The Dammapada

‘The Way of Duty’

The Sayings of the Buddha

1. Choices

We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts we make the world.

Speak or act with an impure mind

And trouble will follow you

As the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart.

We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts we make the world.

Speak or act with a pure mind

And happiness will follow you

As your shadow, unshakable.

"Look how he abused me and hurt me,

How he threw me down and robbed me."

Live with such thoughts and you live in hate.

"Look how he abused me and hurt me,

How he threw me down and robbed me."

Abandon such thoughts, and live in love.

In this world

Hate never yet dispelled hate.

Only love dispels hate.

This is the law,

Ancient and inexhaustible.

You too shall pass away.

Knowing this, how can you quarrel?

How easily the wind overturns a frail tree.

Seek happiness in the senses,

Indulge in food and sleep,

And you too will be uprooted.

The wind cannot overturn a mountain.

Temptation cannot touch the man

Who is awake, strong and humble,

Who masters himself and minds the dharma.

If a man's thoughts are muddy,

If he is reckless and full of deceit,

How can he wear the yellow robe?

Whoever is master of his own nature,

Bright, clear and true,

He may indeed wear the yellow robe.

Mistaking the false for the true,

And the true for the false,

You overlook the heart

And fill yourself with desire.

See the false as false,

The true as true.

Look into your heart.

Follow your nature.

An unreflecting mind is a poor roof.

Passion, like the rain, floods the house.

But if the roof is strong, there is shelter.

Whoever follows impure thoughts

Suffers in this world and the next.

In both worlds he suffers

And how greatly

When he sees the wrong he has done.

But whoever follows the dharma

Is joyful here and joyful there.

In both worlds he rejoices

And how greatly

When he sees the good he has done.

For great is the harvest in this world,

And greater still in the next.

However many holy words you read,

However many you speak,

What good will they do you

If you do not act upon them?

Are you a shepherd

Who counts another man's sheep,

Never sharing the way?

Read as few words as you like,

And speak fewer.

But act upon the dharma.

Give up the old ways -

Passion, enmity, folly.

Know the truth and find peace.

Share the way.

2. Wakefulness

Wakefulness is the way to life.

The fool sleeps

As if he were already dead,

But the master is awake

And he lives forever.

He watches.

He is clear.

How happy he is!

For he sees that wakefulness is life.

How happy he is,

Following the path of the awakened.

With great perseverance

He meditates, seeking

Freedom and happiness.

So awake, reflect, watch.

Work with care and attention.

Live in the way

And the light will grow in you.

By watching and working

The master makes for himself an island

Which the flood cannot overwhelm.

The fool is careless.

But the master guards his watching.

It is his most precious treasure.

He never gives in to desire.

He meditates.

And in the strength of his resolve

He discovers true happiness.

He overcomes desire -

And from the tower of his wisdom

He looks down with dispassion

Upon the sorrowing crowd.

From the mountain top

He looks down at those

Who live close to the ground.

Mindful among the mindless,

Awake while others dream,

Swift as the race horse

He outstrips the field.

By watching

Indra became king of the gods.

How wonderful it is to watch.

How foolish to sleep.

The beggar who guards his mind

And fears the waywardness of his thoughts

Burns through every bond

With the fire of his vigilance.

The beggar who guards his mind

And fears his own confusion

Cannot fall.

He has found his way to peace.

3. Mind

As the fletcher whittles

And makes straight his arrows,

So the master directs

His straying thoughts.

Like a fish out of water,

Stranded on the shore,

Thoughts thrash and quiver,

For how can they shake off desire?

They tremble, they are unsteady,

They wander at their own will.

It is good to control them,

And to master them brings happiness.

But how subtle they are,

How elusive!

The task is to quieten them,

And by ruling them to find happiness.

With single-mindedness

The master quells his thoughts.

He ends their wandering.

Seated in the cave of the heart,

He finds freedom.

How can a troubled mind

Understand the way?

If a man is disturbed

He will never be filled with knowledge.

An untroubled mind,

No longer seeking to consider

What is right and what is wrong,

A mind beyond judgments,

Watches and understands.

Know that the body is a fragile jar,

And make a castle of your mind.

In every trial

Let understanding fight for you

To defend what you have won.

For soon the body is discarded,

Then what does it feel?

A useless log of wood, it lies on the ground,

Then what does it know?

Your worst enemy cannot harm you

As much as your own thoughts, unguarded.

But once mastered,

No one can help you as much,

Not even your father or your mother.

4. Flowers

Who shall conquer this world

And the world of death with all its gods?

Who shall discover

The shining way of dharma?

You shall, even as the man

Who seeks flowers

Finds the most beautiful,

The rarest.

Understand that the body

Is merely the foam of a wave,

The shadow of a shadow.

Snap the flower arrows of desire

And then, unseen,

Escape the king of death.

And travel on.

Death overtakes the man

Who gathers flowers

When with distracted mind and thirsty senses

He searches vainly for happiness

In the pleasures of the world.

Death fetches him away

As a flood carries off a sleeping village.

Death overcomes him

When with distracted mind and thirsty senses

He gathers flowers.

He will never have his fill

Of the pleasures of the world.

The bee gathers nectar from the flower

Without marring its beauty or perfume.

So let the master settle, and wander.

Look to your own faults,

What you have done or left undone.

Overlook the faults of others.

Like a lovely flower,

Bright but scentless,

Are the fine but empty words

Of the man who does not mean what he says.

Like a lovely flower,

Bright and fragrant,

Are the fine and truthful words

Of the man who means what he says.

Like garlands woven from a heap of flowers,

Fashion from your life as many good deeds.

The perfume of sandalwood,

Rosebay or jasmine

Cannot travel against the wind.

But the fragrance of virtue

Travels even against the wind,

As far as the ends of the world.

How much finer

Is the fragrance of virtue

Than of sandalwood, rosebay,

Of the blue lotus or jasmine!

The fragrance of sandalwood and rosebay

Does not travel far.

But the fragrance of virtue

Rises to the heavens.

Desire never crosses the path

Of virtuous and wakeful men.

Their brightness sets them free.

How sweetly the lotus grows

In the litter of the wayside.

Its pure fragrance delights the heart.

Follow the awakened

And from among the blind

The light of your wisdom

Will shine out, purely.

5. The Fool

How long the night to the watchman,

How long the road to the weary traveller,

How long the wandering of many lives

To the fool who misses the way.

If the traveller cannot find

Master or friend to go with him,

Let him travel alone

Rather than with a fool for company.

"My children, my wealth!"

So the fool troubles himself.

But how has he children or wealth?

He is not even his own master.

The fool who knows he is a fool

Is that much wiser.

The fool who thinks he is wise

Is a fool indeed.

Does the spoon taste the soup?

A fool may live all his life

In the company of a master

And still miss the way.

The tongue tastes the soup.

If you are awake in the presence of a master

One moment will show you the way.

The fool is his own enemy.

The mischief is his undoing.

How bitterly he suffers!

Why do what you will regret?

Why bring tears upon yourself?

Do only what you will not regret,

And fill yourself with joy.

For a while the fool's mischief

Tastes sweet, sweet as honey.

But in the end it turns bitter.

And how bitterly he suffers!

For months the fool may fast,

Eating from the tip of a grass blade.

Still he is not worth a penny

Beside the master whose food is the way.

Fresh milk takes time to sour.

So a fool's mischief

Takes time to catch up with him.

Like the embers of a fire

It smoulders within him.

Whatever a fool learns,

It only makes him duller.

Knowledge cleaves his head.

For then he wants recognition.

A place before other people,

A place over other people.

"Let them know my work,

Let everyone look to me for direction."

Such are his desires,

Such is his swelling pride.

One way leads to wealth and fame,

The other to the end of the way.

Look not for recognition

But follow the awakened

And set yourself free.

6. The Wise Man

The wise man tells you

Where you have fallen

And where you yet may fall -

Invaluable secrets!

Follow him, follow the way.

Let him chasten and teach you

and keep you from mischief.

The world may hate him,

But good men love him.

Do not look for bad company

Or live with men who do not care.

Find friends who love the truth.

Drink deeply.

Live in serenity and joy.

The wise man delights in the truth

And follows the law of the awakened.

The farmer channels water to his land.

The fletcher whittles his arrows.

And the carpenter turns his wood.

So the wise man directs his mind.

The wind cannot shake a mountain.

Neither praise nor blame moves the wise man.

He is clarity.

Hearing the truth,

He is like a lake,

Pure and tranquil and deep.

Want nothing.

Where there is desire,

Say nothing.

Happiness or sorrow -

Whatever befalls you,

Walk on

Untouched, unattached.

Do not ask for family or power or wealth,

Either for yourself or for another.

Can a wise man wish to rise unjustly?

Few cross over the river.

Most are stranded on this side.

On the riverbank they run up and down.

But the wise man, following the way,

Crosses over, beyond the reach of death.

He leaves the dark way

For the way of light.

He leaves his home, seeking

Happiness on the hard road.

Free from desire,

Free from possessions,

Free from the dark places of the heart.

Free from attachment and appetite,

Following the seven lights of awakening,

And rejoicing greatly in his freedom,

In this world the wise man

Becomes himself a light,

Pure, shining, free.

7. The Master

At the end of the way

The master finds freedom

From desire and sorrow -

Freedom without bounds.

Those who awaken

Never rest in one place.

Like swans, they rise

And leave the lake.

On the air they rise

And fly an invisible course,

Gathering nothing, storing nothing.

Their food is knowledge.

They live upon emptiness.

They have seen how to break free.

Who can follow them?

Only the master,

Such is his purity.

Like a bird,

He rises on the limitless air

And flies an invisible course.

He wishes for nothing.

His food is knowledge.

He lives upon emptiness.

He has broken free.

He is the charioteer.

He has tamed his horses,

Pride and the senses.

Even the gods admire him.

Yielding like the earth,

Joyous and clear like the lake,

Still as the stone at the door,

He is free from life and death.

His thoughts are still.

His words are still.

His work is stillness.

He sees his freedom and is free.

The master surrenders his beliefs.

He sees beyond the end and the beginning.

He cuts all ties.

He gives up all desires.

He resists all temptations.

And he rises.

And wherever he lives,

In the city or the country,

In the valley or in the hills,

There is great joy.

Even in the empty forest

He finds joy

Because he wants nothing.

8. The Thousands

Better than a thousand hollow words

Is one word that brings peace.

Better than a thousand hollow verses

Is one verse that brings peace.

Better than a hundred hollow lines

Is one line of the dharma, bringing peace.

It is better to conquer yourself

Than to win a thousand battles.

Then the victory is yours.

It cannot be taken from you,

Not by angels or by demons,

Heaven or hell.

Better than a hundred years of worship,

Better than a thousand offerings,

Better than giving up a thousand worldly ways

In order to win merit,

Better even than tending in the forest

A sacred flame for a hundred years -

Is one moment's reverence

For the man who has conquered himself.

To revere such a man,

A master old in virtue and holiness,

Is to have victory over life itself,

And beauty, strength and happiness.

Better than a hundred years of mischief

Is one day spent in contemplation.

Better than a hundred years of ignorance

Is one day spent in reflection.

Better than a hundred years of idleness

Is one day spent in determination.

Better to live one day

Wondering

How all things arise and pass away.

Better to live one hour

Seeing

The one life beyond the way.

Better to live one moment

In the moment

Of the way beyond the way.

9. Mischief

Be quick to do good.

If you are slow,

The mind, delighting in mischief,

Will catch you.

Turn away from mischief.

Again and again, turn away.

Before sorrow befalls you.

Set your heart on doing good.

Do it over and over again,

And you will be filled with joy.

A fool is happy

Until his mischief turns against him.

And a good man may suffer

Until his goodness flowers.

Do not make light of your failings,

Saying, "What are they to me?"

A jug fills drop by drop.

So the fool becomes brimful of folly.

Do not belittle your virtues,

Saying, "They are nothing."

A jug fills drop by drop.

So the wise man becomes brimful of virtue.

As the rich merchant with few servants

Shuns a dangerous road

And the man who loves life shuns poison,

Beware the dangers of folly and mischief.

For an unwounded hand may handle poison.

The innocent come to no harm.

But as dust thrown against the wind,

Mischief is blown back in the face

Of the fool who wrongs the pure and harmless.

Some are reborn in hell,

Some in this world,

The good in heaven.

But the pure are not reborn.

Nowhere!

Not in the sky,

Nor in the midst of the sea,

Nor deep in the mountains,

Can you hide from your own mischief.

Not in the sky,

Not in the midst of the ocean,

Nor deep in the mountains,

Nowhere

Can you hide from your own death.

10. Violence

All beings tremble before violence.

All fear death.

All love life.

See yourself in the other.

Then whom can you hurt?

What harm can you do?

He who seeks happiness

By hurting those who seek happiness

Will never find happiness.

For your brother is like you.

He wants to be happy.

Never harm him

And when you leave this life

You too will find happiness.

Never speak harsh words

For they will rebound upon you.

Angry words hurt

And the hurt rebounds.

Like a broken gong

Be still, and silent.

Know the stillness of freedom

Where there is no more striving.

Like herdsmen driving their cows into the fields,

Old age and death will drive you before them.

But the fool in his mischief forgets

And he lights the fire

Wherein one day he must burn.

He who harms the harmless

Or hurts the innocent,

Ten times shall he fall -

Into torment or infirmity,

Injury or disease or madness,

Persecution or fearful accusation,

Loss of family, loss of fortune.

Fire from heaven shall strike his house

And when his body has been struck down,

He shall rise in hell.

He who goes naked,

With matted hair, mud bespattered,

Who fasts and sleeps on the ground

And smears his body with ashes

And sits in endless meditation -

So long as he is not free from doubts,

He will not find freedom.

But he who lives purely and self-assured,

In quietness and virtue,

Who is without harm or hurt or blame,

Even if he wears fine clothes,

So long as he also has faith,

He is a true seeker.

A noble horse rarely

Feels the touch of the whip.

Who is there in this world as blameless?

Then like a noble horse

Smart under the whip.

Burn and be swift.

Believe, meditate, see.

Be harmless, be blameless.

Awake to the dharma.

And from all sorrows free yourself.

The farmer channels water to his land.

The fletcher whittles his arrows.

The carpenter turns his wood.

And the wise man masters himself.

11. Old Age

The world is on fire!

And you are laughing?

You are deep in the dark.

Will you not ask for a light?

For behold your body -

A painted puppet, a toy,

Jointed and sick and full of false imaginings,

A shadow that shifts and fades.

How frail it is!

Frail and pestilent,

It sickens, festers and dies.

Like every living thing

In the end it sickens and dies.

Behold these whitened bones,

The hollow shells and husks of a dying summer.

And you are laughing?

You are a house of bones,

Flesh and blood for plaster.

Pride lives in you,

And hypocrisy, decay, and death.

The glorious chariots of kings shatter.

So also the body turns to dust.

But the spirit of purity is changeless

And so the pure instruct the pure.

The ignorant man is an ox.

He grows in size, not in wisdom.

"Vainly I sought the builder of my house

Through countless lives.

I could not find him...

How hard it is to tread life after life!

"But now I see you, O builder!

And never again shall you build my house.

I have snapped the rafters,

Split the ridgepole

And beaten out desire.

And now my mind is free."

There are no fish in the lake.

The long-legged cranes stand in the water.

Sad is the man who in his youth

Loved loosely and squandered his fortune -

Sad as a broken bow,

And sadly is he sighing

After all that has arisen and has passed away.

12. Yourself

Love yourself and watch -

Today, tomorrow, always.

First establish yourself in the way,

Then teach,

And so defeat sorrow.

To straighten the crooked

You must first do a harder thing -

Straighten yourself.

You are your only master.

Who else?

Subdue yourself,

And discover your master.

Wilfully you have fed

Your own mischief.

Soon it will crush you

As the diamond crushes stone.

By your own folly

You will be brought as low

As you worst enemy wishes.

So the creeper chokes the tree.

How hard it is to serve yourself,

How easy to lose yourself

In mischief and folly.

The Kashta reed dies when it bears fruit.

So the fool,

Scorning the teachings of the awakened,

Spurning those who follow the dharma,

Perishes when his folly flowers.

Mischief is yours.

Sorrow is yours.

But virtue is also yours,

And purity.

You are the source

Of all purity and impurity.

No one purifies another.

Never neglect your work

For another's,

However great his need.

Your work is to discover your work

And then with all your heart

To give yourself to it.

13. The World

Do not live in the world,

In distraction and false dreams.

Outside the dharma,

Arise and watch.

Follow the way joyfully

Through this world and beyond.

Follow the way of virtue.

Follow the way joyfully

Through this world and on beyond!

For consider the world -

A bubble, a mirage.

See the world as it is,

And death shall overlook you.

Come, consider the world,

A painted chariot for kings,

A trap for fools.

But he who sees goes free.

As the moon slips from behind a cloud

And shines,

So the master comes out from behind his ignorance

And shines.

The world is in darkness.

How few have eyes to see!

How few the birds

Who escape the net and fly to heaven!

Swans rise and fly toward the sun.

What magic!

So do the pure conquer the armies of illusion

And rise and fly.

If you scoff at heaven

And violate the dharma,

If your words are lies,

Where will your mischief end?

The fool laughs at generosity.

The miser cannot enter heaven.

But the master finds joy in giving

And happiness is his reward.

And more -

For greater than all the joys

Of heaven and earth,

Greater still and than dominion

Over all the worlds,

Is the joy of reaching the stream.

14. The Man Who Is Awake

He is awake.

The victory is his.

He has conquered the world.

How can he lose the way

Who is beyond the way?

His eye is open

His foot is free.

Who can follow after him?

The world cannot reclaim him

Or lead him astray,

Nor can the poisoned net of desire hold him.

He is awake!

The gods watch over him.

He is awake

And finds joy in the stillness of meditation

And in the sweetness of surrender.

Hard it is to be born,

Hard it is to live,

Harder still to hear of the way,

And hard to rise, follow, and awake.

Yet the reaching is simple.

Do what is right.

Be pure.

At the end of the way is freedom.

Till then, patience.

If you wound or grieve another,

You have not learned detachment.

Offend in neither word nor deed.

Eat with moderation.

Live in your heart.

Seek the highest consciousness.

Master yourself according to the dharma.

This is the simple teaching of the awakened.

The rain could turn to gold

And still your thirst would not be slaked.

Desire is unquenchable

Or it ends in tears, even in heaven.

He who wishes to awake

Consumes his desires

Joyfully.

In his fear a man may shelter

In mountains or in forests,

In groves of sacred trees or in shrines.

But how can he hide there from his sorrow?

He who shelters in the way

And travels with those who follow it

Comes to see the four great truths.

Concerning sorrow,

The beginning of sorrow,

The eightfold way

And the end of sorrow.

Then at last he is safe.

He has shaken off sorrow.

He is free.

The awakened are few and hard to find.

Happy is the house where a man awakes.

Blessed is his birth.

Blessed is the teaching of the way.

Blessed is the understanding among those who follow it,

And blessed is their determination.

And blessed are those who revere

The man who awakes and follows the way.

They are free from fear.

They are free.

They have crossed over the river of sorrow.

15. Joy

Live in joy,

In love,

Even among those who hate.

Live in joy,

In health,

Even among the afflicted.

Live in joy,

In peace,

Even among the troubled.

Live in joy,

Without possessions.

Like the shining ones.

The winner sows hatred

Because the loser suffers.

Let go of winning and losing

And find joy.

There is no fire like passion,

No crime like hatred,

No sorrow like separation,

No sickness like hunger,

And no joy like the joy of freedom.

Health, contentment and trust

Are your greatest possessions,

And freedom your greatest joy.

Look within.

Be still.

Free from fear and attachment,

Know the sweet joy of the way.

How joyful to look upon the awakened

And to keep company with the wise.

How long the road to the man

Who travels the road with the fool.

But whoever follows those who follow the way

Discovers his family, and is filled with joy.

Follow then the shining ones,

The wise, the awakened, the loving,

For they know how to work and forbear.

Follow them

As the moon follows the path of the stars.

16. Pleasure

Do not let pleasure distract you

From meditation, from the way.

Free yourself from pleasure and pain.

For in craving pleasure or in nursing pain

There is only sorrow.

Like nothing lest you lose it,

Lest it bring you grief and fear.

Go beyond likes and dislikes.

From passion and desire,

Sensuousness and lust,

Arise grief and fear.

Free yourself from attachment.

He is pure, and sees.

He speaks the truth, and lives it.

He does his own work.

So he is admired and loved.

With a determined mind and undesiring heart

He longs for freedom.

He is called Uddhamsoto -

"He who goes upstream."

When a traveller at last comes home

From a far journey,

With what gladness

His family and friends receive him!

Even so shall your good deeds

Welcome you like friends

And with what rejoicing

When you pass from one life to the next!

17. Anger

Let go of anger.

Let go of pride.

When you are bound by nothing

You go beyond sorrow.

Anger is like a chariot careering wildly.

He who curbs his anger is the true charioteer.

Others merely hold the reins.

With gentleness overcome anger.

With generosity overcome meanness.

With truth overcome deceit.

Speak the truth.

Give whenever you can,

Never be angry.

These three steps will lead you

Into the presence of the gods.

The wise harm no one.

They are masters of their bodies

And they go to the boundless country.

They go beyond sorrow.

Those who seek perfection

Keep watch day and night

Till all desires vanish.

Listen, Atula. This is not new,

It is an old saying -

"They blame you for being silent,

They blame you when you talk too much

And when you talk too little."

Whatever you do, they blame you.

The world always finds

A way to praise and a way to blame.

It always has and it always will.

But who dares blame the man

Whom the wise continually praise,

Whose life is virtuous and wise,

Who shines like a coin of pure gold?

Even the gods praise him.

Even Brahma praises him.

Beware of the anger of the body.

Master the body.

Let it serve truth.

Beware of the anger of the mouth.

Master your words.

Let them serve truth.

Beware of the anger of the mind.

Master your thoughts.

Let them serve truth.

The wise have mastered

Body, word and mind.

They are the true masters.

18. Impurity

You are as the yellow leaf.

The messengers of death are at hand.

You are to travel far away.

What will you take with you?

You are the lamp

To lighten the way.

Then hurry, hurry.

When your light shines

Without impurity of desire

You will come into the boundless country.

Your life is falling away.

Death is at hand.

Where will you rest on the way?

What have you taken with you?

You are the lamp

To lighten the way.

Then hurry, hurry.

When your light shines purely

You will not be born

And you will not die.

As a silversmith sifts dust from silver,

Remove your own impurities

Little by little.

Or as iron is corroded by rust

Your own mischief will consume you.

Neglected, the sacred verses rust.

For beauty rusts without use

And unrepaired the house falls into ruin,

And the watch, without vigilance, fails.

In this world and the next

There is impurity and impurity:

When a woman lacks dignity,

When a man lacks generosity.

But the greatest impurity is ignorance.

Free yourself from it.

Be pure.

Life is easy

For the man who is without shame,

Impudent as a crow,

A vicious gossip,

Vain, meddlesome, dissolute.

But life is hard

For the man who quietly undertakes

The way of perfection,

With purity, detachment and vigour.

He sees light.

If you kill, lie or steal,

Commit adultery or drink,

You dig up your own roots.

And if you cannot master yourself,

The harm you do turns against you

Grievously.

You may give in the spirit of light

Or as you please,

But if you care how another man gives

Or how he withholds,

You trouble your quietness endlessly.

These envying roots!

Destroy them

And enjoy a lasting quietness.

There is no fire like passion.

There are no chains like hate.

Illusion is a net,

Desire is a rushing river.

How easy it is to see your brother's faults,

How hard it is to face your own.

You winnow his in the wind like chaff,

But yours you hide,

Like a cheat covering up an unlucky throw.

Dwelling on your brother's faults

Multiplies your own.

You are far from the end of your journey.

The way is not in the sky.

The way is in the heart.

See how you love

Whatever keeps you from your journey.

But the Tathagathas,

"They who have gone beyond,"

Have conquered the world.

They are free.

The way is not in the sky.

The way is in the heart.

All things arise and pass away.

But the awakened awake forever.

19. The Just

If you determine your course

With force or speed,

You miss the way of the dharma.

Quietly consider

What is right and what is wrong.

Receiving all opinions equally,

Without haste, wisely,

Observe the dharma.

Who is wise,

The eloquent or the quiet man?

Be quiet,

And loving and fearless.

For the mind talks.

But the body knows.

Gray hairs do not make a master.

A man may grow old in vain.

The true master lives in truth,

In goodness and restraint,

Nonviolence, moderation and purity.

Fine words or fine features

Cannot make a master

Out of a jealous and greedy man.

Only when envy and selfishness

Are rooted out of him

May he grow in beauty.

A man may shave his head

But if he still lies and neglects his work,

If he clings to desire and attachment,

How can he follow the way?

The true seeker

Subdues all waywardness.

He has submitted his nature to quietness.

He is a true seeker

Not because he begs

But because he follows the lawful way,

Holding back nothing, holding to nothing,

Beyond good and evil,

Beyond the body and beyond the mind.

Silence cannot make a master out of a fool.

But he who weighs only purity in his scales,

Who sees the nature of the two worlds,

He is a master.

He harms no living thing.

And yet it is not good conduct

That helps you upon the way,

Nor ritual, nor book learning,

Nor withdrawal into the self,

Nor deep meditation.

None of these confers mastery or joy.

O seeker!

Rely on nothing

Until you want nothing.

20. The Way

The way is eightfold.

There are four truths.

All virtue lies in detachment.

The master has an open eye.

This is the only way,

The only way to the opening of the eye.

Follow it.

Outwit desire.

Follow it to the end of sorrow.

When I pulled out sorrow's shaft

I showed you the way.

It is you who must make the effort.

The masters only point the way.

But if you meditate

And follow the dharma

You will free yourself from desire.

"Everything arises and passes away."

When you see this, you are above sorrow.

This is the shining way.

"Existence is sorrow."

Understand, and go beyond sorrow.

This is the way of brightness.

"Existence is illusion."

Understand, and go beyond.

This is the way of clarity.

You are strong, you are young.

It is time to arise.

So arise!

Lest through irresolution and idleness

You lose the way.

Master your words.

Master your thoughts.

Never allow your body to do harm.

Follow these three roads with purity

And you will find yourself upon the one way,

The way of wisdom.

Sit in the world, sit in the dark.

Sit in meditation, sit in light.

Choose your seat.

Let wisdom grow.

Cut down the forest.

Not the tree.

For out of the forest comes danger.

Cut down the forest.

Fell desire.

And set yourself free.

While a man desires a woman,

His mind is bound

As closely as a calf to its mother.

As you would pluck an autumn lily,

Pluck the arrow of desire.

For he who is awake

Has shown you the way of peace.

Give yourself to the journey.

"Here shall I make my dwelling,

In the summer and the winter,

And in the rainy season."

So the fool makes his plans,

Sparing not a thought for his death.

Death overtakes the man

Who, giddy and distracted by the world,

Cares only for his flocks and his children,

Death fetches him away

As a flood carries off a sleeping village.

His family cannot save him,

Not his father nor his sons.

Know this.

Seek wisdom, and purity.

Quickly clear the way.

21. Out of the Forest

There is pleasure

And there is bliss.

Forgo the first to possess the second.

If you are happy

At the expense of another man's happiness,

You are forever bound.

You do not what you should.

You do what you should not.

You are reckless, and desire grows.

But the master is wakeful.

He watches his body.

In all his actions he discriminates,

And he becomes pure.

He is without blame

Though once he may have murdered

His mother and his father,

Two kings, a kingdom, and all its subjects.

Though the kings were holy

And their subjects among the virtuous,

Yet he is blameless.

The followers of the awakened

Awake

And day and night they watch

And meditate upon their master.

Forever wakeful,

They mind the dharma.

They know their brothers on the way.

They understand the mystery of the body.

They find joy in all beings.

They delight in meditation.

It is hard to live in the world

And hard to live out of it.

It is hard to be among the many.

And for the wanderer, how long is the road

Wandering through many lives!

Let him rest.

Let him not suffer.

Let him not fall into suffering.

If he is a good man,

A man of faith, honoured and prosperous,

Wherever he goes he is welcome.

Like the Himalayas

Good men shine from afar.

But bad men move unseen

Like arrows in the night.

Sit.

Rest.

Work.

Alone with yourself,

Never weary.

On the edge of the forest

Live joyfully,

Without desire.

22. The Dark

One man denies the truth.

Another denies his own actions.

Both go into the dark.

And in the next world suffer

For they offend truth.

Wear the yellow robe.

But if you are reckless

You will fall into darkness.

If you are reckless,

Better to swallow molten iron

Than eat at the table of the good folk.

If you court another man's wife

You court trouble.

Your sleep is broken.

You lose our honour.

You fall into darkness.

You go against the law,

You go into the dark.

Your pleasures end in fear

And the king's punishment is harsh.

But as a blade of grass held awkwardly

May cut your hand,

So renunciation may lead you into the dark.

For if in your renunciation

You are reckless and break your word,

If your purpose wavers,

You will not find the light.

Do what you have to do

Resolutely, with all your heart.

The traveller who hesitates

Only raises dust on the road.

It is better to do nothing

Than to do what is wrong.

For whatever you do, you do to yourself.

Like a border town well guarded,

Guard yourself within and without.

Let not a single moment pass

Lest you fall into darkness.

Feel shame only where shame is due.

Fear only what is fearful.

See evil only in what is evil.

Lest you mistake the true way

And fall into darkness.

See what is.

See what is not.

Follow the true way.

Rise.

23. The Elephant

I shall endure harsh words

As the elephant endures the shafts of battle.

For many people speak wildly.

The tamed elephant goes to battle.

The king rides him.

The tamed man is the master.

He can endure hard words in peace.

Better than a mule

Or the fine horses of Sindh

Or mighty elephants of war

Is the man who had mastered himself.

Not on their backs

Can he reach the untrodden country.

But only on his own.

The mighty elephant Dhanapalaka

Is wild when he is in rut,

And when bound he will not eat,

Remembering the elephant grove.

The fool is idle.

He eats and he rolls in his sleep

Like a hog in a sty.

And he has to live life over again.

"My own mind used to wander

Wherever pleasure or desire or lust led it.

But now I have it tamed,

I guide it,

As the keeper guides the wild elephant."

Awake.

Be the witness of your thoughts.

The elephant hauls himself from the mud.

In the same way drag yourself out of your sloth.

If the traveller can find

A virtuous and wise companion

Let him go with him joyfully

And overcome the dangers of the way.

But if you cannot find

Friend or master to go with you,

Travel on alone -

Like a king who has given away his kingdom,

Like an elephant in the forest.

Travel on alone,

Rather than with a fool for company.

Do not carry with you your mistakes.

Do not carry your cares.

Travel on alone.

Like an elephant in the forest.

To have friends in need is sweet

And to share happiness.

And to have done something good

Before leaving this life is sweet,

And to let go of sorrow.

To be a mother is sweet,

And a father.

It is sweet to live arduously,

And to master yourself.

O how sweet it is to enjoy life,

Living in honesty and strength!

And wisdom is sweet,

And freedom.

24. Desire

If you sleep,

Desire grows in you

Like a vine in the forest.

Like a monkey in the forest

You jump from tree to tree,

Never finding the fruit -

From life to life,

Never finding peace.

If you are filled with desire

Your sorrows swell

Like the grass after the rain.

But if you subdue desire

Your sorrows shall fall from you

Like drops of water from a lotus flower.

This is good counsel

And it is for everyone:

As the grass is cleared for the fresh root,

Cut down desire

Lest death after death crush you

As a river crushes the helpless reeds.

For if the roots hold firm,

A felled tree grows up again.

If desires are not uprooted,

Sorrows grow again in you.

Thirty-six streams are rushing toward you!

Desire and pleasure and lust...

Play in your imagination with them

And they will sweep you away.

Powerful streams!

They flow everywhere.

Strong vine!

If you see it spring up,

Take care!

Pull it out by the roots.

Pleasures flow everywhere.

You float upon them

And are carried from life to life.

Like a hunted hare you run,

The pursuer of desire pursued,

Harried from life to life.

O seeker!

Give up desire,

Shake off your chains.

You have come out of the hollow

Into the clearing.

The clearing is empty.

Why do you rush back into the hollow?

Desire is a hollow

And people say "Look!

He was free.

But now he gives up his freedom."

It is not iron that imprisons you

Nor rope nor wood,

But the pleasure you take in gold and jewels,

In sons and wives.

Soft fetters,

Yet they hold you down.

Can you snap them?

There are those who can,

Who surrender to the world,

Forsake desire, and follow the way.

O slave of desire,

Float upon the stream.

Little spider, stick to your web.

Or else abandon your sorrows for the way.

Abandon yesterday, and tomorrow,

And today.

Cross over to the father shore,

Beyond life and death.

Do your thoughts trouble you?

Does passion disturb you?

Beware of this thirstiness

Lest your wishes become desires

And desire binds you.

Quieten your mind.

Reflect.

Watch.

Nothing binds you.

You are free.

You are strong.

You have come to the end.

Free from passion and desire,

You have stripped the thorns from the stem.

This is your last body.

You are wise.

You are free from desire

And you understand words

And the stitching together of words.

And you want nothing.

"Victory is mine,

Knowledge is mine,

And all purity,

All surrender.

"I want nothing.

I am free.

I found my way.

What shall I call Teacher?

The gift of truth is beyond giving.

The taste beyond sweetness,

The joy beyond joy.

The end of desire is the end of sorrow.

The fool is his own enemy.

Seeking wealth, he destroys himself.

Seek rather the other shore.

Weeds choke the field.

Passion poisons the nature of man,

And hatred, illusion, and desire.

Honour the man who is without passion,

Hatred, illusion, and desire.

What you give to him

Will be given back to you,

And more.

25. The Seeker

Master your senses,

What you taste and smell,

What you see, what you hear.

In all things be a master

Of what you do and say and think.

Be free.

You are a seeker.

Delight in the mastery

Of your hands and your feet,

Of your words and your thoughts.

Delight in meditation

And in solitude.

Compose yourself, be happy.

You are a seeker.

Hold your tongue.

Do not exalt yourself

But lighten the way

For your words are sweet.

Follow the truth of the way.

Reflect upon it.

Make it your own.

Live it.

It will always sustain you.

Do not turn away what is given you

Not reach out for what is given to others,

Lest you disturb your quietness.

Give thanks

For what had been given to you,

However little.

Be pure, never falter.

You have no name and no form.

Why miss what you do not have?

The seeker is not sorry.

Love and joyfully

Follow the way,

The quiet way to the happy country.

Seeker!

Empty the boat,

Lighten the load,

Passion and desire and hatred.

And sail swiftly.

There are five (senses) at the door

To turn away, and five more,

And there are five to welcome in.

And when five have been left

Stranded on the shore,

The seeker is called Oghatinnoti -

"He who has crossed over."

Seeker!

Do not be restless.

Meditate constantly.

Or you will swallow fire

And cry out: "No more!"

If you are not wise,

How can you steady the mind?

If you cannot quieten yourself,

What will you ever learn?

How will you become free?

With a quiet mind

Come into that empty house, your heart,

And feel the joy of the way

Beyond the world.

Look within -

The rising and the falling.

What happiness!

How sweet to be free!

It is the beginning of life,

Of mastery and patience,

Of good friends along the way,

Of a pure and active life.

So live in love.

Do your work.

Make an end of sorrow.

For see how the jasmine

Releases and lets fall

Its withered flowers.

Let fall wilfulness and hatred.

Are you quiet?

Quieten your body.

Quieten your mind.

You want nothing.

Your words are still.

You are still.

By your own efforts

Waken yourself, watch yourself.

And live joyfully.

You are the master,

You are the refuge.

As a merchant breaks in a fine horse,

Master yourself.

How gladly you follow

The words of the awakened.

How quietly, how surely

You approach the happy country,

The heart of stillness.

However young,

The seeker who sets out upon the way

Shines bright over the world.

Like the moon,

Come out from behind the clouds!

Shine.

26. The True Master

Wanting nothing

With all your heart

Stop the stream.

When the world dissolves

Everything becomes clear.

Go beyond

This way or that way,

To the farther shore

Where the world dissolves

And everything becomes clear.

Beyond this shore

And the further shore,

Beyond the beyond,

Where there is no beginning,

No end.

Without fear, go.

Meditate.

Live purely.

Be quiet.

Do your work, with mastery.

By day the sun shines,

And the warrior in his armour shines.

By night the moon shines,

And the master shines in meditation.

But this day and night

The man who is awake

Shines in the radiance of the spirit.

A master gives up mischief.

He is serene.

He leaves everything behind him

He does not take offense

And he does not give it.

He never returns evil for evil.

Alas for the man

Who raises his hand against another,

And even more for him

Who returns the blow.

Resist the pleasures of life

And the desire to hurt -

Till sorrows vanish.

Never offend

By what you think or say or do.

Honour the man who is awake

And shows you the way.

Honour the fire of his sacrifice.

Matted hair or family or caste

Do not make a master

But the truth and goodness

With which he is blessed.

Your hair is tangled

And you sit on a deerskin.

What folly!

When inside you are ragged with lust.

The master's clothes are in tatters.

His veins stand out,

He is wasting away.

Alone in the forest

He sits and meditates.

A man is not born to mastery.

A master is never proud.

He does not talk down to others.

Owning nothing, he misses nothing.

He is not afraid.

He does not tremble.

Nothing binds him.

He is infinitely free.

So cut through

The strap and the thong and the rope.

Loosen the fastenings.

Unbolt the doors of sleep

And awake.

The master endures

Insults and ill treatment

Without reacting.

For his spirit is an army.

He is never angry.

He keeps his promises.

He never strays, he is determined.

This body is my last, he says!

Like water on the leaf of a lotus flower

Or a mustard seed on the point of a needle,

He does not cling.

For he has reached the end of sorrow

And has laid down his burden.

He looks deeply into things

And sees their nature.

He discriminates

And reaches the end of the way.

He does not linger

With those who have a home

Nor with those who stray.

Wanting nothing,

He travels on alone.

He hurts nothing.

He never kills.

He moves with love among the unloving,

With peace and detachment

Among the hungry and querulous.

Like a mustard seed from the point of a needle

Hatred has fallen from him,

And lust, hypocrisy and pride.

He offends no one.

Yet he speaks the truth.

His words are clear

But never harsh.

Whatever is not his

He refuses,

Good or bad, great or small.

He wants nothing from this world

And nothing from the next.

He is free.

Desiring nothing, doubting nothing,

Beyond judgment and sorrow

And the pleasures of the senses,

He had moved beyond time.

He is pure and free.

How clear he is.

He is the moon.

He is serene.

He shines.

For he has travelled

Life after life

The muddy and treacherous road of illusion.

He does not tremble

Or grasp or hesitate.

He has found peace.

Calmly

He lets go of life,

Or home and pleasure and desire.

Nothing of men can hold him.

Nothing of the gods can hold him.

Nothing in all creation can hold him.

Desire has left him,

Never to return.

Sorrow has left him,

Never to return.

He is calm.

In him the seed of renewing life

Had been consumed.

He has conquered all the inner worlds.

With dispassionate eye

He sees everywhere

The falling and the uprising.

And with great gladness

He knows that he has finished.

He has woken from his sleep.

And the way he has taken

Is hidden from men,

Even from spirits and gods,

By virtue of his purity.

In him there in no yesterday,

No tomorrow,

No today.

Possessing nothing,

Wanting nothing.

He is full of power.

Fearless, wise, exalted.

He has vanquished all things.

He sees by virtue of his purity.

He has come to the end of the way,

Over the river of his many lives,

His many deaths.

Beyond the sorrow of hell,

Beyond the great joy of heaven,

By virtue of his purity.

He has come to the end of the way.

All that he had to do, he has done.

And now he is one.

*Many thanks to Thomas Byrom for a beautiful rendition!*