual impulse.

Being an ancient Indian text, the Dhammapada abounds in references to monsoons, elephants, jungles, villages, brahmins and so on. While this is wonderfully evocative of life in the Buddha's time, it distracts our attention from the point of the sayings; and therefore Ajahn Munindo's version is, on the whole, rendered into a contemporary idiom relevant to the modern worldview. The *birana* grass that grows fast after monsoon rains, for instance, is reinterpreted as weeds fed with fertiliser (verse 335), and the Indian ascetic's matted hair, his antelope skin and his lifestyle are rendered as "outer adornments and pseudo-spiritual preoccupations" (verse 394). Most references to rebirth, and to the hell and heaven realms of Buddhist cosmology, have been replaced by psychological renderings of more relevance today. The references to the wandering mendicant lifestyle of the Buddhist monastic sangha, dependent as it was and is on a village-based agrarian culture, have been modified.

There are other special features of Ajahn Munindo's version. He has not reproduced the gendered language of the original, so that his rendering hopes to address all readers. He has ignored much of the word play that is crucial to

the original poetry, but at the benefit of much greater fluidity and naturalness. Although no attempt has been made to reproduce the formal qualities of the original, some of the beauty of the old text's poetry emerges through the freedom enabled by an interpretive rendering (see, for instance, verse 377).

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