



# *A Pilgrim's Companion*

*Edited by Ken and Visakhia Kawasaki*

*Readings from Buddhist Texts to Enhance  
a Pilgrimage to the Sacred Sites*

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Ken and Visakha Kawasaki

# **Part 2**

## **Daily Meditation**

# Table of Contents

## Day One

Reading, Four Wonderful Things

Reflection, The Best Refuge

## Day Two

Reading, The Most Beautiful Girl of the Land,

Reflection, The Brahma Viharas,

## Day Three

Reading, The Three Divine Messengers

Reflection, Subduing Anger

## Day Four

Reading, The Bamboo Acrobat

Reflection, All Tremble at Violence

## Day Five

Reading, Friendship

Reflection, One Person

## Day Six

Reading, Giving

Reflection, Blessings

## Day Seven

Reading, The Discourse on Loving-Kindness

Reflection, Daily Reflection

## Day Eight

Reading, Hungry Ghosts

Reflection, The Futility of Worldly Gains

## Day Nine

Reading, Bhadraka

Reflection, Divine Abidings

## Day Ten

Reading, Tranquillity and Insight

Reflection, The Chariot

## Day Eleven

Reading, Wood from a Pyre

Reflection, Understanding Death

## Day Twelve

Reading, Worshiping the Six Directions

Reflection, Reflections on Grief

## Day Thirteen

Reading, Families

Reflection, Generosity

## Day Fourteen

Reading, A Handful of Leaves

Reflection, Advice to Rahula

## Day Fifteen

Reading, A Rainless Cloud

Reflection, The Four Dhamma Summaries

### Day Sixteen

Reading, The Simile of the Six Animals

Reflection, Be Familiar with Death

### Day Seventeen

Reading, Grasping and Worry

Reflection, The Mountains

### Day Eighteen

Reading, The Blind Men and the Elephant

Reflection, The Thirty-two Parts of the Body

### Day Nineteen

Reading, The Merit of Giving

Reflection, The Three Characteristics

### Day Twenty

Reading, Bringing Tranquillity to the Land

Reflection, An Auspicious Day

### Day Twenty-one

Reading, Gratitude

Reflection Advisory Stanzas

### Day Twenty-two

Reading, A Lump of Foam

Reflection, No Cause for Grief

### Day Twenty-three

Reading, Be Your Own Island

Reflection, Again and Again



#### Day Twenty-four

Reading, The Four Similes for Nutriment

Reflection, All Beings Will Die

#### Day Twenty-five

Reading, The Advantages of Loving-kindness

Reflection, The Fool

#### Day Twenty-six

Reading, The Hen and Her Eggs

Reflection,

#### Day Twenty-seven

Reading, Kisa-Gotami

Reflection, No Village Law

#### Day Twenty-eight

Reading, Insight Surpasses All

Reflection, Recollection of Death

#### Day Twenty-nine

Reading, Five Ways of Subduing Anger

Reflection, Meditation on Death

#### Day Thirty

Reading, The Goldsmith

Reflection, A Time Will Come

#### Day Thirty-one

Reading, Venerable Sunita, the Outcaste

Reflection, Metta Meditation

### Day Thirty-two

Reading, On Sleeping Well in the Cold Forest

Reflection, The Triple Gem

### Day Thirty-three

Reading, The Rarity of Human Birth

Reflection, The Eight Worldly Conditions

### Day Thirty-four

Reading, The Discourse on Blessings

Reflection, When Many Voices Shout at Once

### Day Thirty-five

Reading, Few Are Those Beings

Reflection, The Unborn

### Dedication of Merit

# **Day One**

## **Reading**

### **Four Wonderful Things**

“Bhikkhus,” the Buddha said, “on the appearance of the Tathagata, the Arahata, the Perfectly Enlightened One, four wonderful and marvelous things appear.

“People, for the most part, delight and rejoice in attachment, but, when the Dhamma of nonattachment is taught by the Tathagata, they wish to listen to it, lend an ear, and try to understand it. This is the first wonderful and marvelous thing that appears on the manifestation of the Tathagata.

“People, for the most part, delight and rejoice in conceit, but, when the Dhamma is taught by the Tathagata for the abolition of conceit, they wish to listen to it, lend an ear, and try to understand it. This is the second wonderful and marvelous thing that appears on the manifestation of the Tathagata.

“People, for the most part, delight and rejoice in restlessness, but, when the Dhamma of peace is taught by the Tathagata, they wish to listen to it, lend an ear, and try to understand it. This is the third wonderful and marvelous thing that appears on the manifestation of the Tathagata.

“People, for the most part, live in ignorance and are blinded and fettered by ignorance, but, when the Dhamma is taught by the Tathagata for the abolition of ignorance, they wish to listen to it, lend an ear, and try to understand it. This is the fourth wonderful and marvelous thing that appears on the manifestation of a Tathagata.

“On the appearance of the Tathagata, the Arahata, the Perfectly Enlightened One, these four wonderful and marvelous things appear.”

## **Reflection**

### **The Best Refuge**

To sacred hills, woods, and groves,  
To sacred trees and shrines,  
Do people go, gripped by fear.  
But those are not safe refuges,  
They are not the best refuge;  
Not by going there  
Is one freed from all suffering.  
But whoever takes refuge  
In the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha  
Will understand with wisdom  
The Four Noble Truths:  
Suffering, its cause, its overcoming,  
And the Noble Eightfold Path,  
Leading to its overcoming.  
This is a safe refuge;  
It is the best refuge.  
Having taken refuge here,  
One is freed from all suffering.

—Dhammapada 188-192

# **Day Two**

## **Reading**

### **The Most Beautiful Girl of the Land**

The Buddha said, “Suppose that, on hearing, ‘The most beautiful girl of the land!’ a great crowd of people were to assemble. Then, that most beautiful girl would dance and sing exquisitely. On hearing, ‘The most beautiful girl of the land is dancing and singing!’ an even larger crowd of people would assemble. Then, suppose that a man, loving life and not wishing to die, were to come along. Now, suppose that someone gave him a bowl filled to the brim with oil and said, ‘My good man, you must carry this bowl of oil through the crowd in front of the most beautiful girl of the land. Right behind you, a man with a drawn sword will be following. If you spill even a single drop of oil, he will immediately cut off your head.’

“Would that man be negligent of that bowl of oil and turn his attention elsewhere?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“Here is the meaning of this simile: ‘The bowl filled to the brim with oil’ is a designation for mindfulness of the body. Therefore, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop and cultivate mindfulness of the body, make it our basis, and fully perfect it.’ Thus, should you train yourselves.”

—Samyutta Nikaya 47, 20

## **Reflection**

### **The Brahma Viharas**

#### **Metta**

Loving-kindness is characterized as promoting the welfare of others. Its function is to desire welfare. It is manifested as the removal of annoyance. Its proximate cause is seeing the loveableness in beings. It succeeds when it makes ill-will subside, and it fails when it gives rise to selfish affection.

#### **Karuna**

Compassion is characterized as promoting the removal of others' suffering. Its function is not enduring the suffering of others. It is manifested as kindness. Its proximate cause is seeing helplessness in those overwhelmed by suffering. It succeeds when it makes cruelty subside, and it fails when it gives rise to sorrow.

#### **Mudita**

Sympathetic joy is characterized as joy in the success of others. Its function is being free from envy. It is manifested as the elimination of aversion. Its proximate cause is seeing other beings' success. It succeeds when it makes aversion subside, and it fails when it gives rise to merriment.

#### **Upekkha**

Equanimity is characterized as promoting equipoise towards beings. Its function is to see the equality in beings. It is manifested as quieting liking and disliking. Its proximate cause is seeing the ownership of deeds thus: "Beings are heirs to their deeds. Whose, if not theirs, is the choice by which they will become happy, or will be free from suffering, or will not fall away from the success they have reached?" It succeeds when it makes liking and disliking subside, and it fails when it gives rise to the indifference of mundane ignorance.

# Day Three

## Reading

### The Three Divine Messengers

The Buddha said, “There are three divine messengers.

“Imagine a person of bad conduct in body, speech, and mind. On the dissolution of the body, after death, he is reborn in hell, where the warders of hell seize him by both arms and take him before Yama, the King of Death. ‘Your Majesty,’ they announce, ‘this man had no respect for father and mother, nor for ascetics and brahmins. He did not honor the elders of the family. May Your Majesty inflict due punishment on him!’

“King Yama asks him, ‘My good man, didn’t you see the first divine messenger appearing among humankind?’

“‘No, Sire,’ he replies, ‘I did not.’

“‘Didn’t you ever see a woman or a man, eighty, ninety, or a hundred years old, frail, bent like a roof bracket, crooked, leaning on a stick, shakily going along, ailing, youth and vigor gone, with broken teeth, with gray hair or bald, and with wrinkled and spotted skin?’

“‘Yes, Sire, I saw that.’

“‘Didn’t it ever occur to you, an intelligent and mature person, “I, too, am subject to old age and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind”?’

“‘No, Sire, it did not. I was negligent.’

“‘Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence.’

“Then King Yama asks, ‘My good man, didn’t you see the second divine messenger?’

“‘No, Sire, I did not.’

“‘Didn’t you ever see a woman or a man who was sick and in pain, seriously ill, lying in his own filth, and having to be lifted up by some and put to bed by others?’

“‘Yes, Sire. I saw that.’

““Didn’t it ever occur to you, “I, too am subject to illness and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds”?”

““No, Sire. It did not. I was negligent.’

““Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence.’

“Then King Yama asks, ‘My good man, didn’t you see the third divine messenger?’

““No, Sire. I did not.’

““Didn’t you ever see a woman or a man, one, two, or three days dead, the corpse swollen, discolored, and festering?’

““Yes, Sire, I saw that.’

““Didn’t it ever occur to you, “I, too, am subject to death and cannot escape it. Let me now do noble deeds ‘?’

““No, Sire, It did not. I was negligent.’

““Through negligence, my good man, you failed to do noble deeds by body, speech, and mind. Well, you will be treated as befits your negligence. That evil action of yours was not done by mother, father, brothers, sisters, friends, or companions, nor by relatives, devas, ascetics, or brahmins. You alone did that evil deed, and you will have to experience the fruit!”

—Anguttara Nikaya 3, 35



## **Reflection**

### **Subduing Anger**

When anger arises, there are five ways by which one can subdue it, and by which he should wipe it out completely.

When anger arises, one should develop loving-kindness toward the other person.

When anger arises, one should develop compassion for the other person.

When anger arises, one should develop equanimity toward the other person.

When anger arises, one should ignore the other person and not pay any attention to him.

When anger arises, one should direct one's thoughts to the fact of the other person's being the product of his kamma: "This person is the owner of his kamma, heir of his kamma, born of his kamma, related to his kamma, and abides supported by his kamma. Whatever kamma he does, for good or for evil, to that he will be the heir."

These are five ways by which one can subdue anger whenever it arises and by which one should wipe it out completely.

—Anguttara Nikaya 5, 161

# Day Four

## Reading

### The Bamboo Acrobat

The Buddha said, “Once, an acrobat set up his bamboo pole and said to his apprentice, ‘Come, dear Medakathalika, climb the bamboo pole and stand on my shoulders.’

“‘Yes, Teacher,’ replied the apprentice. Then he climbed the bamboo pole and stood on the teacher’s shoulders.

“The acrobat then said, ‘You protect me, dear lad, and I’ll protect you. Thus, protected by one another, we’ll display our skills, collect our fee, and complete our act safely.’

“‘No, Teacher,’ the apprentice replied. ‘That’s not the way it should be done. You protect yourself, and I’ll protect myself. Thus, each self-protected, we’ll display our skills, collect our fee, and complete our act safely.’

“That is the proper method,” the Buddha said. “It’s just as the apprentice said to the teacher. ‘I will protect myself.’ Thus, should the foundations of mindfulness be practiced. ‘I will protect others.’ Thus, should the foundations of mindfulness be practiced. Protecting oneself, one protects others; protecting others, one protects oneself.”

“How does one protect others by protecting oneself? By the cultivation of the four foundations of mindfulness.

“How does one protect oneself by protecting others? By developing patience, harmlessness, loving-kindness, and sympathy.”

—Samyutta Nikaya 47,19

## **Reflection**

### **All Tremble at Violence**

All tremble at violence; all fear death. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

All tremble at violence; life is dear to all. Putting oneself in the place of another, one should not kill nor cause another to kill.

One who, while himself seeking happiness, oppresses with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will not attain happiness hereafter.

One who, while himself seeking happiness, does not oppress with violence other beings who also desire happiness, will find happiness hereafter.

—Dhammapada 129-132

# **Day Five**

## **Reading**

### **Friendship**

Once, in the Sakyan country, Venerable Ananda said to the Buddha, “Venerable Sir, good friendship is half of the holy life.”

“Not so, Ananda!” the Buddha replied. “Good friendship is the entire holy life.

“When one has a good friend, it is to be expected that he will develop and cultivate the Noble Eightfold Path—Right view, Right intention, Right speech, Right action, Right livelihood, Right effort, Right mindfulness, and Right concentration—each stage is based upon seclusion, dispassion, and cessation, maturing in release.

“By relying upon me as a good friend, Ananda, beings are freed from birth, from aging, from illness, from death, and from sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair. Thus, Ananda, it may be understood how the entire holy life is good friendship.

“Therefore, you should train yourself thus: ‘I will be one who has good friends.’

“When you have good friends, you should dwell with one thing for support: diligence in wholesome states—avoiding unwholesome states not yet arisen, abandoning unwholesome states already arisen, developing wholesome states, and maintaining wholesome states.

“When you are thus dwelling diligently, those around you will think, ‘Let us also dwell diligently, with diligence for support.’

“In this way, you will be guarded and protected.”

—Samyutta Nikaya 3, 18

## **Reflection**

### **One Person**

There is one person whose birth into the world is for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, for the good, the welfare, and the happiness of devas and humans, out of compassion for the world.

There is one person whose presence is hard to encounter in the world, whose teaching is seldom heard, and whose face is rarely gazed upon.

There is one person whose appearance in the world is unique, unequaled, incomparable, unparalleled, without counterpart, matchless, unrivaled, and who lifts up the hearts of devas and humans.

The passing away of one person from the world is regretted by the many and causes sorrow. Even though he admonished, “After I have passed away, let the Dhamma be your teacher,” still his passing away is regretted.

Who is that person? It is the Tathagata, the Arahata, the fully Enlightened Buddha.

—Anguttara Nikaya 1,13

# **Day Six**

## **Reading**

### **Giving**

The Buddha said, “A donation may be endowed with six factors—three factors of the donor and three factors of the recipients. What are those six factors?

“Before giving, the donor is glad; while giving, the donor’s mind is bright and clear; and after giving, the donor is gratified. These are the three factors of the donor.

The recipients are free of passion or are practicing for the subduing of passion; they are free of aversion or practicing for the subduing of aversion; and they are free of delusion or practicing for the subduing of delusion. These are the three factors of the recipients.

“It is not easy to measure the merit of a donation which is endowed with these six factors. One cannot say that this is a great amount of merit which will result in a heavenly rebirth. One can say only that the merit of such a donation is incalculable and immeasurable.

“It is not easy to measure the water in the ocean as ‘This many buckets of water, this many hundreds of buckets of water, this many thousands of buckets of water, or this many hundreds of thousands of buckets of water.’ One can say only that it is an incalculable and immeasurable mass of water. In the same way, as for the merit of a donation endowed with those six factors, one can say only that it is incalculable and immeasurable.”

—Anguttara Nikaya 6, 37

## **Reflection**

## **Blessings**

May you receive all blessings. May the devas protect you.

Through the power of the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, may you enjoy well-being.

# **Day Seven**

## **Reading**

### **The Discourse on Loving-Kindness**

Once, while the Buddha was staying at Savatthi, a group of bhikkhus, having gotten suitable subjects of meditation from him, went to a forest to spend the rainy season. While the bhikkhus were in the forest, the tree devas living there felt obliged to descend from their tree abodes and to stay on the ground. Hoping that the bhikkhus would soon leave, the devas became very upset when they learned that the bhikkhus intended to stay for three months. They tried to scare the bhikkhus away by harassing them in various ways, especially at night.

The bhikkhus found it impossible to meditate under such conditions, so they went to the Buddha and told him about their difficulties. The Buddha immediately taught them the Metta Sutta and advised them to return, armed with this protective sutta to use on the hostile devas.

When the bhikkhus went back to the forest, they recited the sutta and radiated the whole area with thoughts of loving-kindness. The devas were so affected by the power of the bhikkhus' metta that they allowed them to meditate in peace.

This is what the Buddha taught the bhikkhus:

One who is skilled in goodness and who wishes to attain that state of perfect peace, should be able, honest, truly upright, gentle, and humble.

He should be contented, easy to support, not burdened with responsibilities, frugal, tranquil, prudent, courteous, and undemanding.

He should refrain from any action for which the wise would blame him.

He should always think, "May all beings be well and secure! May all beings be happy!"



“Whatever living beings there be, without exception—weak or strong; long or short; stout, middle-sized, or thin; large or small; seen or unseen; living near or far; born or yet to be born—may all beings be happy!

“Let none deceive another nor despise anyone at all. In either anger or ill-will, may none wish harm upon another.”

Just as with her own life a mother protects her only child, one should cultivate boundless loving-kindness toward all beings.

He should radiate boundless loving-kindness throughout the universe—above, below, and all around—unhindered, without the slightest ill-will, and without a trace of enmity.

While standing, walking, sitting, or lying down—whenever awake—he should develop this mindfulness. This is what is called divine abiding.

Not holding on to wrong views, being virtuous, endowed with insight, and with sense desires restrained, he will never again be reborn in a womb.

—Sutta Nipata 1, 8

## **Reflection**

### **Daily Reflection**

I am of the nature to age. I am subject to aging. I have not got beyond aging.

I am of the nature to sicken. I am subject to illness. I have not got beyond illness.

I am of the nature to die. I am subject to death. I have not got beyond death.

Separation from what is pleasing and beloved will definitely happen to me.

I am the owner of my kamma, the heir of my kamma; born of my kamma, related to my kamma, and I abide supported by my kamma. Whatever kamma I do, for good or for evil, to that I will be the heir.

These things should be frequently recollected.

# **Day Eight**

## **Reading**

### **Hungry Ghosts**

They stand outside the walls and at the crossroads. Having come to their former homes, they stand in the doorways, but, when abundant food and drink is prepared, no one remembers them. Such is the kamma of living beings.

If, however, when a timely donation of food and drink is made, those who are compassionate think, “May this be for our relatives. May they be happy!” the assembled hungry ghosts who have gathered there, will receive the food and will thankfully give their blessing. They will say, “May our relatives, because of whom we have gained this gift, live long. We have been honored, and the donors are not without reward!”

In their realm there is no farming, no herding of cattle, no commerce, no trading with money. Those hungry ghosts live on what is given here.

As rain falling on a hill flows down to the valley, what is given here benefits the dead. As rivers full of water fill the ocean, what is given here benefits the dead.

As one gives gifts, he should remember what relatives have done in the past and think, “He gave to me, he worked for me, he was my relative, my friend, my companion.”

No tears, no grief, nor any other lamentations are of any use to the departed, but a gift that has been properly given to the Sangha is of benefit to them immediately and for a long time.

This is the proper way to repay obligations to one’s relatives. This is how to do great honor to the departed and to give strength to the Sangha. The merit you thus receive is not small.

## Reflection

### The Futility of Worldly Gains

I see men wealthy in the world, who yet  
From ignorance give not their gathered wealth.  
Greedy they hoard away their riches  
Longing still for further sensual pleasures.

Most other people, too, not just a king,  
Encounter death with craving unabated;  
With plans still incomplete they leave the corpse;  
Desires remain unsated in the world.

Clad in a shroud, he leaves his wealth behind,  
Prodded with stakes he burns upon the pyre.  
And as he dies, no relatives or friends  
Can offer him shelter and refuge here.

While his heirs take over his wealth, this being  
Must pass on according to his actions;  
And as he dies nothing can follow him;  
Not child nor wife nor wealth nor royal estate.

Longevity is not acquired with wealth  
Nor can prosperity banish old age;  
Short is this life, as all the sages say,  
Eternity it knows not, only change.

—Majjhima Nikaya 82

# **Day Nine**

## **Reading**

### **Bhadraka**

Once, the Buddha was staying in the Mallan town of Uruvelakappa. At that time, the headman, Bhadraka, said, “It would be good, Venerable Sir, if the Blessed One would teach me about the origin and the passing away of suffering.”

“Headman,” the Buddha replied, “if I were to teach you about the origin and the passing away of suffering with reference to the past or the future, you would become confused. Instead, I will teach you about the origin and the passing away of suffering at this moment. Listen and attend closely.”

“Yes, Venerable Sir,” Bhadraka replied.

“Are there any people in Uruvelakappa on whose account pain and sorrow would arise in you if they were to be severely punished or executed?”

“There are such people, Venerable Sir.”

“Are there any people in Uruvelakappa on whose account pain and sorrow would not arise in you in such an event?”

“There are such people, Venerable Sir.”

“Why would pain and sorrow arise in you on account of some people but not on account of others?”

“There are, Venerable Sir, people for whom I have desire and attachment, but there are also people for whom I have no desire and attachment.”

“Headman, apply this principle that you have just stated to the past and to the future thus: ‘Whatever suffering arose in the past arose rooted in desire, for desire is the root of suffering. Whatever suffering will arise in the future will arise rooted in desire, for desire is the root of suffering.’”

“It is wonderful, Venerable Sir! It is amazing, Venerable Sir! How well that has been stated by the Blessed One: ‘Whatever suffering arises is rooted in desire, for desire is the root of

suffering.’ Venerable Sir, I have a boy named Ciravasi, who stays in another place. Every morning I send a man to find out how Ciravasi is. Until that man returns, Venerable Sir, I am anxious, hoping that Ciravasi has not met with any affliction!”

“If Ciravasi were to be severely punished or executed, would pain and sorrow arise in you?”

“Venerable Sir, if Ciravasi were to be severely punished or executed, my whole life would be upset, so how could pain and sorrow not arise in me?”

“In this way too, it can be understood: ‘Whatever suffering arises is rooted in desire, for desire is the root of suffering.’

“Headman, before you knew Ciravasi’s mother, did you have any desire, attachment, or affection for her?”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“Then was it because of knowing her that this desire, attachment, and affection arose in you?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

“If Ciravasi’s mother were to be severely punished or executed, would pain and sorrow arise in you?”

“Venerable Sir, if she were to be severely punished or executed, my whole life would be upset, so how could pain and sorrow not arise in me?”

“In this way too, it can be understood: ‘Whatever suffering arises is rooted in desire, for desire is the root of suffering.’”

—Samyutta Nikaya 42, 11

# **Reflection**

## **Divine Abidings**

### **Metta**

May I be free from sorrow and always be happy. May those who desire my welfare, those who are indifferent towards me, and those who hate me also be happy.

May all beings who live in this vicinity and those who live in other kingdoms in this world-system be happy.

May all beings living in every world-system and each element of life within such a system be happy and achieve the highest bliss.

Likewise, women, men, the noble and ignoble ones, devas, humans, those in woeful states, and those living in the ten directions—may all those beings be happy.

### **Karuna**

May all those who are in pain, in trouble, facing hardship and suffering find relief. May their troubles be over. May they find happiness.

### **Mudita**

May all those who are well, successful, healthy, and prosperous, maintain themselves happily.

### **Upekkha**

All beings are the owners of their kamma, heirs of their kamma, born of their kamma, related to their kamma, and abide supported by their kamma. Whatever kamma they do, for good or for evil, to that they will be the heir.

# **Day Ten**

## **Reading**

### **Tranquillity and Insight**

Two things are conducive to knowledge: tranquillity and insight. If tranquillity is developed, what profit does it bring? The mind is developed. If the mind is developed, what profit does it bring? All lust is abandoned. If insight is developed, what profit does it bring? Wisdom is developed. If wisdom is developed, what profit does it bring? All ignorance is abandoned.

A mind defiled by lust is not freed, and a mind defiled by ignorance cannot develop wisdom. Thus, with the fading of lust comes the liberation of the mind, and with the fading of ignorance comes the liberation by wisdom.

—Anguttara Nikaya 2, 32



## **Reflection**

### **The Chariot**

One who has faith and wisdom yoked in harness,  
With conscience as the pole, the mind as reins,  
And mindfulness as watchful charioteer,  
Rides in a chariot of morality.  
Its axle is meditation; energy, its wheels;  
And equipoise its balanced shaft.  
Clothed in freedom from desire  
Defended by non-hatred, harmlessness,  
And detachment of the mind,  
He wears a leather coat of patience.  
Furnished thus, this chariot  
Rolls on from slavery to freedom.  
This noble chariot, the best of vehicles,  
Is built by oneself alone.  
It carries the wise from this world  
On to certain victory.

—Samyutta Nikaya 45, 4

# **Day Eleven**

## **Reading**

### **Wood from a Pyre**

“There are four kinds of people in the world. One who is engaged in promoting neither his own good nor the good of another, one who is engaged in promoting another’s good but not his own, one who is engaged in promoting his own good but not that of another, and one who is engaged in promoting both his own good and that of another.

“A person who is engaged in promoting neither his own good nor the good of another is just like a piece of wood from a pyre, burnt at both ends and in the middle fouled with dung, which serves neither for fuel nor for lumber.

More worthy than that person is one who is engaged in promoting another’s good but not his own. More worthy than either of them is the person who is engaged in promoting his own good but not that of another. Foremost, however, is the person who is engaged in promoting both his own good and that of another. Of these four individuals he is the supreme.

“Just as from a cow comes milk; from milk, cream; from cream, butter; from butter, ghee; and from ghee, the skimmings of ghee, which is considered the best; among these four kinds of people, the person who is engaged in promoting both his own good and the good of another is the foremost and the supreme.”

—Anguttara Nikaya 4, 95

## **Reflection**

### **Understanding Death**

Death can be understood by the shortness of the lifespan. Many die at birth or in their youth. Those who live to fifty years, live long. Fewer live to be seventy or eighty. Rare, indeed, are those who live to ninety or one hundred.

Know death by the weakness of the life force. Life needs water and food. Life is dependent upon air.

Understand death by knowing that this body is shared by many others. It is a home to many others.

Understand death by its absence of signs. There is no sign to indicate when death will come—in the morning, in the afternoon, or at night. There is no sign to tell us where one will die—at home or away from home; in the air, on earth, or in the water. The way death will come is also unknown—from illness, by accident, or by an enemy's hand.

Understand death by knowing that all health ends in sickness, that all strength ends in weakness, and that all success ends in failure.

Know that death comes to all. The most powerful ruler, the richest person, the general, the head of a great family, and even the Buddha himself must die, so how can I hope to be spared?

As a turning wheel touches the earth at only one point, so, too, should life be understood. The present moment arises, persists, then passes away. Death comes to each moment, and, likewise, to each life, which arises, stays a bit, then passes away.

# **Day Twelve**

## **Reading**

### **Worshipping the Six Directions**

One morning, a young man named Sigalaka got up early and went outside Rajagaha. With wet clothes and hair, he began a ceremony of paying homage. At the same time, the Buddha left the Squirrel's Sanctuary of Veluvana and began walking toward Rajagaha for alms. When he saw the young man, he stopped and asked, "Young man, why are you paying homage like that?"

"Venerable Sir," Sigalaka answered, "As my father was dying, he told me that I should get up early to pay homage to the six directions—the east, the south, the west, the north, the nadir, and the zenith. It is out of respect for my father's words, that I honor and hold sacred, that I am doing this."

"That is not the right way to pay homage to the six directions."

"Well, Venerable Sir, it would be good if the Blessed One would teach me the proper way."

"Then listen carefully, and I will speak."

"Yes, Venerable Sir," Sigalaka replied.

"These six things are to be regarded as the six directions. The east denotes mother and father. The south denotes teachers. The west denotes wife and children. The north denotes friends and companions. The nadir denotes servants, workers, and helpers. The zenith denotes ascetics and brahmins.

"There are five ways in which children should attend to their parents as the eastern direction. Having been supported by their parents, they should support them, perform their duties to them, keep up the family tradition, be worthy of their heritage, and, after their parents' deaths, distribute gifts on their behalf.

"There are five ways in which the parents, so attended to by their children, should reciprocate. They should restrain them from evil, support them in doing good, teach them a skill, find them

suitable partners, and, in due time, hand over their inheritance to them.

“In this way, the eastern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

“There are five ways in which students should attend to their teachers as the southern direction. They should rise to greet them, wait on them, be attentive, serve them, and master the skills they teach.

“There are five ways in which the teachers, thus attended to by their students, should reciprocate. They should give thorough instruction, make sure the students have grasped what should be grasped, give them a thorough grounding in all skills, recommend them to their friends and colleagues, and provide them with security in all directions.

“In this way, the southern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

“There are five ways in which a husband should attend to his wife as the western direction. He should honor her, praise her, be faithful to her, give authority to her, and provide for her security.

“There are five ways in which a wife, thus attended to by her husband, should reciprocate. She should properly organize her work, be kind to the servants, be faithful to her husband, protect his property, and be skillful and diligent in her duties.

“In this way, the western direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

“There are five ways in which a person should attend to friends and companions as the northern direction. One should give gifts, use kind words, look after their welfare, treat them like oneself, and keep one’s word.

“There are five ways in which friends and companions, thus attended to by a person, should reciprocate. They should look after him when he is inattentive, look after his property when he is careless, be a refuge when he is afraid, stand by him when he is in trouble, and show concern for his children.

“In this way the northern direction is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

“There are five ways in which a master should attend to his servants and workers as the nadir. He should arrange their work according to their strength, supply them with food and wages, look after them when they are ill, share special delicacies with them, and let them off work at the right time.

“There are five ways in which servants and workers, thus attended to by their master, should reciprocate. They should get up before him, go to bed after him, take only what they are given, do their work properly, and be bearers of his praise and good repute.

“In this way, the nadir is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.

“There are five ways in which a person should attend to ascetics and brahmins as the zenith. One should be kind in deed, speech, and thought, keep open house for them, and supply their bodily needs.

“There are five ways in which ascetics and brahmins, thus attended to by a person, should reciprocate. They should restrain him from evil, encourage him to do good, be compassionate toward him, teach him what he has not heard, and point out to him the way to heaven.

“In this way, the zenith is covered, making it at peace and free from fear.”

## **Reflection**

### **Reflections on Grief**

Observe how others, born into this world according to their kamma, tremble under the specter of death.

However people think, things turn out to be otherwise. Such is the opposite nature of things. Observe thus the nature of the world.

Even if a person were to live a hundred years or more, he must still yield his life, at last bereft of friends and relatives.

Therefore, listening to the wise and the holy and seeing a deceased friend or relative, control your weeping.

Reflect on the departure of your beloved ones by thinking that separation is natural.

Just as one would douse a burning house with water, let one who is steadfast and wise remove grief, as quickly as the wind disperses a handful of cotton.

Let a person, desirous of his own welfare, pluck out the shafts of wails and grief, which he himself planted.

Having plucked out these shafts, and having attained mental peace, one becomes blessed and free from grief, overcoming all sorrows.

—Sutta Nipata 3,8

# **Day Thirteen**

## **Reading**

### **Families**

Once, the Buddha was staying at Pavarika's Mango Grove in Nalanda at a time when the city was in the grip of a severe famine.

At the same time, Nigantha Nataputta was also staying in Nalanda, and Asibandhakaputta, one of his lay disciples, visited him. "Come," Nigantha Nataputta said to him, "refute the doctrine of the ascetic Gotama. Then people will say, 'Asibandhakaputta the Headman has refuted the doctrine of the ascetic Gotama, who is so powerful and mighty.'"

"How, Venerable Sir, shall I refute the doctrine of the ascetic Gotama?"

"Approach the ascetic Gotama," Nigantha Nataputta instructed, "and ask him, 'Venerable Sir, doesn't the Blessed One praise compassion towards families and the protection of families?' If he answers, 'Yes,' you should say to him: 'Then why, Venerable Sir, is the Blessed One wandering with a large Sangha of bhikkhus at a time of famine? The Blessed One is practicing for the destruction of families.' When the ascetic Gotama is posed this dilemma by you, he will be able neither to throw it up nor to gulp it down."

Asibandhakaputta agreed to do this, paid his respects to Nigantha Nataputta, and went to see the Buddha. After paying homage, he sat down to one side and asked, "Venerable Sir, doesn't the Blessed One praise compassion towards families and the protection of families?"

"Yes, Headman, the Tathagata praises compassion towards families and the protection of families."

"Then why, Venerable Sir, is the Blessed One wandering with a large Sangha of bhikkhus at a time of famine? The Blessed One is practicing for the destruction of families."



“Headman,” the Buddha replied, “I recollect ninety-one eons back, but I do not recall any family that has ever been destroyed merely by offering cooked almsfood. On the contrary, every rich family whatsoever has become so from giving, from truthfulness, and from self-control.

“There are eight causes for the destruction of families—thieves, fire, water, not finding treasure they may have hidden or stored, mismanagement of business, a family member becoming a wastrel, and, finally, impermanence. While these eight causes for the destruction of families exist, if anyone who accuses the Tathagata of practicing for the destruction of families does not abandon that assertion and relinquish that view, then, according to his deserts, he will be reborn in hell.”

When this was said, Asibandhakaputta praised the Buddha and took refuge in the Triple Gem.

—Samyutta Nikaya 42, 9

## **Reflection**

### **Generosity**

The Buddha said: “If beings knew, as I know, the results of sharing gifts, they would not enjoy their use without sharing them with others, nor would the taint of stinginess obsess the heart and stay there. Even if it were their last morsel of food, they would not enjoy it, without sharing it, if there were anyone to receive it.”

—Itivuttaka 26

# **Day Fourteen**

## **Reading**

### **A Handful of Leaves**

Once, in a grove of simsapa trees in Kosambi, the Buddha picked up a few leaves in his hand and asked the bhikkhus, “Which is more, the few leaves that I have picked up in my hand or those on the trees?”

“The leaves that the Blessed One has picked up in his hand are few; those on the trees are far more.”

“So, too, the things that I have known by direct knowledge are more; the things that I have told you are only a few. Why have I not told them? Because they bring no benefit, no advancement in the spiritual life. They do not lead to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, and to Nibbana. That is why I have not told them.

“What have I told you? ‘This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; and this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ That is what I have told you. Why have I told it? Because it brings benefit, and advancement in the spiritual life. It leads to dispassion, to fading, to ceasing, to stilling, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, and to Nibbana. Therefore, let your task be this: ‘This is suffering; this is the origin of suffering; this is the cessation of suffering; and this is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’”

—Samyutta Nikaya 51, 31

## **Reflection**

### **Advice to Rahula**

Develop the meditation on loving-kindness, for, by so doing, hatred will be got rid of.

Develop the meditation on compassion, for, by so doing, cruelty will be got rid of.

Develop the meditation on sympathetic joy, for, by so doing, discontent will be got rid of.

Develop the meditation on equanimity, for, by so doing, aversion will be got rid of.

Develop the meditation on the impure, for, by so doing, attachment will be got rid of.

Develop the meditation on the perception of impermanence, for, by so doing, the conceit “I am” will be got rid of.

—Majjhima Nikaya 62

# **Day Fifteen**

## **Reading**

### **A Rainless Cloud**

The Buddha said, “There are three kinds of persons in the world. What three? One who is like a rainless cloud, one who rains locally, and one who rains everywhere.

“What kind of person is like a rainless cloud? A certain person never gives to anyone. He does not give food, drink, clothing, garlands, incense, medicine, lodging, or lamps to ascetics, the poor, or the needy. This kind of person is like a rainless cloud.

“What kind of person rains locally? A certain person gives to some but not to others. He gives food, drink, clothing, garlands, incense, medicine, lodging, and lamps only to some ascetics and to some of the poor and the needy, but not to others. This kind of person rains locally.

“What kind of person rains everywhere? A certain person gives to all. He gives food, drink, clothing, vehicles, garlands, incense, medicine, lodging, and lamps to all ascetics and to the poor and the needy. This kind of person rains everywhere.

“These are the three kinds of persons in the world.”

## **Reflection**

### **The Four Dhamma Summaries**

The world is swept away. It does not endure.

The world offers no shelter. There is no one in charge.

The world has nothing of its own. One has to pass on, leaving everything behind.

The world is insufficient, insatiable, and a slave to craving.

—Majjhima Nikaya 82

# **Day Sixteen**

## **Reading**

### **The Simile of the Six Animals**

The Buddha said, “One should develop restraint of the six senses.

“Suppose that a man caught six animals: a snake, a crocodile, a bird, a dog, a jackal, and a monkey, tied each of them by a strong rope, and tied the six ropes together in a knot at the center. Then he let go of the ropes. Those six animals, having different domains and different feeding grounds would pull in six different directions. The snake would pull one way, thinking, ‘Let me enter an anthill.’ The crocodile would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter the water.’ The bird would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me fly up into the sky.’ The dog would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter the village.’ The jackal would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter the charnel ground.’ The monkey would pull another way, thinking, ‘Let me enter the forest.’

“When these six animals became worn out, they would be dominated by the one among them that was strongest. They would submit to it and come under its control. In the same way, when one has not developed and cultivated mindfulness directed to the body, the eye pulls in the direction of agreeable forms and is repelled by disagreeable forms. The ear pulls in the direction of agreeable sounds, .... The nose pulls in the direction of agreeable odors, .... The tongue pulls in the direction of agreeable tastes, .... The body pulls in the direction of agreeable tactile objects, .... The mind pulls in the direction of agreeable mental phenomena, and is repelled by disagreeable mental phenomena.

“So it is with nonrestraint. When one sees a form with the eye, if he is intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form, he dwells without having set up mindfulness of the body, and he does not understand as it really is that liberation of mind by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without

remainder. It is the same for hearing a sound with the ear, smelling an odor with the nose, tasting a flavor with the tongue, feeling a tactile object with the body, and cognizing a mental phenomenon with the mind.

Now suppose that a man caught those six animals and tied each of them by a strong rope. Then he tied the six ropes to a strong post in the center. Those six animals would again each pull in the direction of its own feeding ground and domain.

“When they became worn out, however, they would move close to the post and rest. In the same way, when one has developed mindfulness directed to the body, the eye does not pull in the direction of agreeable forms, nor are disagreeable forms repulsive. The ear does not pull in the direction of agreeable sounds, .... The nose does not pull in the direction of agreeable odors, .... The tongue does not pull in the direction of agreeable tastes, .... The body does not pull in the direction of agreeable tactile objects, .... The mind does not pull in the direction of agreeable mental phenomena, nor are disagreeable mental phenomena repulsive.

“So it is with restraint. When one sees a form with the eye, if he is not intent upon a pleasing form and repelled by a displeasing form, he dwells having set up mindfulness of the body, and he understands as it really is that liberation of mind by wisdom, wherein those evil unwholesome states cease without remainder. It is the same for hearing a sound with the ear, smelling an odor with the nose, tasting a flavor with the tongue, feeling a tactile object with the body, and cognizing a mental phenomenon with the mind.

“The strong post represents mindfulness directed to the body. Therefore, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will develop and cultivate mindfulness directed to the body. We will make it our vehicle and our basis. We will exercise ourselves in it and fully perfect it.’”



## **Reflection**

### **Be Familiar with Death**

Understand death. Be familiar with death.

Death approaches. Just as each step a calf takes toward the slaughterhouse takes him closer to death, so death approaches with each passing day.

Death is inevitable, like the sun, after rising in the east, moves steadily to set in the west.

Death is like a river, always flowing, rushing downstream.

Death is like the drop of water on the tip of a blade of grass, evaporated by the sun.

Death is like the stream that dries up in the summer, leaving only its banks, bereft of water.

Death is like water poured into the sand, disappearing without a trace.

Death is like the overripe fruit that finally falls from the tree.

Death is like the clay vessel which the potter smashes with his hammer.

Just as a mushroom emerges with a cap of soil, when we are born, we carry our death with us.

# **Day Seventeen**

## **Reading**

### **Grasping and Worry**

What is grasping and worry? An ordinary person thinks, “This body is mine; I am this; this is myself.” Then, when the body changes, grief, suffering, and despair arise. It is the same with feelings, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

What is freedom from grasping and worry? An instructed noble disciple thinks, “This body is not mine; I am not this; this is not myself.” Then, even though the body changes, grief, suffering, and despair do not arise. It is the same with feelings, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.

—Samyutta Nikaya 22, 7

## **Reflection**

### **The Mountains**

Like gigantic boulders,  
Mountains reaching to the sky,  
Moving in from the four directions  
And crushing all in their path,  
In the same way, aging and death  
Roll over living beings:  
Noble warriors, priests, merchants,  
Workers, outcastes, and scavengers.  
These mountains spare no one;  
They trample everyone.  
Here elephants can hold no ground  
Neither can chariots, infantry,  
A battle of spells, nor wealth win out.  
Thus, a wise person,  
Seeing his own good,  
Establishes firm conviction  
In the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha.  
One who practices the Dhamma  
In thought, word, and deed,  
Receives praise here on earth  
And, after death, rejoices in heaven.

—Samyutta Nikaya 3, 25

# **Day Eighteen**

## **Reading**

### **The Blind Men and the Elephant**

One day, in Jetavana, after finishing their meal, some bhikkhus approached the Buddha, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said, “Venerable Sir, sometimes, on our almsrounds, we see wanderers of other sects, living around Savatthi, who hold various views, beliefs, and opinions and who propagate those views. They are quarrelsome and disputatious and wound each other with verbal darts, such as, “The Dhamma is like this! It is not like that!” and “The Dhamma is not like this! It is like that!”

The Buddha said: “Bhikkhus, wanderers of other sects are blind and sightless. They do not know what is beneficial and harmful. They do not know what is the Dhamma and what is not the Dhamma.

“Formerly, there was a king in Savatthi who asked a man to round up all the people in the city who were blind from birth. When the man had done so, the king asked him to show the blind men an elephant. To each of the blind men the man presented only one part of the elephant’s body, but to all of them he said, ‘This is an elephant.’

“Then the king went to the blind men and said, ‘Tell me, blind men, what is an elephant like?’

“Those who had been shown the head of the elephant replied, ‘An elephant, Your Majesty, is like a water jar.’ Those who had been shown the ear replied, ‘An elephant is like a winnowing basket.’ Those who had been shown the tusk replied, ‘An elephant is like a spear.’ Those who had been shown the trunk replied, ‘An elephant is like a snake.’ Those who had been shown the body replied, ‘An elephant is like a storeroom.’ Those who had been shown the tail replied, ‘An elephant is like a rope.’ Those who had been shown the tuft of the tail replied, ‘An elephant is like a brush.’

“The blind men began fighting with each other, shouting, ‘An elephant is like this! It is not like that!’ They even resorted to

fighting with fists. Seeing this, the king was delighted. In the same way, the wanderers of other sects are blind and sightless, and, thus, they become quarrelsome, disputatious, and wrangling, and they wound each other with verbal darts.”

—Udana 6, 4

## **Reflection**

### **The Thirty-two Parts of the Body**

This body is made up of:

hair of the head, hair of the body, nails, teeth, skin;  
flesh, sinew, bone, marrow, kidneys;  
heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs;  
intestine, mesentery, stomach, excrement, brain;  
bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat;  
lymph, tears, serum, saliva, nasal mucous;  
synovial fluid, urine.

Urine, synovial fluid;  
nasal mucous, saliva, serum, tears, lymph;  
sweat, blood, pus, phlegm, bile;  
brain, excrement, stomach, mesentery, intestine;  
lungs, spleen, diaphragm, liver, heart;  
kidneys, marrow, bone, sinew, flesh;  
skin, teeth, nails, hair of the body, hair of the head.

Know that here there is nothing pure, lasting, or reliable.  
All is subject to change and to dissolution.

# **Day Nineteen**

## **Reading**

### **The Merit of Giving**

One day, King Pasenadi asked the Buddha, “Venerable Sir, how should a gift be given?”

“One should give with his mind full of confidence, great king.”

“How, Venerable Sir, does giving bear great fruit?”

“This, great king, is a very different question from your first. Giving to one who is virtuous bears great fruit, but giving to one who is immoral does not. Now, great king, let me ask you a question on this point. Suppose you are at war and a battle is about to take place. A khattiya youth, untrained, unskillful, inexperienced, and cowardly, arrives. Would you employ that man as an archer?”

“Surely not, Venerable Sir.”

“If he were a brahmin. Would you employ him?”

“Surely not, Venerable Sir.”

“What if he were a vessa or a sudda. Would you employ him?”

“Surely not, Venerable Sir.”

“Now suppose you are at war and a battle is about to take place. A khattiya youth, trained, skillful with bow and arrow, experienced, and brave, arrives. Would you employ that man as an archer?”

“Surely I would, Venerable Sir.”

“If he were a brahmin. Would you employ him?”

“Surely I would, Venerable Sir.”

“What if he were a vessa or a sudda. Would you employ him?”

“Surely I would, Venerable Sir.”

“In the same way, great king, when a person has gone forth from the household life into homelessness, no matter from which

social class, if he has abandoned five factors and possesses five factors, giving to him bears great fruit. What five factors have been abandoned? Sensual desire, ill-will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubt have been abandoned. What five factors does he possess? He possesses proficiency in virtue, concentration, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and vision of liberation. Giving to one who has abandoned these five factors and who possesses these five factors bears great fruit.”

The Buddha concluded this lesson with this simile, “Just as a king would hire, as an archer, the youth who possesses skill, persistence, and strength, rather than one of noble birth, who is perhaps a coward, so, too, should one honor the wise of noble conduct, in whom patience and gentleness are established, even though they be of lowly birth.

“Build pleasant hermitages with tanks and walking paths and invite the learned to stay there. With calm awareness provide the requisites for those of upright character. As a mighty cloud produces thunder and lightning and pours refreshing rain upon the earth, filling the streams and gullies, one of confidence provides food and drink to mendicants. ‘Give! Give!’ he cries, like thunder from the clouds. And in return rains down on him the merit from his gifts!”

—Samyutta Nikaya 3, 24

## **Reflection**

### **The Three Characteristics**

All that is conditioned is impermanent;  
When with wisdom one sees this,  
One tires of suffering—  
This is the path to purity.

All that is conditioned is suffering;  
When with wisdom one sees this,  
One tires of suffering—  
This is the path to purity.

All phenomena are non-self;  
When with wisdom one sees this,  
One tires of suffering—  
This is the path to purity.



# **Day Twenty**

## **Reading**

### **Bringing Tranquillity to the Land**

One day, the brahmin Kutadanta addressed the Blessed One: “Master Gotama, I have heard that you understand how to conduct the triple sacrifice successfully with its sixteen requisites. I want to make just such a big sacrifice, but I do not know how to do it. It would be good if Master Gotama would explain this to me.”

“Listen, Brahmin,” the Buddha answered. “Pay proper attention, and I will explain.”

“Yes, Master Gotama,” replied Kutadanta.

“Brahmin,” the Buddha continued, “long ago there was a very wealthy king called Mahavijita. One day, as this king was reflecting in private, the thought came to him: ‘I have acquired extensive wealth, I occupy a wide extent of land which I have conquered. Let me now make a great sacrifice.’ He called his spiritual advisor and asked, ‘How can I make a great sacrifice which will be of lasting benefit to me and ensure my happiness?’

“‘Your Majesty,’ the advisor replied, ‘your country is beset by outlaws, who are ravaging villages and towns. The countryside is infested with brigands. It would not be right for Your Majesty to tax this region. Your Majesty might think, “I will get rid of this plague of robbers by executions and imprisonment, or by confiscation, threats, and banishment.” In that way, however, the problem would not be properly resolved. Those who survived would later harm Your Majesty’s realm. There is, however, a plan by which you can completely eliminate the lawlessness. To those in the kingdom who are engaged in cultivating crops, let Your Majesty distribute grain. To those who are raising cattle, give fodder. To those in trade, give capital. To those in government service, assign proper living wages. In this way, thievery will disappear, and Your Majesty’s revenues will certainly increase.’

“‘So be it!’ cried the king, and he did exactly as his advisor had suggested. As a result, all of his subjects became intent on their own occupations, and no one harmed the kingdom. Not only did thievery disappear and the king’s revenues increase, but the land became tranquil, and the people, with joy in their hearts, playing with their children, dwelled in open houses.”

—Digha Nikaya 5

## **Reflection**

### **An Auspicious Day**

Don't dwell on the past;  
Don't long for the future.  
The past is gone;  
The future is yet to come.

With mindfulness be aware  
Of every present moment,  
Training the mind with  
Diligence and steadfastness.

Who knows when death may come?  
Perhaps tomorrow he will strike.  
There is no bargaining  
With him or with his army.

For one who practices in this way,  
Both ardent and untiring,  
Everyday, the Buddha taught,  
Is an auspicious day.

—Majjhima Nikaya 131

# **Day Twenty-one**

## **Reading**

### **Gratitude**

The Blessed One said: “A person of no integrity is ungrateful and does not acknowledge the help given to him. This ingratitude is second nature to rude people. It is the mark of a person of no integrity.

A person of integrity is grateful and acknowledges the help given to him. This gratitude is second nature to fine people. It is the mark of a person of integrity.

There are two people who are not easy to repay—your mother and father. Even if you were to carry your mother on one shoulder and your father on the other shoulder for one hundred years and to look after them by bathing and massaging their limbs and they were to defecate and urinate on you, you would not be repaying your parents. Even if you were to establish them in abundant wealth of the seven treasures and in sovereignty over the entire world, you would not be repaying your parents. Why not? Mother and father do so much for their children! They care for them, nourish them, and introduce them to this world. However, one who rouses his unbelieving parents and establishes them in the Dhamma, rouses his unvirtuous parents and establishes them in virtue, rouses his stingy parents and establishes them in generosity, and rouses his foolish parents and establishes them in wisdom, is, to that extent, repaying one’s mother and father.

—Anguttara Nikaya 2, 31-32

## **Reflection**

### **Advisory Stanzas**

Viewing indolence as something frightful, as the root of all defilements and the destroyer of all good, and treating effort, its opposite, as the remover of all dangers, be energetic at all times—this is the advice of the Buddhas.

Viewing confrontation as something frightful and treating non-confrontation, its opposite, as a haven, seek peace at all times—this is the advice of the Buddhas.

Viewing negligence as something frightful and treating diligence, its opposite, as a haven, practice the Noble Eightfold Path—this is the advice of the Buddhas.

—Cariya Pitaka

# **Day Twenty-two**

## **Reading**

### **A Lump of Foam**

Seated on the bank of the Ganges, the Buddha said, “Suppose that this river Ganges is carrying along a great lump of foam. A person with good eyesight inspects it and carefully investigates it, and it appears to be void, hollow, and insubstantial, for what substance can there be in a lump of foam? So, too, whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, or far or near: one inspects it and carefully investigates it, and it appears to be void, hollow, and insubstantial, for what substance can there be in form?

“Suppose that, in the autumn, when it is raining and big rain drops are falling, a water bubble forms and bursts on the surface of the water. A person with good eyesight carefully investigates it, and it appears to be insubstantial, for what substance can there be in a water bubble? So, too, whatever kind of feeling there is, one carefully investigates it, and it appears to be insubstantial, for what substance can there be in feeling?

“Suppose that, in the last month of the hot season, at high noon, a shimmering mirage appears. A person with good eyesight carefully investigates it, and it appears to be insubstantial, for what substance can there be in a mirage? So, too, whatever kind of perception there is, one carefully investigates it, and it appears to be insubstantial, for what substance can there be in perception?

“Suppose that a person, seeking heartwood, takes a sharp axe and enters a forest. That person finds and cuts down a large and straight plantain tree. Upon unrolling the coils of the trunk, there is found to be no softwood, let alone heartwood. It appears to be insubstantial, for what substance can there be in the trunk of a plantain tree? So, too, whatever kind of volitional formations there are, one carefully investigates them, and they appear to him to be

insubstantial, for what substance can there be in volitional formations?

“Suppose that a magician displays a magical illusion at a crossroads. A person with good eyesight inspects it and carefully investigates it, and it appears to be void, hollow, and insubstantial, for what substance can there be in a magical illusion? So, too, whatever kind of consciousness there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, or far or near, one inspects it and carefully investigates it, and it appears to be void, hollow, and insubstantial, for what substance can there be in consciousness?

“Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion toward form, revulsion toward feeling, revulsion toward perception, revulsion toward volitional formations, revulsion toward consciousness. Experiencing revulsion, one becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion the mind is liberated. When it is liberated, there comes the knowledge: ‘It’s liberated.’ One understands: ‘Destroyed is birth; the spiritual life has been lived; what had to be done has been done; there is no more for this state of being.’”

—Samyutta Nikaya 22, 95

## Reflection

### No Cause for Grief

Uncalled, he hither came,  
Without leave, departed, too;  
Even as he came, he went.  
What cause is there for woe?  
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead.  
Why should I grieve?  
He fares the way he had to tread.

Though I should fast and weep,  
How would it profit me?  
My kith and kin, alas, would more unhappy be!  
No friend's lament can touch the ashes of the dead.  
Why should I grieve?  
He fares the way he had to tread.

—Uraga Jataka



# **Day Twenty-three**

## **Reading**

### **Be Your Own Island**

Once, not long after Venerable Sariputta and Venerable Moggallana had attained final Nibbana, the Buddha was staying among the Vajjians on the bank of the river Ganges, with a large number of bhikkhus.

The Buddha surveyed the bhikkhus, who were all silent, and said, “This assembly appears to me empty now that Sariputta and Moggallana have attained final Nibbana. It is wonderful that, when my disciples act in accordance with the Teacher’s instructions, they will be revered and esteemed by the fourfold Sangha. It is wonderful that, when such a pair of disciples has attained final Nibbana, there is no sorrow or lamentation in the Tathagata.

“Suppose that the largest branches of a mighty tree were to break off. That is how it is for the Tathagata that Sariputta and Moggallana have attained final Nibbana. One may wish: ‘May what is born, come to be, conditioned, and subject to disintegration not disintegrate!’ but that is impossible.

“Therefore, dwell with yourself as your own island, with yourself as your own refuge, with no other refuge, and with the Dhamma as your refuge, with no other refuge. How does one dwell with oneself as one’s own refuge?

“One dwells ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having subdued longing and dejection in regard to the world.

“One dwells contemplating the body in the body, ardent, clearly comprehending, and mindful, having subdued longing and dejection in regard to the world.

“One dwells contemplating feelings in feelings, in the same way.

“One dwells contemplating the mind in the mind, in the same way.

“One dwells contemplating phenomena in phenomena, in the same way.

“One who dwells with oneself as one’s own island, with oneself as one’s own refuge, with no other refuge, and with the Dhamma as one’s refuge, with no other refuge, will be for me foremost of those keen on the training.”

—Samyutta Nikaya 47, 14

## **Reflection**

### **Again and Again**

One morning, in Savatthi, the Buddha dressed, took his bowl and robe, and approached the residence of the brahmin Udaya. Udaya filled the Buddha’s bowl with rice. The next morning, the Blessed One again went to Udaya’s residence, and the brahmin filled the Buddha’s bowl with rice a second time. The next morning, the Buddha again went to Udaya’s residence, and, after the brahmin Udaya had filled the Buddha’s bowl with rice a third time he said, “This pesky ascetic Gotama keeps coming again and again.”

The Buddha recited these verses:

Again and again, they sow the seed.  
Again and again, the sky-king rains.  
Again and again, the farmers plough the fields.  
Again and again, the land produces grain.  
Again and again, the beggars come and beg.  
Again and again, the generous donors give.  
Again and again, when many gifts are given,  
Again and again, the donors reach the heavens.  
Again and again, the dairymen milk the herds.  
Again and again, the calf goes to its mother.  
Again and again, we tire and we toil.

Again and again, the heedless come to birth.  
Again and again, comes birth, and dying follows.  
Again and again, we are carried to the grave.  
Only by gaining the path for non-returning,  
Is a person of wisdom not, again and again, reborn

Hearing this, Udaya took refuge in Buddha, the Dhamma, and  
the Sangha.

—Samyutta Nikaya 7, 12

# **Day Twenty-four**

## **Reading**

### **The Four Similes for Nutriment**

The Buddha said, “There are these four kinds of nutriment for the maintenance of beings: edible food, contact, mental volition, and consciousness.

“As for the nutriment edible food, suppose a husband and wife have taken limited provisions and are traveling through a desert. They have with them their only son, dearly beloved. In the middle of the desert, their provisions have been used up. In desperation, the husband and wife think: ‘Alas! We must kill our dearly beloved son and prepare dried meat. Only by eating our son’s flesh, can we cross the rest of this desert. Let not all three of us perish!’

“Then the husband and wife kill their son, prepare dried meat, and cross the rest of the desert. While they are eating their son’s flesh, they beat their breasts and cry, ‘Where are you, our only son? Where are you, our darling son?’

“What do you think? Would they eat that food for amusement, for enjoyment, or for the sake of physical beauty?”

“No, Venerable Sir. They would eat that food only for the sake of crossing the desert.”

“That is how the nutriment edible food should be seen. When the nutriment edible food is fully understood, lust for the five aggregates is fully understood. When lust for the five aggregates is fully understood, there is no fetter bound by which a noble disciple will be reborn in this world.

“As for the nutriment contact, suppose there is a flayed cow. If she stands near a wall, she is attacked by the creatures in the wall. If she stands near a tree, she is attacked by the creatures in the tree. If she stands near water, she is attacked by the creatures in the water. If she stands in the open, she is attacked by the creatures in the air. Wherever that flayed cow stands, she is attacked by the creatures there.

“That is how the nutriment contact should be seen. When the nutriment contact is fully understood, the three kinds of feeling—pleasant, painful, and neutral—are fully understood. When the three kinds of feeling are fully understood, there is nothing further that a noble disciple needs to do.

“As for the nutriment mental volition, suppose there is a deep charcoal pit, filled with glowing coals. Along comes a man, wanting to live, not wanting to die, desiring happiness and averse to suffering. Then two strong men grab him by both arms and drag him toward the pit. The man’s volition would be to get far away from the charcoal pit. He knows: ‘I will fall into this charcoal pit and, because of that, I will meet deadly suffering or death.’

“That is how the nutriment mental volition should be seen. When the nutriment mental volition is fully understood, the three kinds of craving—for sense pleasures, for existence, and for non-existence—are fully understood. When the three kinds of craving are fully understood, there is nothing further that a noble disciple needs to do.

“As for the nutriment consciousness, suppose a bandit is arrested and brought before the king. His captors say, ‘Sire, this man is a bandit. Impose on him whatever punishment you wish.’ The king says to them, ‘In the morning, pierce this man with one hundred spears.’ The men do so. At noon, the king asks, ‘How is that man?’ ‘Still alive, Sire,’ reply the men. ‘Pierce him with another one hundred spears,’ orders the king. The men do so. In the evening, the king asks, ‘How is that man?’ ‘Still alive, Sire,’ reply the men. ‘Pierce him with another one hundred spears,’ orders the king. The men do so.

“What do you think. bhikkhus? Would that man, being pierced with three hundred spears, experience pain because of that?”

“Venerable Sir, even if he were pierced with one spear, he would experience pain, let alone three hundred spears.”

“That is how the nutriment consciousness should be seen. When the nutriment consciousness is fully understood,

name-and-form is fully understood. When name-and-form is fully understood, there is nothing further that a noble disciple needs to do.”

—Samyutta Nikaya, 12, 63

## **Reflection**

### **All Beings Will Die**

All beings will die, for life ends in death; all beings will receive the fruit of their own merit and evil and will be born again accordingly. Evil doers will be born in hell, and merit doers will be born in a happy destination. Therefore, one should do what is good, an accumulation for a future life. Merits are the foundation for beings in the world beyond.

When life, vital heat, and consciousness abandon this body, then it will lie discarded, useless like a log.

As a cowherd drives the cattle to pasture with a stick, so old age and death drive away the life of living beings.

# **Day Twenty-five**

## **Reading**

### **The Advantages of Loving-kindness**

Eleven advantages are to be expected from the liberation of the mind by cultivating loving-kindness, by regarding it as a vehicle of expression and as something to be treasured, by developing thoughts of loving-kindness, by constantly increasing those thoughts, by living in conformity with them, by putting them into practice, and by firmly establishing them. What are the eleven?

“One sleeps in comfort, awakes in comfort, and sees no evil dreams. One is dear to both human and non-human beings, protected by devas, and unharmed by fire, poison, or the sword. One gains concentration of the mind quickly and has a serene countenance. One dies without being confused in mind and, if failing to attain arahatship here and now, will be reborn in the Brahma-world.

—Anguttara Nikaya 9, 16

## **Reflection**

### **The Fool**

Victory breeds enmity,  
The defeated one sleeps badly.  
The peaceful one sleeps at ease,  
Having abandoned both victory and defeat.

A man will go on plundering  
So long as it serves his ends,  
But, when others plunder him,  
The plunderer is plundered.

The fool thinks fortune is on his side  
So long as his evil does not ripen,  
But, when the evil ripens,  
The fool incurs suffering.

The killer brings forth a killer,  
The conqueror, a conqueror.  
The abuser, an abuser,  
And the reviler, a reviler.  
Thus, by the unfolding of kamma  
The plunderer is plundered.

—Samyutta Nikaya 3, 14-15



# Day Twenty-six

## Reading

### The Hen and Her Eggs

“Suppose that a hen has a clutch of eggs that she has not incubated properly. Even though she might wish, ‘Oh, that each of my chicks might pierce its shell with its egg tooth and hatch safely!’ the chicks would not be capable of doing so. Why not? Because that hen has not nurtured the eggs properly.

“In the same way, when one does not devote himself to development, even though he might wish, ‘Oh, that my mind might be liberated from the taints by nonclinging!’ his mind would not be liberated. Why not? Because he has not devoted himself to the development of the four foundations of mindfulness, the four kinds of effort,<sup>1</sup> the five spiritual faculties,<sup>2</sup> the seven factors of enlightenment,<sup>3</sup> and the Noble Eightfold Path.

“Suppose that a hen has a clutch of eggs that she has incubated properly. Even though she might not wish, ‘Oh, that each of my chicks might pierce its shell with its egg tooth and hatch safely!’ the chicks would be capable of doing so. Why? Because that hen has nurtured the eggs properly.

“In the same way, when one devotes himself to development, even though he might not wish, ‘Oh, that my mind might be liberated from the taints by nonclinging!’ his mind would be liberated. Why? Because he has devoted himself to the development of the four foundations of mindfulness, the four kinds of effort, the five spiritual faculties, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the Noble Eightfold Path.”

—Samyutta Nikaya 22, 101

#### Notes

1 to prevent unwholesome conditions from arising, to overcome unwholesome conditions already arisen, to bring about

wholesome conditions not yet arisen, and to maintain wholesome conditions already arisen.

2 confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and wisdom.

3 mindfulness, investigation of the dhamma, energy, joy, tranquillity, concentration, and equanimity.

## **Reflection**

### **An Exhortation**

Arise! Sit up!  
Of what use are your dreams?  
How can you, who are sick  
And pierced with the arrow of grief,  
Continue to sleep?  
Arise! Sit up!  
Train yourself to win peace.  
Let not the king of death,  
Knowing you to be lazy,  
Trick you into his realm.  
Cross over this attachment,  
Tied to which both devas and men are trapped.  
Do not let this chance slip by,  
Because for those who do,  
There is only hell.  
Dusty is indolence.  
Dust comes in its wake.  
With knowledge and vigilance,  
Draw out the arrow of suffering from yourself.

—Sutta Nipata 2,10

# Day Twenty-seven

## Reading

### Kisa-Gotami

Kisa-Gotami came from a poor family in Savatthi, and she married into a prosperous family. She was not well-treated by her in-laws until she had a son. While her little boy was just a toddler, he suddenly died, and Kisa-Gotami was distraught from grief. Unable to accept that her son was dead, she carried his body on her hip, asking for medicine to restore him. Some people mocked her, but a kind man directed her to the Buddha. The Buddha instructed her to fetch mustard seed from a house where no one had yet died. In the course of her impossible quest, she became calm and understood the inevitability of death. Leaving her child's body in the charnel field, she returned to the Buddha and asked to become a bhikkhuni. In no long time, she attained arahatship.

One morning, Venerable Kisa-Gotami dressed, took her bowl and robe, and entered Savatthi for alms. After eating her meal, she went to the Blind Men's Grove and sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Mara, the Evil One, desiring to arouse fear, trepidation, and terror in her and desiring to make her fall away from concentration, approached Venerable Kisa-Gotami and said, "Why now, when your son is dead, do you sit alone with a tearful face? Having entered the woods all alone, are you on the lookout for a man?"

Venerable Kisa-Gotami wondered, "Who just spoke to me—a human being or a non-human being?" Realizing that it was Mara, she replied, "I've gotten past the death of sons. With this, the search for men has ended. I neither sorrow nor weep, nor do I fear you, Friend. Delight everywhere has been destroyed. The mass of darkness has been sundered. Having conquered the army of Death, I dwell without defiling taints."

Hearing this, Mara realized that Venerable Kisa-Gotami recognized him, and, disappointed, he disappeared.

—Samyutta Nikaya 1, 3

## **Reflection**

### **No Village Law**

No village law is this, no law of a town,  
Nor the law of a single family;  
This is the law of the entire world,  
Inclusive of the devas, that is, impermanence.

No village law is this, no law of a town,  
Nor the law of a single family;  
This is the law of the entire world,  
Inclusive of the devas, that is, suffering.

No village law is this, no law of a town,  
Nor the law of a single family;  
This is the law of the entire world,  
Inclusive of the devas, that is, non-self.

—Therigatha, Kisa-Gotami

# **Day Twenty-eight**

## **Reading**

### **Insight Surpasses All**

The Buddha said to Anathapindika: “In the past, a brahmin named Velama gave a great alms offering of eighty-four thousand golden bowls filled with silver, eighty-four thousand silver bowls filled with gold, eighty-four thousand bronze bowls filled with bullion, eighty-four thousand elephants, chariots, dairy cows, maidens, and couches, many millions of fine cloths, and indescribable amounts of food, drink, ointment, and bedding.

“As great as the alms offering that the brahmin Velama gave was, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed a single person possessed of right view.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred persons possessed of right view, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed a single once-returner.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred once-returners, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed a single non-returner.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred non-returners, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed a single arahat.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred arahats, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed a single Pacceka Buddha.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred Pacceka Buddhas, it would be even more fruitful if one were feed a single Perfectly Enlightened Buddha.

“As great as it would be to feed a hundred Perfectly Enlightened Buddhas, it would be even more fruitful if one were to feed the Sangha headed by the Buddha and to build a monastery dedicated to the worldwide Sangha.

“As great as it would be to feed the Sangha headed by the Buddha and to build a monastery dedicated to the worldwide Sangha, it would be even more fruitful if, with a trusting mind, one

were to go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and to undertake the five precepts.

“As great as all this might be, with a trusting mind, to go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, and to undertake the five precepts, it would be even more fruitful if one were to develop a mind of loving-kindness, even for the time it takes to pull a cow’s udder.

“And, as great as that might be, it would be even more fruitful if one were to develop the perception of impermanence, just for the time it takes to snap one’s fingers.”

—Anguttara Nikaya 9, 20

## **Reflection**

### **Recollection of Death**

Seeing with wisdom the end of life in others and comparing this to a lamp kept in a windy place, one should meditate on death.

Just as in this world beings who once enjoyed great prosperity will die, even so one day will I die too. Death will indeed come to me.

Death comes along with birth. Therefore, like an executioner, death always seeks an opportunity to destroy.

Life, without halting for a moment, ever keen on moving, runs like the sun that rushes to set after its rise.

Life comes to an end like a streak of lightning, a bubble of water, a dew-drop on a leaf, or a line drawn on water, like an enemy intent on killing. Death can never be avoided.

If death can come in an instant to the Buddhas, endowed with great glory, merit, power and wisdom, what can be said of me?

Dying every instant, I will die within the blink of an eye, for lack of food, internal ailments or external injuries.

# **Day Twenty-nine**

## **Reading**

### **Five Ways of Subduing Anger**

“Whenever anger arises,” Venerable Sariputta said, “it must always be subdued, and there are five ways of doing so, depending on the type of person with whom one is angry.

“First, one might get angry with a person whose ways are impure in deed but pure in word. Suppose a bhikkhu, who wears only rag-robles, were to see a piece of cloth on the road. He would hold it down with his left foot, spread it out with his right, pick it up, make use of the best part of it, and go on his way. In the same way, with a person whose ways are impure in deed, but pure in word, one should ignore his impure deeds and concentrate on only his words which are pure. In this way, anger with that person should be subdued.

“Second, one might get angry with a person whose ways are impure in word but pure in deed. Suppose a person, tortured by heat, overcome by heat, weary, thirsty, and craving for water, were to come to a pond overgrown with mossy slime and water plants. He would plunge into that pond, scattering with both hands the moss and plants hither and thither, cup his hands, drink, and go on his way. In the same way, with a person whose ways are impure in word but pure in deed, one should ignore his impure words and concentrate on only his deeds which are pure. In this way, anger with that person should be subdued.

“Third, one might get angry with a person whose ways are impure in both deed and word but who, from time to time, achieves mental clarity and mental calm. Suppose a person, tortured by heat, overcome by heat, weary, thirsty, and craving for water, were to come upon a puddle in a cow’s footprint. He might think, ‘If I drink from this puddle by hand or cup, I will stir it up and make it unfit to drink.’ Instead, he crouches on all fours, sips like a cow, and goes on his way. In the same way, with a person whose ways are impure in both deed and word but who, from time to time, obtains mental clarity and mental calm, one should ignore both his impure words and his impure



deeds and concentrate on only the mental clarity and the mental calm, that he obtains from time to time. In this way, anger with that person should be subdued.

“Fourth, one might get angry with a person whose ways are impure in both deed and word and who never achieves mental clarity or mental calm. Suppose a person who was grievously ill were to go along the highway with no village anywhere nearby. If someone else were to see him, he might raise pity and compassion in that second person, who might say to himself, ‘Alas! That poor man needs proper food, proper medicine, proper assistance, or a guide to lead him to a village, lest he suffer even more or die here.’ In the same way, with a person whose ways are impure in both deed and word and who never obtains mental clarity or mental calm, pity and compassion should arise, so that one says to himself, ‘Alas! He should give up his bad habits and develop good habits, so that, on the breaking up of the body after death, he is not reborn in a miserable realm.’ In this way, anger with that person should be subdued.

“Finally, one might get angry with a person whose ways are pure in both deed and word and who often achieves mental clarity and mental calm. Suppose a person, tortured by heat, overcome by heat, weary, thirsty, and craving for water, were to come to a pool, clear, sweet, cool, and limpid, a lovely resting-place, shaded by all manner of trees. He might plunge into that pool, bathe, and drink. Then he would come out and sit or lie there in the shade of the trees. In the same way, with a person whose ways are pure in both deed and word and who often obtains mental clarity and mental calm, one should think about and remember his words which are pure, his deeds which are pure, and the mental calm and clarity which he often has. In this way, anger with that person should be subdued. When one becomes completely calm, the mind also becomes calm.

“These are the five ways of subduing anger, which should always be subdued.”

## **Reflection**

### **Meditation on Death**

Life in the world is unpredictable and uncertain. Life is difficult, short, and fraught with suffering.

Being born, one has to die; this is the nature of the world. With old age there is death; this is the way things are.

When fruit is ripe, it may drop early in the morning. In the same way, one who is born may die at any moment.

Just as all pots made by all potters end in being broken, so it is with the life of all who are born.

Neither young nor old, foolish nor wise, will escape the trap of death. All move toward death.

They are overcome by death. They pass on to another world. A father cannot save his son, nor a family, its members.

Look! With relatives watching, with tears and crying, people are carried off one by one, like cattle to the slaughter.

Death and aging are a natural part of the world. Thus, the wise grieve not, seeing the nature of the world.

—Sutta Nipata 3, 8

# Day Thirty

## Reading

### The Goldsmith

There are gross impurities in gold—dirt, gravel, and grit. The dirt-washer places the gold in a pan and washes it again and again until he has washed away these impurities. There remain moderate impurities—coarse sand and fine grit. He washes the gold again and again until he has washed away these impurities. There remain fine impurities—fine sand and black dust. He washes the gold again and again until he has washed away these impurities.

Finally, the goldsmith places it in a crucible and heats it, liquefies it, and removes the dross. Until the gold has been washed, heated, and liquefied, and the dross removed, it is not malleable and glistening. It is brittle and cannot be worked. But there comes a time when the goldsmith has washed it sufficiently, heated and liquefied it, and has removed all the dross. At that point, the refined gold is malleable and glistening. Then the goldsmith can make from it whatever ornament he wishes—a belt, an earring, a necklace, or a chain. The gold will serve his purpose.

In the same way, there are gross defilements in one intent on attaining higher states of mind—misconduct in body, misconduct in speech, and misconduct in mind. With mindfulness, the meditator destroys and abandons these gross defilements.

There remain moderate defilements—thoughts of sensuality, thoughts of ill-will, and thoughts of harmfulness. With increased mindfulness, the meditator destroys and abandons these moderate defilements.

There remain the fine defilements—thoughts of his relatives, thoughts of his home, and thoughts of his reputation. With consummate mindfulness, the meditator destroys and abandons these fine defilements.

There remain only thoughts of the Dhamma, but his

concentration is not yet refined. It has not yet attained serenity or unity. It can be maintained only by forceful restraint. There comes a time, however, when his mind settles down, becomes fully concentrated, and gains unity. At this point, his concentration is complete. He has attained serenity and unity, and forceful restraint is no longer needed to maintain concentration.

At this point, the meditator can realize any of the higher knowledges to which he turns his mind whenever the necessary conditions arise.

—Anguttara Nikaya 3,102

## **Reflection**

### **A Time Will Come**

A time will come when the ocean will dry up and be no more, but there will be no end of suffering for those who roam and wander, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

A time will come when Mount Meru will burn up and be no more, but there will be no end of suffering for those who roam and wander, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

A time will come when the earth will be devoured by fire and be no more, but there will be no end of suffering for those who roam and wander, hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving.

—Samyutta Nikaya, 22, 99

# **Day Thirty-one**

## **Reading**

### **Venerable Sunita, the Outcaste**

Born into a low caste, I was poor and had little to eat. I eked out a living scavenging withered flowers left at shrines.

I was despised, abused, and so humbled that I was continually on my knees, paying deference to others.

How fortunate I was to see the Buddha with his train of bhikkhus entering Rajagaha!

I laid down my carrying-pole, approached, and paid obeisance to him, and he, the Blessed One, in compassion paused before me.

Lying there in prostration at his feet, I asked to be accepted into the Order.

“Come, Bhikkhu!” he said, and, thus, was I ordained.

Diligently following the Master’s teaching, I stayed alone in the forest.

In the first watch of the night, I became conscious of my past births. In the middle watch I developed the divine eye.

In the last watch, just as the sun arose, I broke the gloom of ignorance.

Sakka and Brahma appeared and paid respect with folded hands. “All hail!” they declared. “You are the noblest and the highest of men, deserving of reverence, for you have eliminated all desires.”

Seeing me revered by the devas, the Master smiled and said: “By discipline, virtue, and wisdom does one become a noble. This is holiness supreme!”

—Theragatha 2,2

## **Reflection**

### **Metta Meditation**

May I be free from harm and danger. May I be free from mental suffering. May I be free from physical suffering. May I be well, peaceful, and happy.

Likewise, may all those who are dear to me be free from harm and danger. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they be well, peaceful, and happy.

May all strangers, those unknown to me, be free from harm and danger. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they be well, peaceful, and happy.

May all enemies, those hostile to me, be free from harm and danger. May they be free from mental suffering. May they be free from physical suffering. May they be well, peaceful, and happy.

May all beings without exception, keep themselves happily. May none wish harm on another.

# Day Thirty-two

## Reading

### On Sleeping Well in the Cold Forest

Prince Hatthaka of Alavi happened to see the Buddha sitting on a bed of leaves beside a cowpath in a simsapa forest. He paid his respects to the Buddha, sat down beside him, and said, “Venerable Sir, I hope the Blessed One has slept well.”

“Yes, young man. I have slept very well and comfortably.”

“But, Venerable Sir, the nights are cold, and this is the time of snow. The ground is hard and has been trampled by the hooves of cattle. There is but a thin layer of leaves, and the trees are almost bare. Your robes are thin, and the wind is cold. Still, the Blessed One says, ‘Yes, young man. I have slept very well and comfortably.’”

“In that case, young man, let me ask you a question. Suppose a man has a house with a gabled roof, plastered inside and out, draft-free, with close-fitting doors and windows. In his room he has a luxurious bed, spread with comforters and woolen blankets, beautifully embroidered. Overhead is a lovely canopy, and on the floor is a magnificent carpet. The room is well-lit, and his wife is lovingly attending to him. Would that man sleep well?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir, he would sleep well.”

“Is it possible, however, that that man would suffer from a bodily fever or a mental fever—his mind burning with passion—so that he would sleep badly?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

“As for those passion-born fevers which caused that man to sleep miserably, that passion has been abandoned by the Tathagata. Its root has been destroyed, and it will never again arise. Therefore, he sleeps well.

“Is it possible, also, that that man would suffer from a mental fever—his mind burning with aversion—so that he would sleep badly?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

“As for those aversion-born fevers which caused that man to sleep miserably, that aversion has been abandoned by the Tathagata. Its root has been destroyed, and it will never again arise. Therefore, he sleeps well.

“Is it possible, also, that that man would suffer from a mental fever—his mind burning with delusion—so that he would sleep badly?”

“Yes, Venerable Sir.”

“As for those delusion-born fevers which caused that man to sleep badly, that delusion has been abandoned by the Tathagata. Its root has been destroyed, and it will never again arise. Therefore, he sleeps well.”

—Anguttara Nikaya 3,34



## **Reflection**

### **The Triple Gem**

The supreme speaker in all mankind,  
The Sakyan Sage, the Holy One, whose task is done.  
Gone beyond this round of rebirths,  
Possessed of power and energy.  
To you, the Blessed One, I go for refuge!

Exempt from lust and craving, sorrow-free  
Law unconditioned and delectable,  
Sweet, potent, and profoundly analytical.  
To this very Dhamma I go for refuge.

All generosity bears great fruit.  
There are four pairs of persons—  
Eight individuals who have realized the truth.  
To this very Sangha I go for refuge.

# **Day Thirty-three**

## **Reading**

### **The Rarity of Human Birth**

One day, the Buddha said to the bhikkhus, “Suppose that there were a yoke with a single hole in it, floating on the surface of the sea. The east wind carried it to the west, and the west wind carried it to the east; the north wind carried it to the south, and the south wind carried it to the north. Now suppose that there were in the sea a blind turtle which came to the surface only once every one hundred years. Would that blind turtle,” the Buddha asked, “put his neck into the hole of that yoke?”

“Venerable Sir,” the bhikkus answered, “sometime or other, at the end of a long period, he might put his neck into that hole, but it would be very unlikely.”

“Bhikkhus,” the Buddha said, “it would be more likely for that blind turtle to put his neck into that hole than for a fool who has fallen into hell to be reborn as a human because, for those in hell, it is impossible to practice the Dhamma. It is impossible for them to practice righteousness. It is impossible for them to make merit by performing wholesome deeds. Rare, indeed, is birth as a human.

## **Reflection**

### **The Eight Worldly Conditions**

Gain and loss, fame and disgrace, praise and blame, and happiness and suffering:

Among human beings, these conditions are impermanent and constantly changing.

Knowing this, one who is wise mindfully regards them all.

He neither rejoices at the desirable conditions nor feels dismay at the undesirable.

For him, welcoming the good and rejecting the bad have ceased and no longer exist.

Having understood the nature of the world, he is unshaken and has reached the deathless shore.

—Anguttara Nikaya 8, 6

# **Day Thirty-four**

## **Reading**

### **The Discourse on Blessings**

A deva once asked the Buddha “What brings happiness?” and the Buddha replied,

“Not to associate with fools, to have fellowship with the wise, and to honor those worthy of respect—this is the highest blessing.

“To live in a suitable place, to have performed meritorious deeds in the past, and to set oneself in the right direction—this is the highest blessing.

“A good education, training in a skill, respect for discipline, and pleasant speech—this is the highest blessing.

“To support one’s parents, to cherish one’s partner and children, and to have a peaceful occupation—this is the highest blessing.

“Generosity, morality, helpfulness, and blamelessness in deed—this is the highest blessing.

“To avoid evil, to abstain from alcohol, and to be diligent in righteousness—this is the highest blessing.

“Reverence, humility, contentment, gratitude, and hearing the Dhamma—this is the highest blessing.

“Patience, obedience, meeting the Sangha, and discussing the Dhamma—this is the highest blessing.

“Self-control, chastity, understanding the Noble Truths, and the attainment of Nibbana —this is the highest blessing.

“A mind untouched by worldly conditions, free from sorrow, stainless, and secure—this is the highest blessing.

“Those who have gained these qualities will be happy and victorious wherever they go. To them these are the highest blessings.”

## Reflection

### When Many Voices Shout at Once

When many voices shout at once,  
None considers himself a fool;  
Though the Sangha is being split,  
None thinks himself to be at fault.

They have forgotten thoughtful speech,  
They talk obsessed by words alone.  
Uncurbed their mouths, they bawl at will;  
None knows what leads him so to act.

‘He abused me, he struck me,  
He defeated me, he robbed me’ —  
In those who harbor thoughts like these  
Hatred will never be allayed.

‘He abused me, he struck me,  
He defeated me, he robbed me’ —  
In those who do not harbor thoughts like these  
Hatred will be allayed.

For, in this world, hatred is never  
Allayed by further acts of hate.  
It is allayed by non-hatred:  
That is the fixed and ageless law.

Those others do not recognize  
That here we should restrain ourselves.  
But those wise ones who realize this  
At once end all their enmity.

Breakers of bones and murderers,  
Those who steal cattle, horses, wealth,

Those who pillage the entire realm —  
When even these can act together,  
Why can you not do so, too?

If one can find a worthy friend,  
A virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then overcome all threats of danger  
And walk with him content and mindful.

But, if one finds no worthy friend,  
No virtuous, steadfast companion,  
Then, as a king leaves his conquered realm,  
Walk like a tusker in the woods alone.

Better it is to walk alone,  
There is no companionship with fools.  
Walk alone and do no evil,  
At ease like a tusker in the woods.”

—Majjhima Nikaya 128

# **Day Thirty-five**

## **Reading**

### **Few Are Those Beings**

In Jambudīpa, delightful parks, groves, and lotus ponds are few, but steep hills, impassable rivers, and rugged mountains covered with brush and weeds are many. In the same way, those who are reborn as human beings are few, but those who are reborn in other realms are many.

Those who are endowed with the noble eye of wisdom are few, but those who are confused and mired in ignorance are many. Those who are able to see the Tathagata and to hear his Dhamma are few, but those who fail to gain this chance are many. Those who understand the Dhamma and practice it are few, but those who fail to do so are many. Those who are moved by Truth are few, but those who remain indifferent to it are many. Those who diligently strive are few, while those who put forth no effort are many. Those who gain the concentration leading to liberation are few, but those who fail to gain such concentration are many. Those who experience the taste of exquisite food are few, but those who subsist on scraps of stale food are many. Those who experience the taste of the goal, the taste of the Dhamma, and the taste of liberation are few, but those who never experience that taste are many.

Therefore, you should train yourselves thus: “We will experience the taste of the goal, the taste of the Dhamma, and the taste of liberation.”

—Anguttara Nikaya 1, 19, 1

## **Reflection**

### **The Unborn**

The Buddha said, “There is, Bhikkhus, an unborn, unbecome, unmade, and unconditioned. If there were no unborn, unbecome, unmade, and unconditioned, there would be no escape. But, because there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, and unconditioned, there is an escape from what is born, become, made, and conditioned.”

—Udana 8, 3



## **Dedication of Merit**

May all devas share this merit. Long may they protect the Buddha Sasana for the welfare of the world.

By this merit, never may I live with fools, but have fellowship with the wise until Nibbana is won.

May this merit bring about the extinction of defilements in me.

By this meritorious deed, may I attain Nibbana.

May this merit be passed to my departed relatives! May my relatives be happy!

By this practice, according with Truth, I revere the Buddha.

By this practice, according with Truth, I revere the Dhamma.

By this practice, according with Truth, I revere the Sangha.

By this practice, according with Truth, may I be liberated from the bondage of birth and death.

Well done! Well done!! Well done!!!

