

❖ Well-Being in the *Sutta Piṭaka* (2nd part of the Pāli Canon)¹

From *Samyutta-nikāya*, 56.11²

Setting in Motion the Wheel of Dharma (The First Sermon)

These two extremes, friends, are not to be practiced by one who has gone forth from the world. What are the two? That conjoined with the passions, low, vulgar, common, ignoble, and useless—and that conjoined with self-torture, painful, ignoble, and useless. Avoiding these two extremes the Tathāgata [the Buddha] has gained the knowledge of the Middle Way, which gives sight and knowledge, and tends to calm, to insight, enlightenment, *nirvāṇa*.

What, friends, is the Middle Way, which gives sight...? It is the noble Eightfold Path, namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration (*samādhi*). This, friends, is the Middle Way...

(1) Now this, friends, is the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha*): birth is suffering, aging is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow, lamentation, dejection, and despair are suffering. Contact with unpleasant things is suffering, not getting what one wishes is suffering. In short the five *khandhas* of grasping are suffering.³

(2) Now this, friends, is the noble truth of the cause of suffering: that craving (*tanhā*) which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

(3) Now this, friends, is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering: the cessation without remainder of that craving, abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

(4) Now this, friends, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of suffering: this is the noble Eightfold Path, namely, right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration...

As long as in these noble truths my threefold knowledge and insight...was not well purified, even so long, friends, in the world with its gods, Māra, Brahmā, with ascetics, *brahmins*, gods, and men, I had not attained the highest complete enlightenment. Thus I knew.

But when in these noble truths my threefold knowledge and insight...was well purified, then, friends, in the world...I had attained the highest complete enlightenment. Thus I knew. Knowledge arose in me; insight arose that the release of my mind is unshakable; this is my last existence; now there is no rebirth.

¹ The source-numbers below are the volume and page numbers from the Pāli Text Society's standard edition. Small changes were made to the translations to improve style, to be gender-inclusive, etc.

² Translation from E.J. Thomas (1927), *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*. Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 87-88.

³ The five *khandhas* [groups or aggregates] are bodily form, feeling, perception, mental formations (*saṅkhāra*), and consciousness. For the Buddha, suffering arises if one clings or identifies with any of these aggregates; see, e.g., *Samyutta-nikāya* 22.

From *Majjhima-nikāya*, 141.23⁴

Analysis of the Eightfold Path

[What] leads to the cessation of suffering?—It is just the Noble Eightfold Path, consisting of right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

Right view is knowing of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

Right intention is the resolve to renounce the world and to do no hurt or harm.

Right speech is to abstain from lies and slander, from reviling, and from tattle.

Right action is to abstain from taking life, from stealing, and from lechery.

Right livelihood is that by which the disciple of the Noble One supports himself, to the exclusion of wrong modes of livelihood.

Right effort is when a mendicant brings the will to bear, puts forth endeavor and energy, struggles and strives with all one's heart, to stop bad and wrong qualities which have not yet arisen from ever arising, to renounce those which have already arisen, to foster good qualities which have not yet arisen, and, finally, to establish, clarify, multiply, enlarge, develop, and perfect those good qualities which are there already.

Right mindfulness is when realizing what the body is—what feelings are—what the heart is—and what the mental states are—a mendicant dwells ardent, alert, and mindful, in freedom from the wants and discontents attendant on any of these things.

Right concentration is when, divested of lusts and divested of wrong dispositions, a mendicant develops, and dwells in, the first ecstasy (*jhāna*) with all its zest and satisfaction, a state bred of aloofness and not divorced from observation and reflection. By laying to rest observation and reflection, one develops and dwells in inward serenity, in [the] focusing of heart, in the zest and satisfaction of the second ecstasy, which is divorced from observation and reflection and is bred of concentration—passing thence to the third and fourth ecstasies.

This, friends, constitutes the Noble Truth of the Path that leads to the cessation of suffering.

⁴ Translation by Lord Chalmers (1927), *Further dialogues of the Buddha II*, Oxford UP, pp. 296-299.

From *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 36.6⁵

Analogy of the Two Arrows

When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed ordinary person sorrows, grieves, and laments, beats his or her chest, becomes distraught. So the person feels two pains, physical and mental. Just as if they were to shoot someone with an arrow and, right afterward, were to shoot the person with another one, thus feeling the pains of two arrows. In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed ordinary person sorrows, grieves and laments, beats his or her chest, becomes distraught. So the person feels two pains, physical and mental...

Now, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones, when touched with a feeling of pain, does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his or her chest or become distraught. So the person feels one pain: physical, but not mental. Just as if they were to shoot someone with an arrow and, right afterward, did not shoot the person with another one, thus feeling the pain of only one arrow. In the same way, when touched with a feeling of pain, the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones does not sorrow, grieve, or lament, does not beat his or her chest or become distraught. The person feels one pain: physical, but not mental...

This is the difference, this the distinction, this the distinguishing factor between the well-instructed disciple of the noble ones and the uninstructed ordinary person.

The discerning person, learned,
does not sense a (mental) feeling of pleasure or pain:
This is the difference in skillfulness
between the sage & the run-of-the-mill person.

For a learned person
who has fathomed the Dhamma...
desirable things do not charm the mind,
undesirable ones bring no resistance.

Acceptance and rejection are scattered,
gone to their end,
do not exist.

Knowing the dustless, sorrowless state,
one discerns rightly,
has gone, beyond becoming,
to the Further Shore.

⁵ Translated by Thanissaro Bhikku at <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn36/sn36.006.than.html>.

From *Majjhima-nikāya*, 21⁶

Analogy of the Saw

Friends, even if bandits were to sever you savagely limb by limb with a two-handled saw, one who became hateful toward them would not be carrying out my teaching. Herein, friends, you should train thus: “Our minds will remain unaffected, and we shall utter no bitter words; we shall abide compassionate for their welfare, with a mind of loving-kindness, never in a mood of hate. We shall abide pervading them with a mind imbued with loving-kindness; and starting with them, we shall abide pervading the all-encompassing world with a mind imbued with loving-kindness, abundant, exalted, immeasurable, without hostility, and without ill will.” That is how you should train, friends.

Friends if you keep this advice on the analogy of the saw constantly in mind, do you see any course of speech, trivial or gross, that you could not endure?

—No, venerable sir.

Therefore, friends, you should keep this advice on the analogy of the saw constantly in mind. That will lead to your welfare and happiness for a long time.

From *Majjhima-nikāya*, 54⁷

Analogy of the Hungry Dog

Suppose a dog, overcome with weakness and hunger, were to come across a slaughterhouse, and there a skilled butcher or butcher's apprentice were to fling it a chain of bones: thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, smeared with blood. What do you think? Would the dog, gnawing on that chain of bones, thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, smeared with blood, appease its weakness and hunger?

“No, Lord...Because the chain of bones is thoroughly scraped, without any flesh, and smeared with blood. The dog would get nothing but its share of weariness and disappointment.”

In the same way, householder, a disciple of the noble ones considers this point: “The Blessed One has compared sensuality to a chain of bones, of much stress, much despair, and greater drawbacks.” Seeing this with right discernment, as it actually is, then avoiding the equanimity that is diversified, based on diversity, one develops the equanimity that is unified, based on unity, where clinging to the baits of the world ceases without trace.

⁶ Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005). *In the Buddha's Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*. Wisdom Publications.

⁷ Translation by Nānamoli Thera at <https://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.054x.than.html>

From *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 35.28⁸

The Fire Sermon

Friends, everything is on fire. What is on fire?

The eye is on fire; forms are on fire. Consciousness at the eye is on fire, and contact at the eye is on fire. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is on fire. On fire with what? With the fire of desire, the fire of aversion, the fire of illusion. On fire, I tell you, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.

The ear is on fire; sounds are on fire...The nose is on fire; aromas are on fire...The tongue is on fire; flavors are on fire...The body is on fire; tactile sensations are on fire...

The intellect is on fire; ideas are on fire. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—that too is on fire. On fire with what? With the fire of desire, the fire of aversion, the fire of illusion. On fire, I tell you, with birth, aging and death, with sorrows, lamentations, pains, distresses, and despairs.

Seeing thus, the well-instructed disciple of the noble one grows disenchanted with the eye and with forms, disenchanted with consciousness at the eye, disenchanted with contact at the eye. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the eye—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—with that, too, one grows disenchanted.

One grows disenchanted with the ear and with sounds...with the nose and with aromas...with the tongue and with flavors...with the body and with tactile sensations...

One grows disenchanted with the intellect and with ideas, disenchanted with consciousness at the intellect, disenchanted with contact at the intellect. And whatever there is that arises in dependence on contact at the intellect—experienced as pleasure, pain or neither-pleasure-nor-pain—with that, too, one grows disenchanted.

Disenchanted, the disciple becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, one is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, ‘Fully released,’ one discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing more for this world.’

⁸ Translation by Ñanamoli Thera at <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn35/sn35.028.nymo.html>.

From *Khuddaka-nikāya*, 2⁹

The Dhammapada [selected verses]

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts...
3. “They abused me, beat me, defeated me, robbed me.” In those who harbor such thoughts, hatred will never cease.
4. “They abused me, beat me, defeated me, robbed me.” In those who do not harbor such thoughts, hatred will cease.
5. For hatred does not ever cease by hatred: hatred ceases by love. This is an eternal law.
6. The world does not know that we must all come to an end here; but those who know it, their quarrels cease at once.
21. Mindfulness is the path of *nirvāna*; mindlessness the path of death. Those who are mindful do not die, those who are mindless are as if dead already.
42. Whatever a hater may do to a hater, or an enemy to an enemy, a wrongly-directed mind will do one greater mischief.
43. Not a mother, not a father will do so much, nor any other relatives; a well-directed mind will do us greater service.
47. Death carries off one who is gathering flowers, whose mind is distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village.
50. Not the perversities of others, not their sins of commission or omission, but one’s own misdeeds and negligences should a sage take notice of.
62. “These offspring belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me,” with such thoughts a fool is tormented. The self does not even belong to the fool; how much less offspring and wealth?
63. The fool who admits foolishness is wise at least thus far. But a fool who self-identifies as wise, that is called a fool indeed.
80. Irrigators channel the waters; fletchers straighten arrows; carpenters carve wood; wise people fashion themselves.
81. As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, the wise falter not amidst blame and praise.

⁹ Translated by Max Muller (1881). *The Dhammapada: Sacred Books of the East* vol. 10. Oxford UP.

94. Even the gods envy one whose senses, like horses well broken in by the driver, have been subdued, who is free from pride, and free from appetites.
100. Even though a speech be a thousand senseless [words], one word of sense is better which, if one hears, one becomes quiet.
101. Even though a hymn be a thousand senseless [verses], one verse is better which, if one hears, one becomes quiet.
102. Though a person recite a hundred senseless lines, one line of the *dharma* is better which, if one hears, one becomes quiet.
103. Greater in battle than one who would conquer a thousand-thousand, is the person who would conquer just one—the self.
111. Better it is to live one day wise and meditative than to live a hundred years foolish and uncontrolled.
121. Let no one think lightly of evil, saying within the heart “it will not come nigh unto me.” Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; the fool becomes full of evil, even if gathered little by little.
122. Let no one think lightly of good, saying within the heart “it will not come nigh unto me.” Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; the wise become full of good, even if gathered little by little.
133. Do not speak harshly to anybody; those who are spoken to will answer thee in the same way. Angry speech is painful. Blows for blows will touch thee.
172. One who formerly was reckless and afterwards became sober, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds.
173. One whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds.
187. Even in heavenly pleasures one finds no satisfaction; the disciple who is fully awakened delights only in the destruction of all craving.
212. From pleasure comes grief, from pleasure comes fear; one who is free from pleasure knows neither grief nor fear.
221. Let one leave aside anger, forsake pride, and overcome all bondage! No sufferings befall the person who is not attached to name and form, and who calls nothing one’s own.
223. Let us overcome anger by love, let us overcome evil by good; let us overcome the miser by liberality, the liar by truth!

251. There's no fire like lust, no grip like hatred, no snare like delusion, no torrent like craving.
252. The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive. We sift through our neighbors' faults like chaff, but our own fault we hide, as a cheat hides a bad throw of the dice.
253. If one looks after the faults of others, and is always inclined to be offended, one's own cravings grow, and one is far from their destruction.
258. One is not learned because of talking much; one who is patient, free from hatred and fear, such a person is called learned.
259. One is not a bearer of the *dharma* because of talking much; even if one has learnt little but has experienced the truth in person, such a person is a bearer of the *dharma*...
277. "All created things perish." One who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way to purity.
278. "All created things are grief and pain." One who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way that leads to purity.
279. "All forms are unreal." One who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way that leads to purity.
327. Be not thoughtless, watch your thoughts! Draw yourself out of the evil way, like an elephant when sunk in mud.
369. O Bhikshu, empty this boat! If emptied, it will go quickly; having cut off passion and hatred, thou wilt go to *nirvāṇa*.