

STATEMENTS ON AND ABOUT POVERTY, HUNGER, HELPING, AND CHARITY FROM THE DHAMMAPADA

(For anyone not familiar with it, The Dhammapada is a collection of 423 verses attributed to the Buddha; it provides a critical framework for the traditions, beliefs and practices of Buddhism. These quotations are drawn from the P. Lal translation, The Noonday Press, 1974.)

No matter whose the teachings, my friend, if you are sure of this – ‘These doctrines conduce to passion, not serenity; bondage, not freedom; increase, not loss, of material gain; greed, not thrift; restlessness, not calm; noisy company not solitude; sloth, not energy; delight in evil, not performance of good’ – well, rest assured that it is not the Dhamma, that is not the Discipline, that is not the Master’s Way.

But if there are teachings, no matter whose, you are sure will conduce to serenity, not passion; freedom, not bondage; loss, not increase, of material gain; thrift, not greed; calm, not restlessness; solitude, not noisy company; energy, not sloth; performance of good, not delight in evil – that is the Dhamma, that is the Discipline, that is the Master’s Way. - (Pg. 18)

The ocean has only one taste, the taste of salt. Dhamma has only one taste, the taste of Nirvana.- (Pg. 18)

Being religious and following Dhamma has nothing to do with the dogma that the world is eternal; and it has nothing to do with the other dogma that the world is not eternal. For whether the world is eternal or otherwise, birth, old age, death, sorrow, pain, misery, grief, and despair exist. I am concerned with the extinction of these.

Therefore, consider carefully, Malunkyaputta, the things that I have taught and the things that I have not taught. What are the things I have not taught?

I have not taught that the world is eternal. I have not taught that the world is not eternal. I have not taught that the world is finite. I have not taught that the world is infinite. I have not taught that the soul and body are the same. I have not taught that the soul and the body are different. I have not taught that the liberated person exists after death. I have not taught that he does not exist after death. I have not taught that he both exists and does not exist after death; that he neither exists nor does not exist after death.

Why, Malunkyaputta, have I not taught all this? Because all this is useless, it has nothing to do with real Dhamma, it does not lead to cessation of passion, to peace, to supreme wisdom, and the holy life, to Nirvana. That is why I have not taught all this.

And what have I taught Malunkyaputta? I have taught that suffering exists, that suffering has an origin, that suffering can be ended, that there is a way to end suffering.

Why, Malunkyaputta, have I taught this? Because this is useful, it has to do with real Dhamma, it leads to the cessation of passion, it brings peace, supreme wisdom, the holy life, and Nirvana. That is why I have taught all this.

Therefore, Malunkyaputta, consider carefully what I have taught and what I have not taught. - (Pg. 19-20)

Avoid these two extremes, monks. Which two? On the one hand, low, vulgar, ignoble, and useless indulgence in passion and luxury; on the other, painful, ignoble, and useless practice of self-torture and mortification. Take the Middle Path advised by the Buddha, for it leads to insight and peace, wisdom and enlightenment, and to Nirvana.

What, you will ask me, is the Middle Path? It is the Eightfold Way. Right views, right intentions, right speech, right action, right profession, right effort, right watchfulness, right concentration. This is the Middle Path, which lads to insight, peace, wisdom, enlightenment, and Nirvana. - (Pg. 22)

We are what we think,
having become what we thought.
Like the wheel following the cart-pulling ox,
Sorrow follows an evil thought.
And joy follows a pure thought,
like a shadow faithfully tailing a man.
We are what we think,
having become what we thought. - (Pg. 39)

What is a yellow robe if your mind is not pure?
What will the robe do, if truth is lacking, discipline is denied?
Cast aside meanness, stand on virtue,
Learn discipline and speak the truth.
Then will the robe fit you. - (Pg. 40)

Only suffering for the evil man -
suffering now, suffering later,
suffering in this world and the next.
His deeds breed suffering, and he suffers.
Happiness for the good man -
happiness now, happiness later,
happiness in this world and the next.
His deeds breed happiness, and he rejoices. - (Pg. 41)

Lazy cowherd counting others' cows,
having none of his own,
what good is parroting of holy texts
if a man will not get up and gather holiness? - (Pg. 41)

Words do not matter; what matters is Dhamma.
What matters is action rightly performed,
after lust, hate, and folly are abandoned,
and complete detachment from the fruit of action. - (Pg. 42)

Clear thinking, right action, discipline and restraint
make an island for the wise man,
an island safe from floods. - (Pg. 45)

Let the wise man live
in the flower of his village,
like the bee, gently taking honey,
but harming neither color nor scent. - (Pg. 54)

It is not what others do,
or do not do, that is my concern:
It is what I do,
and what I do not do, that is my concern. - (Pg. 54)

Lovely flowers without fragrance
Are sweet words without sweet action. - (Pg. 54)

Is there a limit to the variety of garlands
skilled hands make from a heap of flowers?
Is there a limit to the number of good deeds
a man can do once he is born? - (Pg. 54)

The wind carries the scent of flowers only where it goes,
sandlewood, jasmine, and tagara fragrance,
but the fragrance of good men spreads everywhere,
and their fame is endless.
Sandlewood and tagara are delicately scented,
and give a little fragrance,
but the fragrance of virtue
rises even to the gods. - (Pg. 54-55)

One road goes to profit, another to Nirvana.
Know this, O bhikku, disciple of Buddha,
and struggle for wisdom, not the world's fame. - (Pg. 61)

A year's sacrifice, offering, or gift,
performed for the earning of merit,
is not worth a quarter of homage to virtue. - (Pg. 76)

If a man honor the aged and practice faith,
four rewards follow: long life, beauty, joy, and strength. - (Pg. 76)

One day of virtue and clear thinking is better
than a hundred years of vice and indiscipline. - (Pg. 76)

Move towards good. Cease from evil.
Evil takes over when good is neglected. - (Pg. 79)

Some think lightly, "Evil won't touch me."
Little drops fill a waterpot.
Little virtues make a wise man.
Some think lightly, "Virtues won't affect me."
Little drops fill a waterpot.
Little virtues make a wise man. - (Pg. 79)

A rich and lonely trader avoids lonely dark roads.
A man in love with life avoids poison.
A wise man avoids evil deeds. - (Pg. 79)

Do as you would want done to you. - (Pg. 83)

Like glittering royal chariots slowly rusting,
the body moves into old age.
"Only virtue is stainless," is the only wisdom. - (Pg. 89)

Like the moon slipping from behind a cloud and shining on the earth
is the man whose good deeds exceed his evil deeds. - (Pg. 98)

Fools are not generous:
the world of the gods is not for the stingy.
Wise men are generous
they find happiness in the next birth. - (Pg. 98)

Avoid evil, do good, cleanse your mind -
this is the teaching of the enlightened ones. - (Pg. 101)

No malice, no injury,
disciplined eating and behaving,
high thinking and simple living -
this is the teaching of the enlightened ones. - (Pg.102)

Throw away anger, give up pride.
Give up worldly desires.
How can grief touch you
if nothing is your own? - (Pg. 115)

Be gentle with anger,
do good to evil;
be generous to the miser,
truthful to the liar. - (Pg. 115)

Be truthful,
Curb anger.
Be liberal.
- Three ways to the gods. - (Pg. 115)

As a house unrepaired decays,
goodness unrepeated declines. - (Pg. 122)

Impure is the woman immodest,
impure the calculating giver;
impure are all evil deeds
now and forever. - (Pg. 122)

The man who thinks clearly,
examines good and evil,
And ends by choosing good
is the wise man. - (Pg. 129)

The disciples of Gautama are always awake,
day and night delighting in compassion and love. - (Pg. 140)

That bhikku is tranquil
who has faith in the Dhamma.
Always gentle and equanimous,
he finds the holiest peace.

Make the boat light, bhikku!
Emptied, it will travel swifter. - (Pg. 166)