

## “Dhammapada”: oral tradition becomes part of the Buddhist canon.

*The “Way of Virtue” or “Dhammapada” was a compilation of previously unwritten material which had been handed down from the time of the Buddha and which was asserted to have been transcribed from the words of the Buddha himself. After some deliberation, the “Dhammapada” was pronounced authentic by a religious council convened by Emperor Asoka Maurya (c. 240 BC.E).*

Source: S.E. Frost, Jr., ed., *The Sacred Writing of the World's Great Religions* (N.Y.:McGraw-Hill, 1972), pp. 145-151.

1. Mind it is which gives to things their quality, their foundation, and their being: whoso speaks or acts with impure mind, him sorrow dogs, as the wheel follows the steps of the draught-ox.

2. Mind it is which gives to things their quality, their foundation, and their being: whoso speaks or acts with purified mind, him happiness accompanies as his faithful shadow.

3. “He has abused me, beaten me, worsted me, robbed me”; those who dwell upon such thoughts never lose their hate.

4. “He has abused me, beaten me, worsted me, robbed me”; those who dwell not upon such thoughts are freed of hate.

5. Never does hatred cease by hating; by not hating does it cease: this is the ancient law.

10. He who has doffed his impurities, calm and clothed upon with temperance and truth, he wears the pure robe worthily.

11. Those who mistake the shadow for the substance, and the substance for the shadow, never attain the reality, following wandering fires [lit. followers of a false pursuit].

12. But if a man knows the substance and the shadow as they are, he attains the reality, following the true trail.

18. Here and hereafter the good man rejoices; rejoices as he thinks “I have done well”: yea rather rejoices when he goes to a heaven.

19. If a man is a great preacher of the sacred text, but slothful and no doer of it, he is a hireling shepherd, who has no part in the flock.

20. If a man preaches but a little of the text and practises the teaching, putting away lust and hatred and infatuation; if he is truly wise and detached and seeks nothing here or hereafter, his lot is with the holy ones.

21. Zeal is the way to Nirvana. Sloth is the day of death. The zealous die not: the slothful are as it were dead.

22. The wise who know the power of zeal delight in it, rejoicing in the lot of the noble.

23. These wise ones by meditation and reflection, by constant effort reach Nirvana, highest freedom.

24. Great grows the glory of him who is zealous in meditation, whose actions are pure and deliberate, whose life is calm and righteous and full of vigour.

25. By strenuous effort, by self-control, by tem-

perance, let the wise man make for himself an island which the flood cannot overwhelm.

26. Fools in their folly give themselves to sloth: the wise man guards his vigour as his greatest possession.

27. Give not yourselves over to sloth, and to dalliance with delights: he who meditates with earnestness attains great joy.

28. When the wise one puts off sloth for zeal, ascending the high tower of wisdom he gazes sorrowless upon the sorrowing crowd below! Wise himself, he looks upon the fools as one upon a mountain-peak gazing upon the dwellers in the valley.

29. Zealous amidst the slothful, vigilant among the sleepers, go the prudent, as a racehorse outstrips a hack.

35. Good it is to tame the mind, so difficult to control, fickle, and capricious. Blessed is the tamed mind.

36. Let the wise man guard his mind, incomprehensible, subtle and capricious though it is. Blessed is the guarded mind.

42. Badly does an enemy treat his enemy, a foe-man his foe: worse is the havoc wrought by a misdirected mind.

43. Not mother and father, not kith and kin can so benefit a man as a mind attentive to the right.

50. Be not concerned with other men's evil words or deeds or neglect of good: look rather to thine own sins and negligence [lit. “sins of commission and omission”: things done and undone].

51. As some bright flower—fair to look at, but lacking fragrance—so are fair words which bear no fruit in action.

52. As some bright flower, fragrant as it is fair, so are fair words whose fruit is seen in action.

53. As if from a pile of flowers one were to weave many a garland, so let mortals string together much merit.

54. No scent of flower is borne against the wind, though it were sandal, or incense or jasmine: but the fragrance of the holy is borne against the wind: the righteous pervade all space (with their fragrance).

55. More excellent than the scent of sandal and incense, of lily and jasmine, is the fragrance of good deeds.

56. A slight thing is this scent of incense and of

sandal-wood, but the scent of the holy pervades the highest heaven.

61. If on a journey thou canst not find thy peer or one better than thyself, make the journey stoutly alone: there is no company with a fool.

62. "I have sons and wealth," thinks the fool with anxious care; he is not even master of himself, much less of sons and wealth.

63. The fool who knows his folly is so far wise: but the fool who reckons himself wise is called a fool indeed.

64. Though for a lifetime the fool keeps company with the wise, yet does he not learn righteousness, as spoon gets no taste of soup.

65. If but for a moment the thoughtful keep company with the wise, straightway he learns righteousness, as tongue tastes soup.

66. Fools and dolts go their way, their own worst enemies: working evil which bears bitter fruit.

67. That is no good deed which brings remorse, whose reward one receives with tears and lamentation.

68. But that is the good deed which brings no remorse, whose reward the doer takes with joy and gladness.

69. Honey-sweet to the fool is his sin—until it ripens: then he comes to grief.

76. Look upon him who shows you your faults as a revealer of treasure: seek his company who checks and chides you, the sage who is wise in reproof: it fares well and not ill with him who seeks such company.

77. Let a man admonish, and advise, and keep others from strife! So will he be dear to the righteous, and hated by the unrighteous.

103. If one were to conquer a thousand thousand in the battle—he who conquers self is the greatest warrior.

104, 105. Self-conquest is better than other victories: neither god nor demi-god, neither Mara nor Brahma, can undo the victory of such a one, who is self-controlled and always calm.

106. If month by month throughout a hundred years one were to offer sacrifices costing thousands, and if for a moment another were to reverence the self-controlled—this is the better worship.

107. If one for a hundred years tended the sacred fire in the glade, and another for a moment revered the self-controlled, this is the better worship.

108. Whatsoever sacrifice or offering a man makes for a full year in hope of benefits, all is not worth a quarter of that better offering—reverence to the upright.

109. In him who is trained in constant courtesy and reverence to the old, four qualities increase: length of days, beauty, gladness, and strength.

117. If one offends, let him not repeat his offence; let him not set his heart upon it. Sad is the piling up of

sin.

118. If one does well, let him repeat his well-doing: let him set his heart upon it. Glad is the storing up of good.

119. The bad man sees good days until his wrong-doing ripens; then he beholds evil days.

120. Even a good man may see evil days till his well-doing comes to fruition; then he beholds good days.

121. Think not lightly of evil "It will not come nigh me." Drop by drop the pitcher is filled: slowly but surely the fool is saturated with evil.

122. Think not lightly of good "It will not come nigh me." Drop by drop the pitcher is filled: Slowly but surely the good are filled with merit.

129. All fear the rod, all quake at death. Judge then by thyself, and forbear from slaughter, or from causing to slay.

130. To all is life dear. Judge then by thyself, and forbear to slay or to cause slaughter.

131. Whoso himself desires joy, yet hurts them who love joy, shall not obtain it hereafter.

132. Whoso himself desires joy and hurts not them who love it, shall hereafter attain to joy.

133. Speak not harshly to any one: else will men turn upon *you*. Sad are the words of strife: retribution will follow them.

142. If even a fop fosters the serene mind, calm and controlled, pious and pure, and does no hurt to any living thing, he is the Brahmin, he is the Samana, he is the Bhikkhu.

143. Is there in all the world a man so modest that he provokes no blame, as a noble steed never deserves the whip? As a noble steed stung by the whip, be ye spirited and swift.

144. By faith, by righteousness, manliness, by meditation, by just judgment, by theory and practice, by mindfulness, leave aside sorrow—no slight burden.

145. Engineers control the water fletchers fashion their shafts, carpenters shape the wood: it is themselves that the pious fashion and control.

157. If a man love himself, let him diligently watch himself: the wise will keep vigil for one of the three watches of the night.

158. Keep first thyself aright: then mayest thou advise others. So is the wise man unblameable.

159. If one so shapes his own life as he directs others, himself controlled, he will duly control others: self, they say, is hard to tame.

160. A man is his own helper: who else is there to help? By self-control man is a rare help to himself.

161. The ill that is begun and has its growth and its being in self, bruises the foolish one, as the diamond pierces its own matrix.

162. As the creeper overpowers the tree, so he whose sin is great, works for himself the havoc his enemy would wish for him.

163. Ill is easy to do; it is easy to do harm: hard indeed it is to do helpful and good deeds.

164. Whoso fondly repudiates the teaching of the noble and virtuous Arahats, following false doctrine, is like the bamboo which bears fruit to its own destruction.

165. Thou art brought low by the evil thou hast done thyself: by the evil thou hast left undone art thou purified. Purity and impurity are things of man's inmost self; no man can purify another.

166. Even for great benefit to another let no man imperil his own benefit. When he has realised what is for his own good, let him pursue that earnestly.

173. He who covers his idle deeds with goodness lights up the world as the moon freed of clouds.

174. Blinded are the men of this world; few there are who have eyes see: few are the birds which escape the fowler's net; few are they who go to heaven.

175. Through the sky fly the swans: Rishis too pass through the air. The wise leave the world altogether, deserting Mara and his hosts.

176. There is no wrong he would not do who breaks one precept, speaking lies and mocking at the life to come.

177. Misers go not to the realm of gods: therefore he is a fool who does not delight in liberality. The wise delighting in liberality come thereby with gladness to the other world.

178. Good is kingship of the earth; good is birth in heaven; good is universal empire; better still is the fruit of conversion.

183. "Eschew all evil: cherish good: cleanse your inmost thoughts"—this is the teaching of Buddhas.

184. "Patience and fortitude is the supreme asceticism: Nirvana is above all," say the Buddhas. He is no recluse who harms others: nor is he who causes grief an ascetic (samana).

194. A blessing is the arising of Buddhas, a blessing is the true preaching. Blessed is the unity of the Sangha, blessed is the devotion of those who dwell in unity.

195, 196. Immeasurable is the merit of him who does reverence to those to whom reverence is due, Buddha and his disciples, men who have left behind them the trammels of evil, and crossed beyond the stream of sorrow and wailing, calmed and free of all fear.

197. O Joy! We live in bliss: amongst men of hate, hating none. Let us indeed dwell among them without hatred.

198. O Joy! In bliss we dwell; healthy amidst the ailing. Let us indeed dwell amongst them in perfect health.

199. Yea in very bliss we dwell; free from care amidst the careworn. Let us indeed dwell amongst them without care.

200. In bliss we dwell possessing nothing: let us

dwell feeding upon joy like the shining ones in their splendour.

201. The victor breeds enmity; the conquered sleeps in sorrow. Regardless of either victory or defeat the calm man dwells in peace.

202. There is no fire like lust; no luck so bad as hate. There is no sorrow like existence: no bliss greater than Nirvana (rest).

203. Hunger is the greatest ill: existence is the greatest sorrow. Sure knowledge of this is Nirvana, highest bliss.

204. Health is the greatest boon; content is the greatest wealth; a loyal friend is the truest kinsman; Nirvana is the Supreme Bliss.

205. Having tasted the joy of solitude and of serenity, a man is freed from sorrow and from sin, and tastes the nectar of piety.

206. Good is the vision of the Noble; good is their company. He may be always happy who escapes the sight of fools.

207. He who consorts with fools knows lasting grief. Grievous is the company of fools, as that of enemies; glad is the company of the wise, as that of kinsfolk.

208. Therefore do thou consort with the wise, the sage, the learned, the noble ones who shun not the yoke of duty: follow in the wake of such a one, the wise and prudent, as the moon follows the path of the stars.

222. Whoso controls his rising anger as a running chariot, him I call the charioteer: the others only hold the reins.

223. By calmness let a man overcome wrath; let him overcome evil by good; the miser let him subdue by liberality, and the liar by truth.

224. Speak the truth, be not angry, give of thy poverty to the suppliant: by these three virtues a man attains to the company of the gods.

231. Guard against evil deeds: control the body. Eschew evil deeds and do good.

232. Guard against evil words; control the tongue. Eschew evil words and speak good ones.

233. Guard against evil thoughts; control the mind. Eschew evil thoughts and think good ones.

234. The wise, controlled in act, in word, in thought, are well controlled indeed.

235. Thou art withered as a sere leaf: Death's messengers await thee. Thou standest at the gate of death and hast made no provision for the journey.

236. Make to thyself a refuge; come, strive, and be prudent: when thy impurities are purged, thou shalt come into the heavenly abode of the Noble.

237. Thy life is ended; thou art come into the Presence of Death: there is no resting-place by the way and thou hast no provision for the journey.

238. Make for thyself a refuge; come, strive and play the sage! Burn off thy taints, and thou shalt know birth and old age no more.

239. As a smith purifies silver in the fire, so bit by bit continually the sage burns away his impurities.

245. Hard it is for the modest, the lover of purity, the disinterested and simple and clean, the man of insight.

246, 247. The murderer, the liar, the thief, the adulterer, and the drunkard—these even in this world uproot themselves.

256, 257. Hasty judgment shows no man just. He is called just who discriminates between right and wrong, who judges others not hastily, but with righteous and calm judgment, a wise guardian of the law.

258. Neither is a man wise by much speaking: he is called wise who is forgiving, kindly, and fearless.

268, 269. Not by silence (mona) is a man a sage (muni) if he be ignorant and foolish: he who holds as it were the balance, taking the good and rejecting the bad, he is the sage: he who is sage for both worlds, he is the true sage.

270. A man is no warrior who worries living things: by not worrying is a man called warrior.

303. The faithful, upright man is endowed with (the true) fame and wealth, and is honoured wherever he goes.

304. Far off are seen the Holy Ones, like the Himalayas: the unholy pass unseen as arrows shot in the darkness.

305. Alone when eating, alone when sleeping, alone when walking, let a man strongly control himself and take his pleasure in the forest glade.

313. If a duty is to be done, do it with thy might: a careless recluse scatters contagion broadcast.

314. Better leave undone a bad deed; one day the doer will lament: good it is to do the good deed which brings no remorse.

315. As a fortress guarded within and without, so guard thyself. Leave no loophole for attack! They who fail at their post mourn here, and hereafter go to hell.

316. Some are ashamed at what is not shameful, and blush not at deeds of shame: these perverse ones go to hell.

317. They who see fear where there is no fear, and tremble not at fearful things: these perverse ones go to hell.

318. They who think evil where there is no evil, and make light of grievous sin: these perverse ones go to hell.

319. But whoso calls sin sin, and innocence innocence: these right-minded ones go to happiness.

327. Be ye zealous: guard your thoughts. As an elephant sunk in the mud extricate yourselves from the clutches of evil.

328. If you can find a dutiful friend to go with you, a righteous and prudent man not caring for hardships, go with him deliberately.

329. If you cannot find such a one, travel alone as a king leaving a conquered realm, or as the elephant in

the jungle.

330. It is better to be alone; there is no companionship with a fool: travel alone and sin not, forgetting care as the elephant in the jungle.

331. Good are companions in time of need; contentment with thy lot is good; at the hour of death, merit is a good friend, and good is the leaving of all sorrow.

332. Good is reverence for mother and father: good, too, reverence for recluses and sages.

333. Good is lifelong righteousness; and rooted faith is good: good is the getting of wisdom, and good the avoiding of sin.

334. As the "maluwa" creeper, so spreads the desire of the sluggard. From birth to birth he leaps like a monkey seeking fruit.

335. Whoso is subdued by this sordid clinging desire, his sorrows wax more and more, like "birana" grass after rain.

336. But *his* sorrows drop off like water from the lotus leaf, who subdues this sordid, powerful desire.

372. There is no meditation apart from wisdom; there is no wisdom apart from meditation. Those in whom wisdom and meditation meet are not far from Nirvana.

373. Divine pleasure is his who enters into solitude, the Bhikkhu who is calmed and sees the law with the seeing eye:

374. Whenever he ponders the beginning and the end of the elements of being, he finds joy and bliss; nectar it is to those who know.

375. This is the beginning in my teaching for a wise Bhikkhu; self-mastery, contentment, and control by the precepts: to cultivate those who are noble, righteous, and zealous friends;

376. To be hospitable and courteous, this is to be glad and to make an end of sorrow.

377. As jasmine sheds its withered blossoms so, O Bhikkhus, do you put away lust and hatred.

378. He who is controlled in act, in speech, in thought, and altogether calmed, having purged away worldliness, that Bhikkhu is called calm.

379. Come, rouse thyself! Examine thine own heart. The Bhikkhu who is thus self-guarded and mindful will live in happiness.

380. Each man is his own helper, each his own host; therefore curb thyself as the merchant curbs a spirited horse.

381. The glad Bhikkhu who puts his trust in Buddha's Preaching goes to Nirvana, calm and blissful end of rebirth.

382. Let the young Bhikkhu apply himself to Buddha's Preaching: so will he light up the world as the moon escaped from the clouds.

390. It is no slight benefit to a Brahmin when he learns to hold his impulses in check; from whatever motive evil temper is controlled, by that control grief is truly soothed.

391. By whomsoever no evil is done in deed, or word, or thought, him I call a Brahmin who is guarded in these three.

392. As the Brahmin honours the burnt-sacrifice, so do thou honour him, from whomsoever is learnt the law of the true Buddha.

393. Not by matted locks, nor by lineage nor by caste is one a Brahmin; he is the Brahmin in whom are truth and righteousness and purity.

394. What boots your tangled hair, O fool, what avails your garment of skins? You have adorned the outer parts, within you are full of uncleanness.

395. A man clothed in cast-off rags, lean, with knotted veins, meditating alone in the forest, him I call a Brahmin.

396. Not him do I call Brahmin who is merely born of a Brahmin mother; men may give him salutation as a Brahmin, though he be not detached from the world: but him I call a Brahmin who has attachment to nothing.

397. Him I call a Brahmin who has cut the bonds, who does not thirst for pleasures, who has left behind the hindrances.

398. Whoso has cut the cable, and the rope and the chain with all its links, and has pushed aside the bolt, this wise one I call a Brahmin.

399. Whoever bears patiently abuse and injury

and imprisonment, whose bodyguard is fortitude, he is the Brahmin.

400. He is the Brahmin who does not give way to anger, who is careful of religious duties, who is upright, pure, and controlled, who has reached his last birth.

401. He who clings not to pleasures as water clings not to the lotus leaf; nor mustard-seed to the needle-point, him I call Brahmin.

402. He is the Brahmin who in this very world knows the end of sorrow, who has laid the burden aside and is free.

403. Whoso is wise with deep wisdom, seeing the right way and the wrong, and has reached the goal, him I call Brahmin.

404. He is the Brahmin who is not entangled either with householders or with recluses, who has no home and few wants.

405. He who lays down the rod, who neither kills, nor causes the death of creatures, moving or fixed, he is the Brahmin.

406. Not opposing those who oppose, calm amidst the fighters, not grasping amidst men who grasp, he is the Brahmin.

407. He is the Brahmin from whom anger, and hatred, and pride, and slander have dropped away, as the mustard-seed from the needle-point.

### Questions

- (1) Compare/contrast the "Dhammapada" to "Apastamba" (Document 9-2); what similarities/differences can you discern?
- (2) To what extent and in what manner is stress placed upon the "passive life"?
- (3) Apart from passivity and resignation, what other notable themes recur in "Dhammapada"?

## 9-6

### Kamo no Chomei: a Japanese monk looks back on his life.

*In the year 1212, at the age of 59, Kamo no Chomei (1153-1216) wrote "An account of my hut" describing his early years and how he made a commitment to devote his remaining years to the Buddhist faith. His eyewitness accounts of the major disasters of his day, and of the inner tranquillity he was able to achieve by escaping from his former life, offer a particularly stark contrast between the dynamic historical world of Heiani-era Japan and the otherworldliness of the Japanese variant of Buddhism.*

Source: Donald Keene, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (N.Y.: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 197-212.

The flow of the river is ceaseless and its water is never the same. The bubbles that float in the pools, now vanishing, now forming, are not of long duration: so in the world are man and his dwellings. It might be imagined that the houses, great and small, which vie roof against proud roof in the capital remain unchanged from one generation to the next, but when we examine whether

this is true, how few are the houses that were there of old. Some were burnt last year and only since rebuilt; great houses have crumbled into hovels and those who dwell in them have fallen no less. The city is the same, the people are as numerous as ever, but of those I used to know, a bare one or two in twenty remain. They die in the morning, they are born in the evening, like foam on the water.