

## PREFACE

Dhammapada is one of the best known books of the Piṭaka. It is a collection of the teachings of the Buddha expressed in clear, pithy verses. These verses were culled from various discourses given by the Buddha in the course of forty-five years of his teaching, as he travelled in the valley of the Ganges (Gaṅgā) and the sub-mountain tract of the Himalayas. These verses are often terse, witty and convincing. Whenever similes are used, they are those that are easily understood even by a child, e.g., the cart's wheel, a man's shadow, a deep pool, flowers. Through these verses, the Buddha exhorts one to achieve that greatest of all conquests, the conquest of self; to escape from the evils of passion, hatred and ignorance; and to strive hard to attain freedom from craving and freedom from the round of rebirths. Each verse contains a truth (dhamma), an exhortation, a piece of advice.

Dhammapada verses are often quoted by many in many countries of the world and the book has been translated into many languages. One of the earliest translations into English was made by Max Muller in 1870. Other translations that followed are those by F.L. Woodward in 1921, by Wagismara and Saunders in 1920, and by A.L. Edmunds (Hymns of the Faith) in 1902. Of the recent translations, that by Nārada Mahāthera is the most widely known. Dr. Walpola Rahula also has translated some selected verses from the Dhammapada and has given them at the end of his book "What the Buddha Taught," revised edition. The Chinese translated the Dhammapada from Sanskrit. The Chinese version of the Dhammapada was translated into English by Samuel Beal (Texts from the Buddhist Canon known as Dhammapada) in 1878.

In Burma, translations have been made into Burmese, mostly in prose, some with paraphrases, explanations and abridgements of stories relating to the verses. In recent years, some books on Dhammapada with both Burmese and English translations, together with Pāli verses, have also been published.

(iv)

Preface

The Dhammapada is the second book of the Khuddaka Nikāya of the Suttanta Piṭaka, consisting of four hundred and twenty-three verses in twenty-six chapters arranged under various heads. In the Dhammapada are enshrined the basic tenets of the Buddha's Teaching.

Verse (21) which begins with "Appamādo amatapadam" meaning "Mindfulness is the way to Nibbāna, the Deathless," is a very important and significant verse. Mindfulness is the most important element in Tranquillity and Insight Meditation. The last exhortation of the Buddha just before he passed away was also to be mindful and to endeavour diligently (to complete the task of attaining freedom from the round of rebirths through Magga and Phala). It is generally accepted that it was on account of this verse on mindfulness that the Emperor Asoka of India and King Anawrahta of Burma became converts to Buddhism. Both kings had helped greatly in the propagation of Buddhism in their respective countries.

In verse (29) the Buddha has coupled his call for mindfulness with a sense of urgency. The verse runs: "Mindful amongst the negligent, highly vigilant amongst the drowsy, the wise man advances like a race horse, leaving the jade behind."

Verses (1) and (2) illustrate the immutable law of Kamma, under which every deed, good or bad, comes back to the doer. Here, the Buddha emphasizes the importance of mind in all our actions and speaks of the inevitable consequences of our deeds, words and thoughts.

Verses (153) and (154) are expressions of sublime and intense joy uttered by the Buddha at the very moment of his Enlightenment. These two verses give us a graphic account of the culmination of the Buddha's search for Truth. They tell us about the Buddha finding the 'house-builder,' Craving, the cause of repeated births in Samsāra. Having rid of Craving, for him no more houses (khandhas) shall be built by Craving, and there will be no more rebirths.

Verses (277), (278) and (279) are also important as they tell us about the impermanent, unsatisfactory

Preface

(v)

and the non-self nature of all conditioned things. It is very important that one should perceive the true nature of all conditioned things and become weary of the khandhas, for this is the Path to Purity.

Then the Buddha shows us the Path leading to the liberation from round of rebirths, i.e., the Path with eight constituents (Aṭṭhaṅgiko Maggo) in Verse (273). Further, the Buddha exhorts us to make our own effort in Verse (276) saying, "You yourselves should make the effort, the Tathāgatas only show the way." Verse (183) gives us the teaching of the Buddhas. It says, "Do no evil, cultivate merit, purify one's mind; this is the teaching of the Buddhas."

In Verse (24) the Buddha shows us the way to success in life, thus: "If a person is energetic, mindful, pure in thought, word and deed, if he does everything with care and consideration, restrains his senses, earns his living according to the Dhamma and is not unheedful, then, the fame and fortune of that mindful person increase."

These are some of the examples of the gems to be found in the Dhammapada. Dhammapada is, indeed, a philosopher, guide and friend to all.

This translation of verses is from Pāli into English. The Pāli text used is the Dhammapada Pāli approved by the Sixth International Buddhist Synod. We have tried to make the translation as close to the text as possible, but sometimes it is very difficult, if not impossible, to find an English word that would exactly correspond to a Pāli word. For example, we cannot yet find a single English word that can convey the real meaning of the word "dukkha" used in the exposition of the Four Noble Truths. In this translation, wherever the term "dukkha" carries the same meaning as it does in the Four Noble Truths, it is left untranslated, but only explained.

When there is any doubt in the interpretation of the dhamma concept of the verses or when the literal meaning is vague or unintelligible, we have referred to the Commentary (in Pāli) and the Burmese translation of the Commentary by the Nyaunglebin Sayadaw, a very

(vi)

Preface

learned thera. On many occasions we have also consulted the teachers of the Dhamma (dhammācariyas) for elucidation of perplexing words and sentences.

In addition we have also consulted Burmese translations of the Dhammapada, especially the translation by the Union Buddha Sāsana Council, the translation by the Saṅgajā Sayadaw (1805-1876), a leading mahā thera in the time of King Mindon and King Thibaw, and also the translation by Sayadaw U Thittila, an Ovādācariya mahā thera of the Burma Piṭaka Association. The book by the Saṅgajā Sayadaw also includes paraphrases and abridgements of the Dhammapada stories.

### Dhammapada Stories

Summaries of the Dhammapada stories are given in the second part of the book as it is generally believed that the Dhammapada Commentary written by Buddhaghosa (5th. century A.D.) is a great help towards a better understanding of the Dhammapada. Three hundred and five stories are included in the Commentary. Most of the incidents mentioned in the stories took place during the life-time of the Buddha. In some stories, some facts about some past existences were also retold.

In writing summaries of stories we have not tried to translate the Commentary. We have simply culled the facts of the stories and have rewritten them briefly. A translation of the verses is given at the end of each story.

It only remains for me now to express my deep and sincere gratitude to the members of the Editorial Committee, Burma Piṭaka Association, for having meticulously gone through the script; to Sayagyi Dhammācariya U Aung Moe and to U Thein Maung, editor, Burma Piṭaka Association, for helping in the translation of the verses.

May the reader find the Path to Purity.

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Daw Mya Tin