

DHAMMAPADA

by

Ven. Dr K Sri Dhammapada

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LEARNING WITHOUT PRACTISE IS OF NO WORTH

Bahum pi ce sahitam bhasamano-
na takkaro hoti naro pamatto
Gopo'va gavo ganayam paresam-
na bhagava samannassa hoti

~ Dh. 19 ~

Though much he recites the Sacred Texts, but acts not accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who counts others' kind. He has no share in the fruits of the Holy Life.

Appam pi ce sahitam bhasamano-
dhammassa hoti anudhammacari
Ragan ca dosan ca pahaya moham-
sammappajano suvimuttacitto
Anupadiyano idha va haram va-
sa bhagava samannassa hoti

~ Dh. 20 ~

Though little he recites the Sacred Texts, but acts in accordance with the teaching, forsaking lust, hatred and ignorance, truly knowing, with mind well freed, clinging to naught here and here-after, he shares the fruits of the Holy life.

1:14 Knowledge is not realization

Once there were two bhikkhus of noble family who were good friends. One of them had learned the Tipitaka and was very proficient in reciting and preaching the sacred doctrine. He taught many other bhikkhus and became the instructor of eighteen groups of bhikkhus. The other bhikkhu after striving diligently and ardently, attained Arahant hood together with extraordinary knowledge in the course of insight Meditation.

On one occasion, when the second bhikkhu came to pay homage to the Buddha at the Jevatana monastery, the two bhikkhus met. Not realizing that his friend had already become an Arahant, the Master of the Tipitaka looked down on him, thinking that the old bhikkhu knew very little of the sacred Dhamma. So he decided to ask him some questions on the Dhamma. The Buddha knew about his unkind intention and he also knew that as a result of seeking to ridicule a noble disciple the learned bhikkhu would have to suffer.

So, out of compassion, the Buddha visited the two bhikkhus to prevent the learned bhikkhu from ridiculing his friend. The Buddha himself did the questioning. He put questions on jhanas and maggas (higher achievement through meditation) to the master of the Tipitaka who could not answer them because he had not practiced what he had taught. The other bhikkhu, having practiced the Dhamma and having attained Arahant hood, could answer all the questions. The Buddha praised the one who had practiced and realized the Dhamma but not a single word of praise was spoken for the learned scholar.

The Buddha admonished him that as the mind is easily excitable and fickle, one should control one's mind in a proper manner wherever one is.

Reflecting mindfully on the admonition given by the Buddha, Meghiya attained the first stage of Sainthood.

CONTROL YOUR MIND

Dunnigghassa lahuno-

Yatha kama nipatino

Cittassa damatho sadhu-

Cittam dantam sukhavaham

~ Dh. 35 ~

The mind is difficult to control; swiftly and lightly, it moves and lands wherever it pleases. It is good to tame the mind, for a well-tamed mind brings happiness.

III:2 The lady mind reader (Matika Mata)

Once, sixty bhikkhus, after each obtain a subject of meditation from the Buddha, went to a village at the foot of a mountain. There, Matika Mata, mother of the village headman, offered them alms food; she also built a shelter for them, so that they could stay in the village during the rainy season. One day, she requested the bhikkhus to teach her meditation. They taught her how to meditate on the thirty-two constituents of the body leading to the awareness of the decay and dissolution of the body. Matika Mata practiced with diligence and attained the third stage of Sainthood together with extraordinary knowledge and mental powers, even before the bhikkhus did.

With the Divine Power of Sight (Dibbacakkhu) she saw that the bhikkhus had not attained Insight. She also learned that these bhikkhus had enough potential for the attainment of Arahant hood but that they needed proper food because a weak body will not allow the mind to function at its best. So, she prepared nutritious food for them . With nutritious food and right effort, the bhikkhus developed right concentration and eventually attained Arahant hood.

At the end of the rainy season, the bhikkhus returned to the Jetavana monastery, where the Buddha was in residence. They reported to the Buddha that all of them were in good health and in comfortable circumstances and that they did not have to worry about food. They also mentioned Matika Mata who had been aware of their thoughts and had offered them the very good food that was necessary to keep them in good health which is important for proper concentration.

A certain bhikkhu hearing about Matika Mata, decided that he too will go to the village. So, taking a subject of meditation from the Buddha he arrived at the village monastery. There, he found that everything he wished for was sent to him by Matika Mata. When he wishes for some food she personally came to the monastery, bringing along choice food with her. After taking the food, he asked her if she really could read the thoughts of others, but she evaded his question and replied, 'People who can read thoughts of others behave in such and such a way.' Then the bhikkhu thought, 'If I, like an ordinary worldlying, should entertain any impure thoughts, and if she can really read thoughts, she is sure to think ill of me.' He, therefore became afraid of the lay devotee and decided to return to the Jetavana monastery. He told the Buddha that he could not stay in Matika's village because he was afraid that the lay devotee might detect impure thoughts in him.

The Buddha then advised him to observe just one thing, that is, to control his mind. He also advised him to return to the village and not to think of anything else but the object of his meditation. The bhikkhu returned and Matika Mata offered him nutritious food as she had done to the others before, so that he might be able to practise meditation without worry. Within a short time, he too purified his mind and attained Arahant hood.

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DO MUCH GOOD

Yatha'pi puppha rasimha-

Kayira malagune bahu

Evam jatena maccena-

Kattabbam kusalam bahum

~ Dh. 53 ~

As from a heap of flowers many a garland is made, even so many good deeds should be done by one subject to birth and death.

IV: 8 The most devout lady (Visakha)

Visakha was the daughter of a rich man of Bhaddiya named Dhananjaya and his wife Sumana Devi, and the grand daughter of Mendaka, one of the five extremely wealthy men of King Bimbisara's kingdom. When Visakha was very young, the Buddha came to Bhaddiya. On that occasion, the rich man Mendaka took Visakha and her companions with him to pay homage to the Buddha. After hearing the discourse given by the Buddha, Visakha, her grandfather and all her companions attained the first stage of Sainthood.

When Visakha came of age, she married Punnavaddhana, son of Migara, a rich man in Savatthi. On the day of her marriage, her father Dhananjaya gave Visakha ten admonitions to observe as a dutiful wife. The admonitions are:-

- 1) Do not carry the indoor fire outside
- 2) Do not carry the outdoor fire inside
- 3) Give only to those that give
- 4) Do not give to those that do not give
- 5) Give both to those that give and do not give
- 6) Sit happily
- 7) Eat happily
- 8) Sleep happily
- 9) Tend to the fire
- 10) Honour the household divinities

The implied meaning is as follow:-

- 1) Fire here signifies slandering. The wife should not speak ill of her husband and parents-in-law to others. Neither should their shortcomings nor household quarrels be reported elsewhere.
- 2) A wife should not listen to the reports and stories of other households.
- 3) Things should be lent only to those who return them.
- 4) No article should be lent to those who do not return them.
- 5) Poor relatives and friends should be helped even if they do not repay.
- 6) A wife should stand and not remain sitting on seeing her parents-in-law. (This admonition deals with the modesty of a woman and the respect that should be shown to elders like parents-in-law).

- 7) Before taking her meal, a wife should first see to the needs of her parents-in-law and husband. She should see that the servants, too are well cared for.
- 8) This does not mean that a wife should sleep as long as she likes. Before sleeping, a wife should see that all doors are locked, servants have performed their duties, and that parents-in-law and husband have gone to bed.
- 9) Parents-in-law and husband should be regarded as fire. Deal as carefully with them as one deals with fire.
- 10) Parents-in-law and husband are regarded as divinities.

One day, while Migara was having his meal, a bhikkhu stopped for alms at his house but Migara completely ignored the bhikkhu. Visakha, seeing this, told the bhikkhu, 'I am sorry, Venerable bhikkhu, my father-in-law only eats stale food.' On hearing this, Migara was very angry and ordered her to leave the house. Visakha replied she would not leave the house. Instead she summoned for the eight elders who were sent by her father to accompany her and to advise her on any problems she might face in her new home. It was for them to decide whether she was guilty. When the elders came, Migara told them, 'While I was having my food in a gold bowl, Visakha said that I was taking stale food. For this offence, I'm sending her away.' Thereupon, Visakha explained as follows: 'When I saw my father-in-law completely ignoring the bhikkhu standing for almsfood, I thought to myself that since my father-in-law was not doing any meritorious deed in this existence, he was only eating the fruits of his past good deeds. So, I said, 'My father-in-law only eats stale food. Now Sirs, what do you think? Am I guilty?'

The elders decided that Visakha was not guilty. Visakha then announced that she who had absolute and unshakeable faith in the Teaching of the Buddha could not stay where bhikkhus were not welcomed. She also said if she was not given permission to invite the bhikkhus to the house to offer almsfood and make other offerings, she would leave the house. Therefore, Migara granted her all her requests.

The next day, the Buddha and his disciples were invited to the house of Visakha. When alms food was about to be offered, she invited her father-in-law to join her in offering the food; but he refused the invitation. When the meal was over, again she invited her father-in-law to join her in hearing the discourse to be given by the Buddha. Her father-in-law felt that he should not refuse for a second time. But his ascetics teachers, the Niganthas, would not let him go. However, they conceded that he could listen from behind a curtain. After hearing the Buddha's discourse Migara's good kamma ripened and he attained the first stage of Sainthood. He felt very thankful to the Buddha and also to his daughter-in-law. Being so thankful, he declared that henceforth Visakha would be like a mother to him, and Visakha came to be known as Migara Mata.

Visakha gave birth to several sons and daughters. Visakha possessed an immensely valuable gem-encrusted cloak given by her father as a wedding present. One day, Visakha went to the Jetavana monastery. On arrival at the monastery, she found that her bejeweled cloak was too heavy. So, she took it off, wrapped it up in her shawl, and gave it to the maid to hold it and take care of it. The maid absentmindedly left it at the monastery. It was the custom for Venerable Ananda to look after the things left by any of the lay disciples. Visakha sent the maid back to the monastery saying, 'Go and look for the bejeweled cloak but if Ananda has already found it and kept it in a place do not bring it back. I will donate the bejeweled cloak to the Venerable monks'. But Ananda did not accept the offer. So, Visakha decided to sell the bejeweled cloak and donate the money. But as there was no one who could afford to buy the

bejeweled cloak, Visakha bought it back herself. With this money, she built a monastery which came to be known as *Pubbarama*.

After the merit offering ceremony she called all her family members and on that night she told them that all her wishes had been fulfilled and that she had nothing more to desire. Then, reciting some verses, she went round and round the monastery. Some bhikkhus hearing her, thought she was singing and reported to the Buddha that Visakha was not like before, and that she was going round the monastery, singing. 'Could it be that she has gone off her mind?' they asked the Buddha. The Buddha explained, 'Today, Visakha had all her wishes of the past and present existences fulfilled and on account of that sense of achievement she is feeling elated and contented. Visakha was just reciting some verses to express her happiness; she certainly had not gone off her mind. Visakha, throughout her previous existences, had always been a generous donor and an ardent promoter of the Doctrine.'

The Buddha then revealed that Visakha in one of her past existences was born during the time of a previous Buddha by the name of Padumuttara Buddha. At that time, after admiring the qualities of her friend who was the chief female lay disciple and benefactress of Padumuttara Buddha, she had cherished a desire to possess those sterling qualities. So, after offering alms food to Padumuttara Buddha and his bhikkhus for seven days, she had made an earnest wish that she would one day be born as the chief female lay disciple and benefactress of a future Buddha.

With his supernormal powers, Padumuttara Buddha looked into the future, and having determined that her earnest wish could be fulfilled, he confirmed that Visakha would be able to fulfill her wish. Also in one of her later existences, she also received the same assurance from Kassapa Buddha regarding her earnest wish.

The Buddha concluded the discourse by saying that Visakha was strongly inclined to do good deeds and had done much good in her previous existences, just as an expert florist makes many garlands from a collection of flowers.

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Niraya Vagga
Woeful State

LIARS SUFER

Abhuta vadi nirayam upeti-

Yo capi katva na karomi'ti c'aha

Ubho'pi te pecca sama bhavanti-

Nihina kamma manuja parattha

~ Dh. 306 ~

One who tells lies (about others) goes to niraya (a woeful state); one who has done evil and says, 'I didn't do it,' also goes to niraya. Both of them being evil doers, suffer alike (in niraya) in their next existence.

XXII:1 An evil plot against the Buddha (Sundari)

As the number of people revering the Buddha increased, some heretics found that the number of their following was dwindling. They had lost gain and honour, and no one knew whether they existed or not. Therefore they became very jealous of the

Buddha. They were also afraid that things would get worse if they did not do something to destroy the reputation of the Buddha. So, they sent for a young woman called Sundari and said to her, 'Sundari, you are a very beautiful and clever young lady. We want you to put Gotama Buddha to shame by making it appear to others that you are having an affair with him. By doing so, his honour will be destroyed, his followers will decrease and many will come to us. Make the best use of your looks and be crafty.'

Sundari understood what was expected of her. Therefore, late in the evening, she went in the direction of the Jetavana monastery. When asked where she was going, she answered, 'I am going to visit Gotama. I live with him in the monastery.' After saying this she proceeded to the place of the heretics. Early in the morning the next day, she would return home. If anyone asked her from where she had come, she would reply, 'I have come from the Jetavana monastery after spending the night with Gotama.' She carried on like this for a few more days. Then the heretics hired some villains to kill Sundari and dump her body near the Jetavana monastery.

The next day, the heretics spread the news of the disappearance of Sundari. They reported to the king who gave them permission to search where they wished. Finding the body near the Jetavana monastery, they reported, 'O king, the followers of Gotama have killed Sundari and have thrown her body near the Jetavana monastery to cover up the misdeed of their Teacher.' The king replied, 'In that case, you may go around the town and proclaim the fact.' So they went around the town carrying the dead body of Sundari, shouting, 'Look at what the followers of Gotama have done! See how they have tried to cover up the misdeed of Gotama!' When informed that the heretics were trying to ruin his reputation and honour, the Buddha only said, 'My sons, you just tell them this: One who tells lies goes to hell; one who has done evil and says 'I did not do it' also goes to hell. Both of them, being evil doers, suffer alike in hell and in their future existence.'

The king then ordered his men to investigate the murder of Sundari. On investigation, they found that Sundari had died at the hands of some villains. When brought before the king, the villains admitted that they were hired by the heretics to kill Sundari and dump her body near the Jetavana monastery. The heretics were also brought before the king and they confessed their role in the murder of Sundari. The king then ordered them to go around the town and confess their guilt to the people. So they went around the town saying, 'We have falsely accused the disciples of Gotama just to bring disgrace on him. The disciples of Gotama are innocent, only we are guilty of the crime.' The heretics and the villains were punished for the murder of Sundari. As a result of this episode, the glory and the good name of the Buddha were very much enhanced.

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BLESSED INDEED ARE THEY WHO HONOUR THOSE WORTHY OF HONOUR

Abhivadanasilissa-

Niccama vaddhapacayino

Cattaro dhamma vaddhanti-

Ayu vanno sukham balam

~ Dh. 109 ~

For one who is in the habit of constantly honouring and respecting the elders, four blessings increase- age, beauty, bliss, and strength.

VIII: 8 How the Buddha protected a child (Ayu Waddhana)

Once, there were two hermits who lived together practicing religious austerities for many years. Later, one of them left the hermit life and got married. After a son was born, the family visited the old hermit and paid their respects to him. To the parents the hermit said, ' May you live long', but he said nothing to the child. The parents were puzzled and asked the hermit the reason for his silence. The hermit told them that the child would live only seven more days and that while he himself did not know how to prevent his death, Gotama, the Buddha, might know how to do it.

So the parents took the child to the Buddha. When they paid homage to the Buddha, he also said, ' May you live long ' to the parents only and not to the child. The Buddha also knew the impending death of the child. To prevent his death, the parents were told to build a pavilion at the entrance to the house, and put the child on a couch in the pavilion. Then some bhikkhus were sent there to chant the Parittas for seven days. On the seventh day, the Buddha himself came to the pavilion; the devas were also in attendance. At that time, an evil spirit was at the entrance, waiting for a chance to attack the child, but as more powerful devas arrived the demon had to step back and make room for them so that he had to stay at a place very far away from the child. That whole night, recitation of parittas continued, thus protecting the child. The next day, the child was taken up from the couch and made to pay respects to the Buddha. This time, the Buddha said, ' May you live long 'to the child. When asked how long the child would live, the Buddha replied that he would live up to one hundred and twenty years. So the child was named Ayu Waddhana.

When the child grew up, he went about the country with his friends and fellow devotees. One day, they came to the Jetavana monastery, and the bhikkhus, recognizing him, asked the Buddha, ' For living beings, is there any means of gaining longevity?'To this question, the Buddha answered, ' By respecting and honouring the elders and those who are wise and virtuous, one would gain not only longevity but also beauty, happiness and strength.'

Extracted From The Book : The Dhammapada

The Full Text is on Sale and can be obtained from:

Buddhist Missionary Society
Buddhist Maha Vihara
123, Jalan Berhala, Brickfields
50470 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia