

(Translated from Pali by F.Max Müller,Oxford:ClarendonPress,1881)
Selections from THE DHAMMAPADA (original sayings of the Buddha)

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage.
2. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him.
7. He who lives looking for pleasures only, his senses uncontrolled, immoderate in his food, idle, and weak, Mara (the demon tempter) will certainly overthrow him, as the wind throws down a weak tree.
8. He who lives without looking for pleasures, his senses well controlled, moderate in his food, faithful and strong, him Mara will certainly not overthrow, any more than the wind throws down a rocky mountain.
15. The evil-doer mourns in this world, and he mourns in the next; he mourns in both. He mourns and suffers when he sees the evil of his own work.
16. The virtuous man delights in this world, and he delights in the next; he delights in both. He delights and rejoices, when he sees the purity of his own work.
21. Earnestness is the path of Nirvana, thoughtlessness the path of death. those who are in earnest do not die, those who are thoughtless are as if dead already.
33. As an archer makes his arrow straight, so a wise man makes straight his trembling and unsteady thought, which is difficult to guard and difficult to hold back.
34. As a fish taken from his watery home and thrown on the dry ground, our thought trembles all over in order to escape the dominion of Mara.
35. It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it wishes; a tamed mind brings happiness.
36. Let the wise man guard his thoughts, for they are difficult to perceive, very artful, and they rush wherever they wish: thoughts well guarded bring happiness.
39. If a man's thoughts are not dissipated,¹ if his mind is not perplexed, if he has ceased to think of good or evil, then there is no fear for him while he is watchful.
41. Before long, alas! this body will lie on the earth, despised, without understanding, like a useless log.
46. He who knows that this body is like froth, and has learned that the body is as unsubstantial as a mirage, will break the flower-pointed arrow of Mara,² and never see the king of death.
47. Death carries off a man who is gathering flowers and whose mind is distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village.

48. Death subdues a man who is gathering flowers, and whose mind is distracted, before he is satisfied with his pleasures.

50. Not in the perversities of others, nor their sins, nor their omissions, but his own misdeeds should a wise man take notice of.

58, 59. As on a heap of rubbish cast upon the highway the lily will grow full of sweet perfume and delight, thus the disciple of the truly enlightened Buddha shines forth by his knowledge among those who are like rubbish, among the people that walk in darkness.

60. Long is the night to him who is awake; long is a mile to him who is tired; long is life [3](#) to the foolish who do not know the law.

61. If a traveler does not meet with one who is his better, or his equal, let him firmly keep to his solitary journey; there is no companionship with a fool.

62. "These sons belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me," with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself; how much less his sons and wealth?

64. If a fool be associated with a wise man (*pandita*) even all his life, he will perceive the truth as little as a spoon perceives the taste of soup.

65. If an intelligent man be associated for one minute only with a wise man, he will soon perceive the truth, as the tongue perceives the taste of soup.

66. Fools of little understanding have themselves for their greatest enemies, for they do evil deeds which must bear bitter fruits.

69. As long as the evil deed done does not bear fruit, the fool thinks it is like honey; but when it ripens, then the fool suffers grief.

75. One is the road that leads to wealth, another the road that leads to Nirvana; if the Bhikshu, [4](#) the disciple of Buddha, has learned this, he will not yearn for honor, he will strive after separation [5](#) from the world.

76. If you see an intelligent man who tells you where true treasures are to be found, who shows what is to be avoided, and administers reproofs, follow that wise man; it will be better, not worse, for those who follow him.

90. There is no suffering for him who has finished his journey, and abandoned grief, who has freed himself on all sides, and thrown off all fetters.

92. Men who have no riches, who live on recognized food, who have perceived void and unconditioned freedom (*Nirvana*), their path is difficult to understand, like that of birds in the air.

96. His (the wise and venerable person: arhat) thought is quiet, quiet are his word and deed, [6](#) when he has obtained freedom by true knowledge, when he has thus become a quiet man.

97. The man who is free from credulity, but knows the uncreated, who has cut all ties, removed emptations, renounced all desires, [7](#) he is the greatest of men.

100. Even though a speech be a thousand words long, but made up of senseless words, one word of sense is better, which if a man hears, he becomes quiet.

103. If one man conquer in battle a thousand times a thousand men, and if another only conquers himself, he is the greatest of conquerors.

116. If a man would hasten towards the good, he should keep his thought away from evil; if a man does what is good slothfully, his mind delights in evil.

121. Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, It will not come near to me. Even by the falling of water-drops is a water-pot filled; the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gathers it little by little.

122. Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, It will not come near to me. Even by the falling of water-drops is a water-pot filled; the wise man becomes full of good, even if he gathers it little by little.

124. He who has no wound on his hand may touch poison with his hand; poison does not affect one who has no wound; nor is there evil for one who does not commit evil.

125. If a man offend a harmless, pure, and innocent person, the evil falls back upon that fool, like light dust thrown up against the wind.

126. Some people are reborn; evil-doers go to hell; righteous people go to heaven; those who are free from all worldly desires attain Nirvana.

127. Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, not if we enter into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where a man might be freed from an evil deed.

128. Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, not if we enter into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where death could not overcome the man.

133. Do not speak harshly to anybody; those who are spoken to will answer you in the same way. Angry speech is painful, blows for blows will touch you.

134. If like a shattered gong, you make no utterance, then you have reached Nirvana; strife is not known to you.

135. As a cowherd with his staff drives his cows into the stable, so do Age and Death drive the life of men.

136. A fool does not know when he commits his evil deeds; but the wicked man burns by his own deeds, as if by fire.

141. Not nakedness, not platted hair, not dirt, not fasting, or lying on the earth, not rubbing with dust, not sitting motionless, can purify a mortal who has not overcome desires.

142. He who, though dressed in fine apparel, exercises tranquillity, is quiet, subdued, restrained, and has ceased to find fault with all other beings, he indeed is a Brahmana, an ascetic, [8](#) a Bhikshu.

145. Canal-makers lead the water; archers bend the arrow; carpenters bend a log of wood; good people fashion themselves.

146. How is there laughter, how is there joy, as this world is always burning? Why do you not seek a light, all you who are surrounded by darkness?

147. Look at this dressed-up lump, covered with wounds, joined together, sickly, full of many thoughts, which has no strength, no hold!

148. This body is wasted, full of sickness, and frail; this heap of corruption breaks to pieces, life indeed ends in death.

149. Looking for the maker of this tabernacle,⁹ I shall have to run through a course of many births, so long as I do not find him; and painful is birth again and again. But now, maker of the tabernacle, you have been seen; you shall not make up this tabernacle again. All your rafters are broken, your ridge-pole is sundered; the mind, approaching the Eternal has attained to the extinction of all desires.

160. The self is the master of the self, for who else could be its master? With the self well subdued, a man finds a master such as few can find.

161. The evil done by oneself, self-begotten, self-bred, crushes the foolish, as a diamond breaks a precious stone.

163. Bad deeds, and deeds hurtful to ourselves, are easy to do; what is beneficial and good, that is very difficult to do.

165. By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself; no person can purify another person.

166. Let no one forget his own duty for the sake of another's, however great; let a man, after he has discerned his own duty, be always attentive to his own duty.

170. Look upon the world as a bubble, look upon it as a mirage: the king of death does not see him who thus looks down upon the world.

171. Come. Look at this glittering world, like a royal chariot; the foolish are immersed in it, but the wise do not touch it.

172. He who formerly was reckless and afterwards became sober, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds.

174. This world is dark, few only can see here; a few only go to heaven, like birds escaped from the net.

175. The swans go on the path of the sun, they go through the atmosphere by means of their miraculous power; the wise are led out of this world, when they have conquered Mara and his train. 178. Better than sovereignty over the earth, better than going to heaven, better than lordship over all the worlds, is the reward of the first step in holiness.

179. He whose conquest is not conquered again, into whose conquest no one in this world enters, by what track can you lead him, the Awakened (*Buddha*),¹¹ the Omniscient, the trackless?

180. He whom no desire with its snares and poisons can lead astray, by what track can you lead him, the Awakened (*Buddha*), the Omniscient, the trackless?

181. Even the gods envy those who are awakened and not forgetful, who are given to meditation, who are wise, and who delight in the repose of retirement from the world.

183. Not to commit any sin, to do good, and to purify one's mind, that is the teaching of the Awakened.

185. Not to blame, not to strike, to live restrained under the law, to be moderate in eating, to sleep and sit alone, and to dwell on the highest thoughts—this is the teaching of the Awakened.

186. There is no satisfying desires, even by a shower of gold pieces; he who knows that desires have a short taste and cause pain, he is wise.

188. Men, driven by fear, go to many a refuge, to mountains and forest, to groves and sacred trees.

189. But that is not a safe refuge, that is not the best refuge; a man is not delivered from all pains after having gone to that refuge.

190. He who takes refuge with Buddha, the Law, and the Church; he who, with clear understanding, sees the four holy truths:

191. these four holy truths are: suffering, the origin (*Samudaya*) of suffering (*Dukha*), the destruction (*Nirodha*) of suffering, and the eightfold holy way (*Marga*) that leads to the quieting of suffering,

192. that is the safe refuge, that is the best refuge; having gone to that refuge, a man is delivered from all suffering.

202. There is no fire like passion; there is no losing throw like hatred; there is no pain like this body; there is no happiness higher than stillness.

210. Let no man ever look for what is pleasant, or what is unpleasant. Not to see what is pleasant is pain, and it is pain to see what is unpleasant.

306. He who says what is not, goes to hell; he who, having done a thing, says he hasn't done that thing, also goes to hell. After death, both are equal: they are men with evil deeds in the next world.

367. He who never identifies himself with name and form, and does not grieve over what is no more, he indeed is called a Bhikshu.[12](#)

368. The Bhikshu who acts with kindness, who is calm in the doctrine of Buddha, will reach the quiet place (*Nirvana*), cessation of natural desires, and happiness.

369. O Bhikshu, empty this boat! If emptied, it will go quickly; having cut off passion and hatred, you will go to Nirvana!

370. Cut off the five senses, leave the five senses, rise above the five senses. A Bhikshu who has escaped from the five chains (i.e., the five senses) is called *Oghatinna*: "saved from the flood."

ENDNOTES

- 1 For a mind to be dissipated (*anavassuta*), is for it to run towards external objects; it is the occupation of the mind and the senses on sensible objects.
- 2 Mara is the god of death and the representative of worldly temptations, and the father of worldly desires. "Desires" (*tamha*) are the cause of birth (*gati*), so the defeat of desires and the conquest of Mara are almost the same thing. Mara's "flower-pointed arrow" is the pleasurable temptations of the physical world through which he slays unsuspecting humans. The oxymoron (nonsense construction) of an arrow whose point is a flower is meant to illustrate how pleasures do not seem to be dangerous, but in fact are supremely fatal. The Hindu god of love, Kama, also uses flower-pointed arrows on his victims.
- 3 "Life" here is *samsara*, or the constant revolution of birth and death which goes on for ever until the knowledge of the true law or the true doctrine of Buddha enables a man to free himself from *samsara*, and enters into Nirvana.
- 4 That is, the mendicant, or monk who has devoted himself or herself to discovering enlightenment.
- 5 This is *viveka*, which means "understanding" in Sanskrit, but has the technical meaning among Buddhists of "separation," either separation from the world into a life of solitude (*kaya-viveka*), or separation from idle thoughts (*kitta-viveka*), or the highest separation and freedom of self-extinguishment (*Nirvana*).
- 6 These are the *trividha-dvara*, the three doors of Buddhism: thought, word, deed.
- 7 This is *tamha*; in the army of Mara is a figure of Tamha, "thirst" or "desire."
- 8 *Srmana*.
- 9 These are among the most famous of Buddha's sayings, because they are traditionally the words the Buddha uttered at the moment he attained to Buddhahood.
- 10 The body and the self; the "maker of the tabernacle" refers to the multiple births that form the subject of these verses.
- 11 Buddha does not refer to a specific person, but anyone who has arrived at complete knowledge.
- 12 Mendicant; someone living an ascetic life.