

SUTTA-NIPATA

By Lesley Fowler Lebkowicz and
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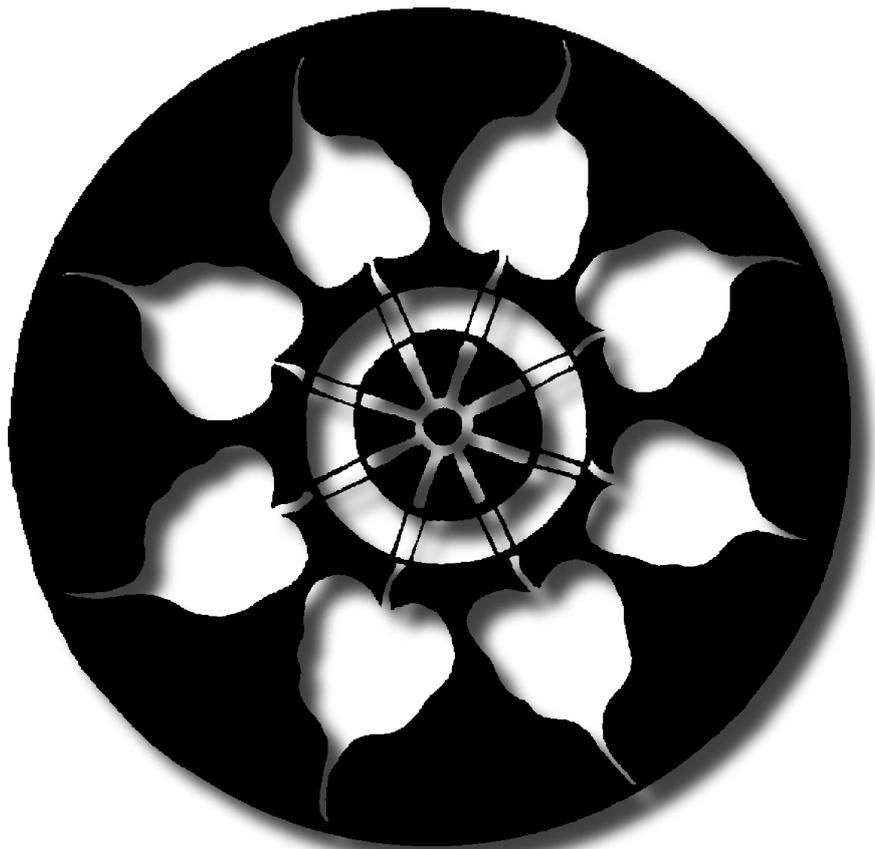
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THE WAY THINGS REALLY ARE

A TRANSLATION OF BOOK IV OF THE SUTTA-NIPATA

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CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE	IV
A NOTE ON THE PALI LANGUAGE	IV
ON DESIRE	I
THE CAVE	2
HOW OPINION & THOUGHT CONTAMINATE THE MIND	4
PURITY OF HEART	6
THE ULTIMATE	9
OLD AGE	11
TISSA METTEYYA	14
PASURA, THE DEBATER	16
MAGANDIYA QUESTIONS THE BUDDHA	19
BEFORE THE BODY'S DISSOLUTION	23
QUARRELS AND DISPUTES	27
THE FIRST DISCOURSE ON DISPUTES	32
THE SECOND DISCOURSE ON DISPUTES	37
THE FAST WAY TO FREEDOM	43
ON VIOLENCE	48
SARIPUTTA QUESTIONS THE BUDDHA	53

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The Sutta-nipata is one of the earliest texts of the Pali canon, coming from the same period as the Dhammapada, before the monastic tradition was strong. It was created by people as they practised and refers to “the wise one”, rather than to monks or nuns. In the present translation, “the wise one” is referred to as female and as male on a roughly equal number of occasions.

The translators, Tamara Ditrich (with assistance from Primoz Pecenko) and Lesley Fowler Lebkowicz are all experienced meditators who brought their understanding of meditation to bear on the text.

Tamara Ditrich and Primoz Pecenko are Pali scholars who translated the Pali into literal English; Lesley Fowler Lebkowicz has published poetry and prose and devised the present form.

This translation aims to combine textual precision and a colloquial style. Natural Australian speech rhythms and some idiomatic expressions (*skite*, for example, is an Australian colloquial word for *brag* or *boast*) were chosen to reflect both the popular origins of the text and the audience to whom this translation is directed.

LESLEY FOWLER LEBKOWICZ

A NOTE ON THE PALI LANGUAGE

The language of the Theravada (Theravaada) Buddhist Canon is called Pali (Paali). The earliest recorded Buddhist scriptures, preserved by the Theravada Buddhist tradition, are often called the Pali Canon. Originally the word Pali seems to have been an abbreviation for the compounded word *pali-bhasa* (*paali-bhaasaa*), meaning “the language (*bhasa*) of the texts (*pali*)”. In this compound the word Pali does not refer to a language but to canonical Buddhist texts. The first western Pali scholars misinterpreted the meaning of the word Pali and translated it as the language of the early Buddhist Canon. In the traditional Theravada commentarial literature it is stated that the language of the scriptures, which was also spoken by the Buddha, was Magadhi (Maagadhii), a language

spoken in the north-east India of that time (one of the so-called Prakrit languages), related to Sanskrit and, historically, of Indo-European origin. However, modern scholars believe that the language of the Theravada Buddhist Canon is not Magadhi but a dialect, closely related to Magadhi, which was used in Northern India for the oral transmission of Buddhist teaching after the death of the Buddha, especially when Buddhism started to spread widely throughout India and beyond.

For several centuries after the death of the Buddha the Canon was transmitted orally, probably in several dialects, throughout the Indian subcontinent. According to the traditional sources, the entire Canon was for the first time written down in the first century BCE in Sri Lanka. Although the entire Canon has been written down several times since its first recordings the oral tradition has continued till the present day. There is no single script developed for the language of the Pali Buddhist Canon, every country used for writing Pali the script which was used for its native languages. The language which is today, due to the misunderstanding, called Pali was not used only for canonical texts but also for commentarial literature and for communication among learned Buddhist scholars in Theravada countries.

The texts of the Pali Canon are divided into three collections, traditionally called the “three baskets” (*Tipitaka*): the monastic rules (*Vinaya*), the Buddha’s discourses (*Suttas*) and the higher teachings (*Abhidhamma*). The Buddhist tradition believes that all the three groups represent “the word of the Buddha”; however, modern scholarship shows that many texts belonging to the Canon are of later origin. The *Sutta-nipata* (*Suttanipaata*) is one of the oldest canonical texts, belonging to the *Suttapitaka*, the collection of Buddha’s discourses.

TAMARA DITRICH

In Pali the vowels ‘a’, ‘i’ and ‘u’ can be short or long. The long vowels are usually transliterated as ‘aa’, ‘ii’ and ‘uu’, or marked by a diacritic mark “-” placed above the vowel letter; e.g. in the word Theravada the second vowel ‘a’ is pronounced long: Theravaada; in the word Pali the vowel ‘a’ is pronounced long: Paali.

ON DESIRE

You're overjoyed
if you get
what you want.

If you don't,
you writhe,
a hunter pierced
by your own arrow,
born of desire,
engendering desire,
desire driven.

No matter what you long for:
a house, land, livestock, gold,
serfs, servants, slaves,
men, women, family,
(innocent things of themselves)
the longing overwhelms you
till troubles bear down
and suffering follows
like water rushing into
a leaky boat.

But if you're mindful
you evade desire
as easily as side-
stepping a snake. You're free
of the world's sticky
traps.

Be mindful.
Abandon desire.
Bale out the boat
& reach the further shore.

THE CAVE

Worldly desire's
so hard to give up.
Look at you:
stuck in a cave
surrounded by every kind of form
sunk in murkiness
far from freedom.

Your longings tie you up
in knots.
Sense pleasures snare you.
You yearn now
as you did in the past
and will in the future.
No one else
can release you.

You're greedy,
intent on desire,
infatuated by desire,
mean.
You're on the wrong track
heading for a bad time.
You wail, "What'll happen to me
when I die?"

I see you trembling
with desire
for a different state
of mind,
a sad wretch
muttering in the mouth
of death.

Look! You're self
obsessed,
flapping about like a fish
in a drying creek.

You see this
so be aware,
be selfless,
don't cling to any
state of mind.

Be here in this moment.
Keep clear
of what you know's
no good.
Life's much too short.

You've found a middle way,
completely understood
how sense impressions link us
to the world,
given up greed
and act now only
with a blameless heart.
In short you're wise,
unsullied by things
you see and hear,
free of opinion,
tradition or belief.

You've seen there's
no significance in forms.
You're free,
untrammelled by possessions,
impeccably mindful,
the barb of existence
extracted,
longing neither
for this world
nor the next.

HOW OPINION & THOUGHT CONTAMINATE THE MIND

Some people debate maliciously.
Others honestly.
But the wise
are silent,
stand back from arguments,
keep the mind
open.

How can you ever
free the mind
of its opinions
if you let desire
lead you
and do exactly as you like?
You're bound
by your own habits,
can speak
only what you know.

If you credit anything
based on rational thought
or fantasy
you're not clear.
They're part of
the conditioned world.
The benefit they give
is shaky,
built on sand.

To overcome habitual
points of view
is hard.
You investigate them all,
abandon some
and choose
a special one.

You argue to defend
a point of view
but if you're free
of set beliefs -
no need!
You've nothing to deny
or to assert,
quite purified
right now
of worldly views.

The wise
have no such view
about what is
or what is not.
They know
both thought
and pride
are meaningless.
Nothing
defines them.

The wise
see your failings
if you blow
your own trumpet,
skite
about your virtue
and awareness

but they acknowledge
your virtue
if you're calm,
don't brag,
are selfless
and unworldly.

PURITY OF HEART

Someone who wants
purity
and thinks to find it
by gazing
at the pure
might say,
“I see something pure
excellent
free of decay.
Seeing it purifies me.”

If seeing
or some intellectual process
could rid you of pain
the purifying agent would be
outside you
and you'd be left
still eager to grasp.
This view describes
a grasping person
not any path
to purity.

Anyone who's free
denies there's liberation
by another
or by what she sees
and hears,
by rules of morality,
rites and rituals
or through what
she thinks.
Neither good
nor evil
affect her.
She's given up
the grasping self.

Her action now
is neither good
nor bad.

If you abandon
one thing
just to cling to
another
you'll never
free yourself.
You're like
a monkey
letting go of
one branch,
grasping another.

You immerse yourself
in religious practices,
favour certain ways
of seeing things
and go up
and down.
The wise one sees
the way things are
through insight,
no longer swings
from high to low.

You need not defend yourself
against anything you see,
hear, touch, taste,
smell or think
Who can define you?
You live so openly.

You take
no theoretical position,
claiming it
as the ultimate.
All things are equal.

You've disentangled
the knot that used to
bind you.
No longing now
for anything in the world.

You're free.
You've understood
the way things are.
There's nothing
you would grasp.
You've gone beyond
all limitations,
have no taste
for desire
or its absence.
There's nothing
left to do.

THE ULTIMATE

If you have a set view
of the best spiritual path
in the world
and go round saying,
“This is the best
and everything else
is inferior,”
you’re stuck
in discrimination.

If you see some gain
for yourself
through the senses
or the ideas you use
in rites and rituals
and grasp hold of it
right there and then
you’ll jeer at
every other way.

The wise point out
that you’re bound
if you see your way
as best
and the rest as inferior.
Anyone who wants
to understand the way things
are
doesn’t rely
on his senses or ideas
or ritual practices.

Use neither knowledge
nor rite and ceremony
to invent some view.
Don’t consider yourself
as anybody’s equal or

their better or inferior.
No comparison at all.

You've abandoned the self!
Are free of grasping!
Depend not even on knowledge
and follow no learned group.
You hold no view
at all!

You yearn for no extreme:
being or non-being
in this world
or the next.
You've investigated
everything you've clung to
and need not cling to anything
again.

You formulate no theories
about the experience
of your senses.
No one can define you,
wise one,
free of ideas
and opinions.

The wise have
no set views,
no opinions
or preferences,
form no theories
about truth,
can't be led
by ceremonial.
They have truly
gone beyond,
need not come back
from the free
and further shore.

OLD AGE

Life's so short
you'll die
before you turn
a hundred.
(Even if you don't
old age'll get you
in the end).

When what you cherish
fades away,
you grieve
but nothing's
permanent.
You know
owning things
is meaningless
so don't get stuck
in your comfortable
house.

Everything you think
is yours
stays here
when you die.
Be wise:
devote yourself
to truth
forget about
owning things.

You dream
and meet someone
and when you wake
they've gone.
When someone you love
dies
it's just the same:

*I see you
hear you
call your name.
You die
and now there's just
the name.*

Greedy people
get stuck with
sorrow, lamentation,
meanness.
The wise
forget about
owning things,
wander about
in peace.

If you want
to understand
the way things
are
don't put yourself
forward.
Live quietly.
That's all you need.

The wise depend
on nothing,
have no likes
or dislikes.
Lamentation
and meanness
run off them
like water
from a lotus leaf.

Just as a drop
of water
slides off
a red lotus flower,

so a wise person
is unblemished
by anything
she sees, hears
or thinks.

When you're free
you don't cling
to sights, sounds
or thoughts.
You neither
like nor dislike
anything,
you want
no other way.

TISSA METTEYYA

Tissa Metteyya asked,
“What, sir, is wrong
with sex?
If you explain
we’ll train ourselves
to give it up.”

“Metteyya,” said the Buddha.
“If you’re intent
on sex,
you forget about
the teaching.
You begin to make
mistakes. That’s what’s
wrong.

“If you’ve lived
alone
and then take up
sex
you sink down
like a carriage
that can’t hold
the road.

“You’re sure to lose
what good name
you had.
Aim
to give it up.

“You hear reproaches,
are troubled.
Your thoughts
overwhelm you.
You brood,
wretched.

Spurred on
by what they say
you hurt yourself.
This is desire
driving you
from the truth!

“We said
you were wise
living quietly
and then you
turned to sex.
You’re in trouble!
A fool!

“The wise
know this danger
and always keep firmly
to their quiet life
and avoid sex.

“Train yourself
to solitude,
that’s the best
you can do,
the most noble thing.
But don’t think
of yourself
as the best
now you’re close
to freedom.”

Worldly people
bound by desire
envy the wise
wandering free,
indifferent to pleasure,
gone beyond
to the further shore.

PASURA, THE DEBATER

Different people settle
for different versions
of the truth. You say
your way's
best.

You claim: this is
the way to purity
and only this.

You all gather
to discuss the truth,
each one believing
the other's
got it wrong.
You base your claims
on what others
tell you.

You quarrel,
wanting praise,
saying that you
know best.

You're arguing
at a gathering,
hoping for praise,
fearing the failure
which leaves you
downcast,
furious at their jibes.
How can you
get them?

When your opponents
find flaws
in your argument
and refute it,
you lament and grieve
wailing, "They've defeated me!"

Ascetics quarrel
like this.
They have ups
and downs
as they win
and lose.
You see
what they're like,
give up
debate.
Ascetics only do it
for praise.

If you make your point
and win,
the group
praises your ideas.
You laugh,
swell up
with pride.

That pride
will bring you
down
but you're still
arrogant,
swollen with conceit.
Don't you see
there's no point
to dispute?
The wise tell us
that quarrelling
and purity
don't mix.

Like a hero
fed at
the king's table
who roars at his rival,

“Run away!”
you’ve no reason
to fight.

When people argue,
defending a set view
and saying,
“This is the only way!”
just tell them
you don’t want
to argue.

There are people
who live free
from argument,
who don’t set
one view
against another
who have nothing
more to attain.
They have no self
you can argue with, Pasura.

Thinking about
different ideas
just confused you.
Now you’ve met
a purified being
you can’t escape
the truth.

MAGANDIYA QUESTIONS THE BUDDHA

The Buddha said,
“I’ve watched desire,
discontent and passion
and felt no need
for sex. What is
this thing? A bag
of piss and shit!
I wouldn’t even
touch it
with my foot.”

Magandiya replied,
“You don’t want
this woman
whom kings
have sighed for?
This perfect jewel!
What do you believe in?
What virtuous kind of life?
What notions of a life
to come?”

“Magandiya,” the Buddha
said. “I investigated
different theories
but didn’t claim one
for myself. I didn’t
ever say, this one
is it. But I searched
and found true
inner peace.”

Magandiya asked,
“How do you investigate
without settling for one
point of view? How
do you wise ones
teach this inner peace?”

“Not by belief,
oral transmission
or knowledge,
Magandiya,” said
the Buddha, “and not
by rites and rituals
nor by the absence
of any one
of these. By none
of them at all.
The thing to do
is give them up,
stay calm
and independant.
You’ll stop longing
for any state
of mind.”

“If you say
that purity doesn’t come
from belief,
oral transmission,
knowledge
or rites and rituals,”
said Magandiya,
“nor from the absence
of these things,
I think
your teaching’s
stupid.
There are people
who say
belief’ll
make you pure.”

“Magandiya, because your search
has relied on these beliefs
you’ve been besotted
by the theories you’ve adopted.

You don't understand
a thing.
That's why you think
it's stupid.

“Think of yourself
as better
equal
or worse than another
and you'll find yourself
quarrelling.
Rest firm
and undoubting.
Comparisons
disappear.

“Why would someone
who's found freedom argue,
saying, “This is true
and that's wrong.”
If you don't make
comparisons
you won't argue
about them.

“You're wise,
you've left your home,
wander in solitude
not chatting
in villages,
free of lust,
bound by
no preferences.
You never argue
with people.

“You're wise, you're free,
not stuck in dispute.
You promote peace,
live without desire,

grow in the world
like a lotus
rising unsullied
from mud and water.

“You’ve experienced
profound insight,
have no pride
in your beliefs
or understanding.
You’re just not
like that.

“If you can see
and hear
without clinging,
nothing ties you
down.
If you’re wise,
Ignorance can’t bind you
but if you get stuck
in the senses
or beliefs
you roam around the world
causing trouble.”

BEFORE THE BODY'S DISSOLUTION

“Gotama the Buddha,
what do you say
when you're asked
about a freed being?
How does someone
who's at peace
see things? How
does she live?”

The Buddha said,
“Even before
the body's dissolution,
if you're free
you're untroubled about
anything that's past
or still to come
or happening
right now.
You have
no preferences.

“You're free
of anger,
fear
and pride,
have no remorse,
speak wisely
with restraint,
a truly
peaceful person.

“You don't long
for what's to come
or miss
what's gone.
You're not stuck
in the world
of the senses

or influenced
by mere belief.

“You live modestly
and honestly,
aren’t covetous
or greedy.
You live quietly
not scorned by others,
don’t speak in ways that sour
the love that flows
between them.

“You’re not dazzled
by pleasure
or pride,
you’re gentle
and astute,
a person
of faith
with no strong
likes
or dislikes.

“You don’t live
the way of truth
in order to get
something
and aren’t upset
when you don’t.
You’re free of desire,
have no greed
for pleasure.

“You swim
oceans of equanimity
are always
mindful
never assess yourself

as superior
equal
or inferior.
You have no haughtiness
at all.

“You’re free,
rely
on nothing,
understand the way
things are,
desire
neither existence
nor non-existence.

“You don’t care
about the pleasures
of the senses,
have gone beyond
the ties
and bonds
of clinging.

“You have no children,
cattle, land or property.
You don’t reach
for things
or throw them
away.

“You don’t choose
the ways
that ordinary people,
recluses
or ascetics
would condemn:
so they make
no accusations
to disturb you.

“Free of greed
and selfishness,
wise one, you
don’t describe yourself
as superior
equal
or inferior.
You’re free
of ideas,
free of
any views.

“There’s nothing
in the world
you call your own.
You don’t pine
for something
that’s not there.
Everyone knows
you’re calm,
untroubled by ideas
about the truth.

QUARRELS AND DISPUTES

Where do disputes
& quarrels
come from?
And wailing, grief & envy?
Rudeness, insults, lies?
Why do they
happen?

Disputes & quarrels,
wailing, grief & envy,
pride, conceit,
rudeness, insults, lies
all happen because we like
& want
things pleasant.
Disputes & quarrels
grow out of envy
& when we argue
we speak
spitefully.

Why do some things
please us?
Why do we feel
such greed?
Why do we hope
& shape our lives
to gratify
those hopes?

Things please us
because we want them.
Greed's part
of worldly life.
it's just the same
for hope
& its fulfillment.

Why's greed a part
of living in the world?
& what's the origin
of thought & anger,
telling lies & doubt &
all the mental states
the Buddha
talked of?

Seeing things as pleasant
or unpleasant
means we prefer
one thing
& not another.
Likewise we see
how things arise
& pass away,
& choose one state.

Anger & doubt,
telling lies
& other mental states
arise
when we see things
as pleasant
or unpleasant.
We're bound
by this duality.
If you have doubt,
train yourself
to know this.
You'll understand
when you've seen
what mental states
are like.

Why do we feel
pleasure
or displeasure?

What has to happen
to make them
disappear?
And why do things
arise
& pass away?

Pleasant or
disagreeable feeling
comes with
sense impressions
(if there's no
sense impression,
pleasure
& displeasure
don't exist).
Arising
& passing away
are just the same.
They come
with sense impressions.

So where in the world
do sense impressions
come from?
Why do we cling
to things?
What do we have
to do
to be free
of selfishness
& sense impressions?

Sense impressions depend
on mind & body.
Grasping is born
of desire.
When there's no desire,
there's no selfishness

& when mind & body disappear
sense impressions
are gone.

What do we have
to do
for mind & body
to disappear?
For happiness
& unhappiness
to cease?
Tell us please,
we really
want to know.

Mind & body cease to exist
when you experience
neither true
nor false perception;
when you're neither
without perception
nor perceive
something that's
not there.
It's perception
that's the source
of every problem.

You've explained
all the questions that we've asked.
Now just one more:
do all the wise
say this purification's
the highest
or do they say
that there's
some other goal?

Some of the wise contend
this purification's

the highest,
but some good teachers say
that there's a state
in which no clinging's
left.

The wise one investigates
& sees
what some depend on
& having understood,
is free:
doesn't bother
with disputes,
doesn't strive
for one state
or another.

THE FIRST DISCOURSE ON DISPUTES

When you get stuck
in your own beliefs
& argue with others,
you're likely to say,
"If you agree with me
you know the truth
& if you don't,
you're just not
realised!"

The debate's
a slanging match.
"You're stupid!"
"Well, you're wrong!"
Everyone says
they're the one who's right.
How can you know
who is?

if you don't agree
with someone else,
you're a fool,
worthless,
an ox.
All fools
are daft,
all of them
stuck
in their own beliefs.

But if you're
purified
by what you've come
to know,
if you're good
& wise
& understand,
then you're

no fool.
You're just living
what you know.

Ignore what fools
tell one another.
Don't say,
"This is the truth!"
It's only fools
who think their way's
the true one
& everybody else
is just a fool.

How people argue!
Some say, "This
is the truth,
the way things
are!"
& others say, "That's
wrong!"
Why can't these ascetics
learn to agree?

There is indeed
one truth
& only one.
The wise know this
but the ascetics proclaim
a variety of truths
& can't agree.

Why do the arguing ascetics
who're meant to be
so clever
promote such a variety
of truths?
Either truth is various
or they're playing games
with reason and ideas.

There's just one truth.
Any others are conceived
by sense impressions
& thought.
Ascetics reason
about their beliefs
then say those ideas
are either true
or false.

You're full of scorn.
You rely
on what you
see, hear, think,
on rites
& ritual;
you stick
to your opinions
saying smugly,
"You're stupid."
You know
nothing.

You think
others are fools
& you're smart.
You say
you're smart
reviling
all the others.

By your own
far fetched beliefs,
you're realised,
drunk with pride,
swollen with a sense
of your own perfection,
prostrating to
yourself.

You think
you're so good.

The words with which
someone would drag you
down
bear them down too
& if all ascetics say
they're wise
& understand the way
things are,
then there's no fool
amongst them.

Impassioned by their own
beliefs,
members of different sects
call out,
"If you say the truth's
different
to what I say,
you're still deluded!
You're not realised!"

Various dogmatics
stick
to their various ways,
insisting, "This is
the way
& all these other paths
lead nowhere!"

Even if you talk
with conviction
about the way you know,
why scorn
others & their ways?
If you say they're fools
you only stir up
trouble.

You stick
to your beliefs,
measure others
against yourself,
argue your views
with pride.
If you give up
these beliefs
you cause no
pain.

THE SECOND DISCOURSE ON DISPUTES

Do all those people
who cling to their views
& assert that they know
the truth
really bring blame
crashing down around their heads?
Or do some
win praise?

You know, debate
brings either praise
or blame
but such little praise
as yields no peace.
See this and don't
dispute. Peace grows
where there's no
argument.

The wise one doesn't hold
with all the popular ideas.
How could they
interest her?
She relies on nothing
she sees or hears.

People who hold codes
of good conduct
to be the highest path,
claim purity's
the fruit of self restraint,
adopt some rite
& practise it,
declaring, "We'll practise
now and soon win
purity." They say
they're experts

& pass on, experts
from one life
to the next.

If they slip
from this code
of good conduct
or fail to perform
the rites,
they tremble
still yearning
for purity
like someone far
from home
craving its comforts.

Abandon codes of good conduct
reject religious rites
& judgements of blame
or praise.
Desire neither purity
nor impurity.
Live in peace
& freedom.

People who practise
self restraint,
who depend on what
is seen, heard or thought,
proclaim purity
as they wander in worldly
confusion
craving for yet another
life on earth.

Their desire gives birth
to more desire.
They tremble
confused
by all the theories.

If they went beyond
birth and death,
what could make them
tremble?
What would there be
to yearn for?

Some people say they know
the highest truth.
Others say,
“No!
Your idea of the truth
couldn't be
more wrong!”
Who is right?
Everyone claims
to know best.

Some people say
their own opinions
are perfect & others'
flawed.
They bicker and argue
each claiming
the truth
as their own.

If reviling a view
of the truth
is enough to cast it
down,
none would stand out
from the many.
People insist
any view different
to their own is
inferior.

As they honour
their own beliefs,

so they'll praise
their own practices.
All their arguments
must be valid,
their idea of purity shaped
to their own standards.

The wise one doesn't
need another's
guidance, doesn't
hold any belief
as best.
She's gone beyond dispute.
She's explored
the way things
are.

Some people believe
purity
comes from a view
of life.
They say,
"I know.
I see the way
things are."
But what's the use
of such experience
once you've gone
beyond?

Some one who sees
mind and body
knows only
mind and body.
The wise one says,
"No matter if he sees
much or little.
It's not the way
to purity."

Dogmatic people are hard
to teach. They honour
some set opinion,
say they've seen the truth
that purity lives where they say it is
& their beliefs are best.

The wise one doesn't bother
with theories,
ideas,
or popular opinion.
She's not moved
by the notions
that sway others.

The wise one's left behind
all worldly ties,
isn't bound
by sectarian beliefs.
She's at peace
whilst others fret
and fidget.
Theories that sway them,
leave her
unmoved.

She's given up
her old delusions,
creates no new ones,
isn't trapped by
her desires
or stuck in rigid
opinion.
She's free of theories,
unsullied by the world,
no longer blames
herself.
She's wise.

She's not bound
by what she sees,
hears or thinks,
has gone beyond
the cycles of death
& rebirth,
neither restrains herself
nor desires anything;
has set down
her burden,
is delivered,
free.
That's what
the Buddha said

THE FAST WAY TO FREEDOM

Great sage!
Close kinsman of the sun!
Teach me about
peace and non-attachment.
How can a monk
see enough
to grow calm?
Give up grasping hold
of worldly things?

The great sage, Buddha,
said, “Be wise. Side-
step the traps
that trick you
into believing
that ‘you are’.
It’s a delusion.
Whatever deep desires
you may have,
practise for their
extinction.
Be mindful
all the time.

Whatever understanding
you may gain
intuitively
or by formal education,
don’t be proud.
Good people know
that’s not the way
to peace.

“Don’t think such insight
makes you
a better person,
an equal
or a lesser being.

Don't let
the many things
that touch you
fool you into thinking
'I exist.'

“Find peace within.
Don't look for it
elsewhere.
Someone who's calm
takes nothing,
casts nothing
aside.

“Be as still
as the centre
of the ocean.
Be calm and
free of conceit.”

“Buddha, clear-sighted
open-minded one,
knower of the truth,
you've taught the way
to end our troubles.
Please explain
the practices,
the precepts
and the methods
of concentration.”

“Keep your eyes
from roaming greedily
and your ears
from idle chatter.
Don't yearn
for your favourite
foods.
Cling to nothing
in the world.

“Don’t complain about anything
that comes your way.
Don’t yearn for any other
state of mind.
Don’t be shaken by some
frightening experience.

“If someone gives you
food, drinks, sweets or clothes,
don’t hoard them.
If no one gives you
any,
never mind.

“Meditate.
Don’t be greedy.
Don’t worry.
Be mindful.
Live quietly.

“Don’t sleep too much.
Be ardent in your practice,
alert.
Give up laziness,
deceit,
laughter,
amusements,
sex
and ornaments!

“Don’t practise
sorcery,
the interpretation
of dreams and omens,
or even
astrology.
Don’t devote yourself
to reading the cries
of animals,

enhancing fertility
or healing the sick.

“Reproaches don’t ruffle you,
praise doesn’t sway you.
You turn from
greed, envy, anger,
lies, insults and swearing.

“You don’t buy or sell.
You provoke no blame.
You don’t hang around villages
hoping for gifts
for your preaching.

“Don’t boast.
Don’t speak deceitfully
or arrogantly.
Don’t quarrel.

“Don’t lie or cheat
or sneer at others’ ways,
their understanding
or religious rites.

“If ascetics or other folk
annoy you, don’t answer back.
Good people don’t retaliate.

“You know the truth.
You investigate.
Train yourself
to be mindful all the time.
You know that when desire’s
quenched
there’s peace.
Don’t be careless
about the Buddha’s teaching.

“If you’ve overcome
the mentality
that made you unhappy,
you can’t be
cast down.

You’ve seen the way
things are
with your own eyes,
not by hearsay.

Respect the Buddha’s
teaching. Be mindful
of it. Always.”

That’s what
the Buddha said.

ON VIOLENCE

The response to violence
is fear. I'll tell you
about the dismay I felt
when I saw people
hurting each other.

They struggled like fish
fighting
in a drying creek
and I was scared.

The world's
not stable,
everything's
in flux.
I wanted a place
to be safe
from change
but there was
nowhere.

In the end I was
disgusted
by their hostility.
That's when I saw
the barb
worked deep
into the tissue
of their hearts.

When the barb
pierces someone's heart
she runs first one way
then another;
when the barb's
drawn out
she neither runs
confused

nor falls down
weary.

Remember:

don't tie yourself
to worldly bonds;
go beyond
desire. Practise
for your own
realisation;

tell the truth,
be modest and
open. Speak
kindly to people,
don't yell at them;
be wise. Avoid
greed and selfishness,

overcome lethargy,
weariness
and apathy.

If you're intent
on freedom,
don't be mindless,
don't be proud,

don't start lying
or grow fond
of material things.

Recognise your own
pride. Live free
of violence.

Don't wallow
in delightful memories
or present pleasures;
don't wail
for what you've lost,
don't cling
to desire.

I call greed
the great river
and desire
its current.
Desire
makes the river run.
Our sense pleasures
bog us down in mud,
make it hard
to cross over.

The wise one,
noble sage,
doesn't flinch
from the truth,
stands firm.
She's given up
everything, is
truly calm.

She's wise,
knows the way
things are,
is bound by
nothing,
lives in the world
envying no one,
coveting nothing.

Someone who's gone
beyond worldly desire
and clinging (so difficult
to do)
doesn't grieve,
doesn't worry.
She's cut through
the current of desire,
untied the binding
knots.

Let the past fade,
the future disappear,
don't cling
to the present.
Live in peace.

Someone whose well-being
depends neither
on her mind
nor body
doesn't wail
for something that's
not there,
can't be harmed
by anything in the world.

An unselfish person
doesn't think:
this is mine,
that's hers;
doesn't wail,
"I haven't got one!"

If you ask me
I'd say the advantage
of being unshakeable,
is feeling merciful,
free of greed
and perfectly balanced
all the time.

A wise person
is free of desire.
Her actions bring her
neither ill
nor good,
she strives
for nothing,
is always
safe.

A wise person
considers herself
neither superior,
equal
nor inferior.
She's calm,
Unselfish,
without likes
or dislikes.
That's what
the Buddha said.

SARIPUTTA QUESTIONS THE BUDDHA

The venerable Sariputta said,
“I’ve never seen or heard
a teacher who speaks
so sweetly. He’s brought
his disciples here
from the fourth realm
of heaven. They know
what freedom is.

The wise one has driven
out all darkness
won perfect
happiness.
Men, women and gods
behold him.

To help all the people
trapped
in their worldly lives,
I’ve come to ask
a question of
the free and open
perfect Buddha.

How many frightening things
await a monk
who’s given up worldly life?
Suppose he’s found
a secluded place to live:
a mountain cave,
a graveyard
under a tree,
some other remote spot.
He shouldn’t be
afraid
in perfect solitude.

How many dangers
are there in the world
for someone
who wants to go
beyond?
A monk living
alone
must overcome them.

Suppose this monk's
resolute in his practice,
how should he speak?
Where should he go
for food?
What rituals should he
perform?

What kind of training
should he undertake?
What qualities of attention
mindfulness wisdom
should he develop
to drive the causes
of misery from his mind
as a smith drives dross
from silver?"

"I'll tell you, Sariputta,"
said the Buddha. "I know
what works for someone
who's fed up with
worldly life,
who lives in solitude
practising for enlightenment,
following the way
things really are.

"A monk who's wise,
mindful
and lives moderately,

need not fear
the five dangers:
poisonous insects,
snakes,
violent men,
raging animals
or people
with different beliefs.

“Even after he’s seen
the danger of them,
he need have
no fear.
He goes on
striving for goodness,
overcoming
still other obstacles.

“Though he’s sick,
hungry, cold or
far too hot,
he’ll be patient;
though he’s homeless
he’ll be firm and
strong-hearted.

“He doesn’t steal
or tell lies.
He blesses all beings
with loving-kindness,
the weak and the strong
alike.
When he sees agitation
in his mind
he thinks: this
is evil
and lets it
go.

“He’s not swayed

by anger
or pride,
lives free of them,
has no likes
or dislikes.

“He honours wisdom,
delights in what’s
good,
overcomes difficulties,
has no dislikes,
lives quietly.

“These four thoughts
cause trouble:
What shall I eat?
Where shall I eat it?
Last night was awful!
Where shall I sleep
tonight?
Someone who’s practising
and living alone
leaves these thoughts
behind.

“He receives food
and clothes
when they’re offered.
He knows moderation
makes him content,
is careful
with what he’s received;
behaves modestly
in the village.
Even if people
are rude,
he replies kindly.

“He keeps his eyes
down,

doesn't loaf about,
practises meditation,
is very aware,
well balanced,
attentive,
leaves himself no room
to think or
do ill.

“He hears his teacher's
guidance or reproofs
with joy and mindfulness,
feels no hatred
for the people
who practise with him.
Speaks wisely
and concisely
when he's asked.
Doesn't gossip

“He practises mindfully
to overcome the five causes
of worldly misery:
desire for things to see,
hear, taste, smell or touch.

‘The monk who's mindful,
free,
gives up desire
for these things,
examines the way
things are,
pays close attention
to them,
puts an end
to ignorance.
That's what
the Buddha said.