



THE DHAMMAPADA

VERSES ON THE WAY

A NEW TRANSLATION OF THE
TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA,
WITH A GUIDE TO READING THE TEXT,
BY GLENN WALLIS



The
DHAMMAPADA

धम्मपद

Verses on the Way

A NEW TRANSLATION
of the
TEACHINGS OF THE BUDDHA,
with a
GUIDE TO READING THE TEXT,
by Glenn Wallis



THE MODERN LIBRARY
NEW YORK

2004 Modern Library Edition

Copyright © 2004 by Random House, Inc.

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American Copyright Conventions. Published in the United States by Modern Library, an imprint of The Random House Publishing Group, a division of Random House, Inc., New York, and simultaneously in Canada by Random House of Canada Limited, Toronto.

MODERN LIBRARY and the TORCHBEARER Design are registered trademarks of Random House, Inc.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following for permission to reprint previously published material:

© Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, 2001. Adapted from *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya* with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A., www.wisdompubs.org

© Maurice Walshe 1987, 1995. Adapted from *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya* with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A., www.wisdompubs.org

© Bhikkhu Bodhi 1995, 2000. Adapted from *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Samyutta Nikaya* with permission of Wisdom Publications, 199 Elm Street, Somerville, MA 02144 U.S.A., www.wisdompubs.org

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Tipitaka. Suttapitaka. Khuddakanikaya. Dhammapada. English

The Dhammapada : verses on the Way, a new translation of the Teachings of the Buddha, with a guide to reading the text / by Glenn Wallis.

p. cm.

In English; translated from Pali.

ISBN 0-679-64307-9

1. Spiritual life—Buddhism. I. Wallis, Glenn. II. Title.

BQ1372.E64W35 2004

294.3'82.322—dc22 2004050464

Modern Library website address: www.modernlibrary.com

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper

2 4 6 8 9 7 5 3 1

because of the *dhamma*” means something like: “The teaching is the proper way of living because of the way things are.” And, unlike in theistic traditions, “the way things are” is, in the Buddhist view, readily observable, here and now, to anyone who would develop the skill to discern it. The *dhamma*, as teaching, is precisely the means to this skill.

The second term, *pada*, also covers a rich variety of meanings. At its root, it denotes three basic actions: “to fall,” “to go,” and “to participate.” Its numerous derivatives include “word,” “verse,” “foot,” “footstep,” “path,” “trace,” and “matter.”

Now, how does all of this bear on my translation of *dharmmapada* as “verses on the way”? The *Dharmmapada* literally asks its reader to turn (*versus*—homonyms are fun!) toward the teaching (*dhamma*), toward the path (*pada*); the verses (*pada*) that compose the work are the seeker’s intimate companions on the way (*dhamma*). The “on” here means, of course, both “along” (i.e., while on the journey) and “concerning, about.” As a distillation of the Buddha’s teachings, the *Dharmmapada* constitutes a prescription for proper living, and its sole purpose is to guide the reader along the way that the Buddha saw as the most conducive to that aim.

A Note on the Translation



This book is organized in a way that is meant to encourage a fresh encounter with the *Dhammapada*. The translation, which immediately follows, is given without any explanatory material. It is then followed by the “Guide to Reading the Text.” The Guide contains explanatory material in the form of chapter overviews and notes, providing clarification of Buddhist terminology, concepts, and models. Verses discussed in the Guide are marked with asterisks in the translation. I recommend reading through the translation unaided by my comments, and then, on the second, third, fourth, et cetera, reading, referring to the notes as necessary. *A second reading?! Learning is slow; careful reading is tedious; understanding is elusive. So why not read the *Dhammapada* repeatedly, taking to heart its claim to be a revealer of treasures?*



Translation

CHAPTER ONE



Contrasting Pairs

यमकवग्गो

Preceded by mind
are phenomena,
led by mind,
formed by mind.
If with mind polluted
one speaks or acts,
then pain follows,
as a wheel follows
the draft ox's foot.

(1)*

Preceded by mind
are phenomena,
led by mind,
formed by mind.
If with mind pure
one speaks or acts,
then ease follows,
as an ever-present shadow.

(2)*

“He berated me! He hurt me!
He beat me! He deprived me!”
For those who hold such grudges,
hostility is not appeased.

(3)

“He berated me! He hurt me!
He beat me! He deprived me!”
For those who forgo such grudges,
hostility ceases. (4)

In this world
hostilities are *never*
appeased by hostility.
But by the absence of hostility
are they appeased.
This is an interminable truth. (5)*

Some do not understand
that we are perishing here.
Those who understand this
bring to rest their quarrels. (6)

Living with an eye to pleasure,
unrestrained in the sense faculties,
immoderate in eating, indolent, and idle—
Māra overcomes such a person,
as the wind overcomes a weak tree. (7)*

Living without an eye to pleasure,
well restrained in the sense faculties,
moderate in eating, faithful, and energetic—
Māra does not overcome such a person,
as the wind, a rocky hill. (8)*

A stained person
who would wear the yellow-stained robe,
although neither honest nor restrained,
is not worthy of the yellow-stained. (9)*

But a person
who has dispelled his stain,
well set on virtuous ways,

both honest and restrained,
that one is worthy of the yellow-stained. (10)*

Those who hold the worthless to be of value,
and see in the valuable the worthless,
do not attain the valuable,
pasturing, as they are, in the field of wrong intention. (11)*

But having understood the valuable as the valuable,
and the worthless as the worthless,
they attain the valuable,
pasturing, as they are, in the field of right intention. (12)*

Just as rain pierces
a poorly roofed house,
so passion pierces
an uncultivated mind. (13)*

Just as rain cannot pierce
a well-roofed house,
so passion cannot pierce
a well-cultivated mind. (14)*

In this world he grieves.
In the world beyond he grieves.
In both worlds, the harm doer grieves.
He grieves, he is struck down by sorrow,
having seen the impurity of his own actions. (15)*

In this world he rejoices.
In the world beyond he rejoices.
In both worlds, the virtuous person rejoices.
He rejoices, he is uplifted,
having seen the purity of his own actions. (16)*

In this world he suffers.
In the world beyond he suffers.

In both worlds, the harm doer suffers.
Thinking, "I have acted destructively!" he suffers.
Taking an unfortunate rebirth,
he suffers even more. (17)*

In this world he is delighted.
In the world beyond he is delighted.
In both worlds, the virtuous person is delighted.
Thinking, "I have created value!" he is delighted.
Taking a fortunate rebirth,
he is delighted even more. (18)*

Although reciting many religious texts,
if one does not practice accordingly,
he is a heedless man.
Like a cowherd counting the cows of others,
he has no share in the religious life. (19)*

Although reciting but little from religious texts,
if one is good, he lives in harmony with the teachings.
Abandoning passion, hatred, and delusion,
he possesses proper understanding, perfect purity of mind.
Showing no attachment to this world or beyond,
he has a share in the religious life. (20)*

{ *Guide page 103* }

CHAPTER TWO



Diligence

अप्पमादवग्गो

Diligence is the path to the deathless.
Negligence is the path of death.
The diligent do not die.
Those who are negligent
are as the dead. (21)*

Understanding this distinctly,
those who are skilled in diligence
rejoice in diligence,
delighting in the pasture of the noble ones. (22)*

Those meditators who persevere,
persistently endeavoring,
are wise ones who touch the unbinding—
that perfect peace from bondage. (23)*

For the person of energy, thoughtfulness,
pure conduct, considerate action,
restraint, wholesome living, and diligence,
glory increases. (24)

With energy, diligence,
restraint, and control,

the wise person should make an island
which no flood can overflow. (25)

Childish, unthinking people
indulge negligence.
But the wise person guards diligence
as the greatest treasure. (26)

You should not indulge negligence
or be intimate with sensual delight.
Meditating diligently,
one obtains abundant ease. (27)*

When the skilled person
expels negligence by means of diligence,
he is free from sorrow.
Having ascended the palace of wisdom,
this skilled one gazes down
—as if standing on a mountain—
on the sorrowing people,
the childish ones below
standing on the ground. (28)*

Diligent among the negligent,
ever vigilant among the sleeping,
the wise person moves on
like a swift horse
who has overtaken a weak one. (29)

By means of diligence
Maghavan became
the best of the radiant ones.
Diligence they praise.
Negligence is always censured. (30)*

A practitioner delighting in diligence,
seeing dread in negligence,

advances as a fire—
every fetter, coarse and subtle, burns. (31)*

A practitioner delighting in diligence,
seeing dread in negligence,
being near to the unbinding
cannot likely fall away. (32)

{ *Guide page 111* }

CHAPTER THREE



Mind

चित्तवग्गो

Trembling and quivering is the mind,
difficult to guard and hard to restrain.
The person of wisdom sets it straight,
as a fletcher does an arrow. (33)*

Like a fish thrown to the ground,
wrenched from its sheltered home,
this mind trembles,
seized by the sway of death. (34)*

It is good to tame the mind,
alighting, as it does, wherever it desires—
swift, resistant to restraint.
A tamed mind gives rise to ease. (35)*

So difficult to perceive, exceedingly subtle,
alighting, as it does, wherever it desires.
Let the person of wisdom guard the mind.
A guarded mind gives rise to ease. (36)*

Wandering far and alone, intangible,
the mind is hidden in the cave of the body.

Those who would restrain the mind
are liberated from the bonds of Māra. (37)*

For the one whose mind is unsteady,
who does not know the good way,
whose serenity is wavering,
insightful knowledge is not perfected. (38)*

There is no fear for the wide awake—
the one who has let go of gain and loss,
whose mind is not moistened by passion,
whose thoughts are unassailed. (39)*

Considering this body as a pot of clay,
establishing this mind as a fortress,
may you attack Māra with the weapon of wisdom
and, guarding the victory, be free from attachment. (40)

Soon, for certain,
this body will lie on the ground,
cast away, without consciousness,
like a useless log. (41)*

Whatever a rival may do to a foe,
or a vengeful person to the one he hates,
a wrongly applied mind would do more
damage to him than that. (42)

Nothing that a mother, father,
or other relative might do
would do more good for him
than a mind well controlled. (43)

CHAPTER FOUR

Flowers

पुष्पवग्गो

Who will master this earth,
this world of death and radiant beings?
Who will gather a well-taught verse on the way,
as a skilled gardener gathers a flower? (44)*

A seeker will master this earth,
this world of death and radiant beings.
A seeker will gather a well-taught verse on the way,
as a skilled gardener gathers a flower. (45)*

Considering this body to be as foam,
awakening fully to its nature
as a shimmering mirage,
cutting, like this, the flowers of Māra,
you would walk beyond the sight
of the king of death. (46)*

Death carries away
the person whose mind is engaged
in gathering flowers only,
like a great flood does a sleeping village. (47)

Death seizes
the person whose mind is engaged
in gathering flowers only,
desires yet unsatisfied. (48)

As a bee flying from a flower,
having taken up its nectar,
does not harm its luster or fragrance,
so should the sage wander in the village. (49)*

Look not at the faults of others
nor at what they do or leave undone;
but only at your own deeds
and deeds unachieved. (50)

As a brilliant flower
rich in luster but without scent—
so is a well-spoken word fruitless
for the one who does not act. (51)

As a brilliant flower
rich in luster and fragrant—
so does a well-spoken word
bear fruit for the one who acts. (52)

Just as many strands of garlands
may be made from a heap of flowers,
so should a mortal-born person
do much that is beneficial. (53)

Neither does the fragrance of a flower
nor that of sandalwood or jasmine
flow against the wind.
But the scent of the good
does flow against the wind.
An excellent person diffuses scent
in all directions. (54)*

Sandalwood, crepe jasmine,
blue lotus, and flowering jasmine—
of the fragrances born of these,
incomparable is the scent of virtue. (55)

Slight is this fragrance—
jasmine and sandal.
But the scent of a virtuous person
wafts supreme among the radiant ones. (56)

Māra cannot find the path
to those whose virtue is complete,
living diligently, freed
by perfect understanding. (57)

As on the road,
in a heap of discarded refuse,
there might be born a lotus
of perfumed fragrance,
pleasing to the mind, (58)*

so amid those beings,
common and blind,
who have become as refuse,
a disciple of the fully awakened one,
by means of insightful knowledge, shines. (59)*

{ *Guide page 121* }

CHAPTER FIVE



The Childish Person

बालवग्गो

The night is long for the wide awake.
The mile is long for the weary.
The round of birth and death is long
for childish people, who do not know the good way. (60)*

If you cannot find a companion
who is better than or like yourself,
you should make your way, steadily, alone.
In the childish there is no companionship. (61)

Thinking, "I have children and wealth!"
—the childish person becomes anxious.
For oneself there is not even a self.
Whence then sons and wealth? (62)*

A childish person considering his folly
is thereby even as a skilled one.
But a childish person considering himself skilled
is rightly called "childish." (63)

Even if throughout his life
a childish one attends the skilled,

he does not thereby discern the way,
as the spoon, the taste of soup. (64)

Even if for just an instant
an intelligent person attends the skilled,
he quickly discerns the way,
as the tongue, the taste of soup. (65)

Childish, unthinking people
go through life as enemies to themselves,
committing detrimental actions
that bear bitter fruit. (66)*

That act is not beneficial which,
having been committed, one regrets,
the fruit of which one receives
crying, face full of tears. (67)*

But that act is beneficial which,
having been committed, one does not regret,
the fruit of which one receives
pleased and content. (68)*

As long as the damage has not borne fruit,
the childish one considers it as honey.
But when the damage bears fruit,
then the childish one suffers affliction. (69)

Month after month the childish person
might eat his meal with a blade of grass;
yet he would still not be worth a fraction
of those who have discerned the way. (70)*

Like milk, a detrimental action, once committed,
does not at once congeal.
Smoldering, it follows the childish person
like a fire concealed in ashes. (71)

Carpenters shape wood.
The skilled tame themselves. (80)

As a rock of single solid mass
cannot be moved by the wind,
so are the skilled unshaken
by praise and blame. (81)

As a deep pond, clear, calm,
so do the skilled become serene,
having heard the teachings. (82)

Good people stand apart everywhere.
The good do not initiate conversation
out of desire for enjoyment.
Touched now by pleasure, now by pain,
the skilled do not expose their highs and lows. (83)

Neither for your own nor for another's sake
should you wish for a son, wealth, or empire.
You should not wish for your own success
if acquired by improper means.
You should be virtuous, wise, and honorable. (84)

Few are those among the people
who cross to the other shore.
The rest of humanity just runs about
on the bank right here before us. (85)*

But those people who follow the way
when the teaching is well proclaimed
will go to the other shore.
The realm of death is so hard to traverse. (86)*

Having left the dark way,
the skilled person should cultivate the bright.
Coming from his home to no home,
in seclusion, where enjoyment is hard to find, (87)*

there he should hope for delight.
Having forsaken all desires, possessing nothing,
the skilled person should cleanse himself
of the afflictions of his mind. (88)*

Those whose minds are well trained
in the factors of full awakening
who delight, without clinging,
in the renunciation of grasping—
such bright ones, impulses destroyed,
are, in this very world, unbound. (89)*

{ *Guide page 131* }

CHAPTER SEVEN



The Accomplished Person

अरहन्तवग्गो

There is no fever for the person
who has completed the journey—
free from sorrow,
freed in every respect,
the knots removed. (90)*

The mindful strive.
They do not delight in shelter.
Like cranes quitting the moor,
they forsake home after home. (91)*

Those for whom there is no amassing,
who understand fully the nature of food,
free, empty, and without conditions
is their sphere of action.
As birds in space, their way is hard to trace. (92)*

His impulses exhausted
and nutriments starved,
free, empty, and without conditions
is his sphere of action.
As birds in space, his way is hard to trace. (93)*

His senses serene
like horses well tamed by the charioteer,
the person who has let go of haughtiness,
who is free from impulses—
even the radiant ones are envious of one such as that. (94)

Like the earth, he is not troubled.
Like a pillar he is firm.
Like a pond free from mud
there are no rounds of rebirths
for such a person. (95)

Calmed is the mind,
calmed, speech and action
of one set free by genuine knowledge.
For such a person
there is peace. (96)

The person who is beyond faith
and understands the unconditioned,
who cuts off rebirth, forgoes opportunity,
and gives up wishing—
that one is a superior person. (97)*

Whether in a village or in the forest,
whether in a valley or on high ground,
delightful is the place
where accomplished ones dwell. (98)

Delightful are the forests
where no worldly person takes delight.
Those who are free from passion will delight there;
those who seek sensual pleasure will not. (99)

CHAPTER EIGHT



Thousands

सहस्सवगो

Better than a thousand statements
composed of meaningless words
is a single meaningful word which,
having been heard, brings peace. (100)

Better than a thousand verses
composed of meaningless words
is a single word of verse which,
having been heard, brings peace. (101)

And if one should recite a hundred verses
composed of meaningless words,
better is a single verse on the way which,
having been heard, brings peace. (102)

Though one might conquer in battle
a thousand times a thousand men,
the one who conquers himself alone
is supreme in battle. (103)

It is better indeed to conquer yourself
rather than other people.

CHAPTER NINE



Detriment

पापवग्गो

In goodness be quick!
Restrain your thought from detriment.
For a person who creates value slowly,
the mind delights in detriment. (116)*

If a person does something detrimental,
he should not do it again and again.
He must not create that impulse in himself.
Pain is the accumulation of detriment. (117)

If a person does something valuable,
he should do it again and again.
He must create that impulse in himself.
Ease is the accumulation of value. (118)

Even a person who acts to his
own detriment has good fortune
as long as his misdeed has not matured.
But when the misdeed has matured
then that person experiences misfortunes. (119)

