

CHAPTER-III

THE END OF LIFE ACCORDING TO DHAMMAPADA

So far as the *Dhammapada* is concerned, the life has got its causal efficacy if there is any purpose of living in this world. Life becomes fruitful if it is not utilized only for the the fulfillment of physical needs, but it should have broader perspective of maintaining moral and social needs. The philosophy projected by the *Dhammapada* in broad outlines can be put thus:

Be like birds in the air!
Untraceable, leaving no marks,
Upon the shifting sands of time,
That birth, death and rebirth conjure,
Upon this universal flux of *samsara*,
Try not to leave the footmark of 'I'.

This makeshift nest called life,
Substantial though it may seem,
It a bubble, kamma-wrought,
Liberated be from this empty toilsomeness.

Ever oozing is the cancer:
Breeding a circle, endless and aimless,
So like the bird, free be! ¹

The *Dhammapada* is a book based on the promotion of moral values in a society. The insight illuminating the heart of Buddha has been incorporated in luminous verses of pure wisdom. As the Buddhist manual of right living, the *Dhammapada* is a world classic and a perennial source of inspiration.

The basic concepts of Buddhism have been arranged in the sacred Pali Canon, in a way that even a simple, unsophisticated seeker of truth can be benefited from these., as much as, or perhaps more than, a learned scholar burdened with the burden of knowledge. Thus, in the *Dhammapada* the *asavas* have been depicted by images that are full of wisdom.

In a desert no man in his senses would make a given sand dune a fixed reference point to guide caravans. Sand dunes shift often and where there is a hill today; there could be a big depression tomorrow. Life, wrought by *kamma* and fraught with suffering, is at best a tracing, a temporary track laid by the *asavas*, only to be obliterated,

If *asava* is the ink, life is the imprint or impression thereof, rather a heavy one, which, 'bleeding through', leaves its mark on the next page. The page called - life", lightly printed, with further *asava* imprints or activities, similarly impresses the subsequent pages.

The idea of oozing, seeping or percolating is bound up with the idea of layers, levels, areas and time. This is exactly what the concept of life is in Buddhism, that a process or progression from life to life, through different planes of existence, through different levels and modes of psychophysical formation. This dynamic-imagery of life is called *samsara* wandering, in the sense of aimless drifting or existential vagrancy.

In the *Dhammapada*, *asava* is a synonym of *samsara*, which literally means an endless wandering. It emphasizes an existential situation, which has neither permanent footing nor purpose. *Asava*, effluent or discharge, by its very nature, percolates without a purpose, pollutes without provocation, plagues without punishing, perplexes

without persecuting. Even so it is with *samsara*. By its very changeful, impersonal and conditioned nature, it perpetuates a perennial stream of discrete, discontinuous, distinct, individual units of becoming called 'life'. In the transmigratory state each and every individual is roaming through cycle of birth and death and taking shelter in mother's womb (*'punarapi jananam punarapi maranam punarapi janani-jathare sayanam'*)

Such a *samsara* is taken by the Buddhist with special reference to *Dhammapada* as a wound which is to be healed up. Otherwise it may continue and persist for a longer period of time. For this reason the necessary treatment is needed. Until healed, a wound, whence matter is continuously discharged, is an affliction, an illness. *Asava* is a wound arising out of mental disturbances, which have to be removed somehow. *Asavas* are also tended by continuous 'feeding'. Feeding, *ahara*, is a synonym of *asava* and therefore also of *samsara*.

To the Buddhists like medicines the substantial food is also essential for keeping our physical and mental health in tact. If there is mal-nutrition, an individual would not be in a position to become mentally fit for removing the disturbances. That is why; *ahara* or sufficient feeding is essential.

The word *ahara*,-"feeding", is a technical term in Buddhism, rich with philosophical implications, something which sustains and perpetuates *asava* as well as *samsara*. There are four *aharas*, one physical and the other three mental. These *aharas* sustaining the mind and body (*nama-nupa*) can be described as psychophysical processes of feeding the continuity of phenomenal existence. As such, they represent a dynamic universal law, known as *Niyama Dhamma*, cosmic laws that govern all forms of sentient existence. The working of *aharas*, in conjunction with *niyama-dhammas*, is as follows:

1. **Kavalikara ahara** – The nourishment of human body as representing the laws of physical nature which regulate seasonal changes, environmental balance (*utu-niyama*), and reproductive functions (*bija-niyama*) etc.

2. **Phassahara** - Sensory and mental contact or impression as mental feeding representing
citta-niyama, the law regulating our mind.

3. **Manosancetanahara** – Volitional activity as *kammic* feeding representing *kamma-niyama*, the law that regulates the relationship between action and its result, e.g. rebirth.

4. **Vinnanahara** - Consciousness that links our previous life with the latter as existential food representing *Dhamma-niyama*, i.e., the law governing one's destiny both here and hereafter, as also the supernormal events, attainment etc.

These four types of *ahara* amount to a process of developing the body, the mind, *kamma* and rebirth, and thus sustain and perpetuate *asava*, and thereby *samsara*.

The *Dhammapada*, by setting a goal, spells it out very concretely. The only meaningful goal of life, and therefore also the true objective for all spiritual endeavor, is what is called *khinasava*, the canker-free state, A wise caravan leader has for guidance the pole star, or some such reliable reference point, as he travels through infinite stretches of desert, made more fearsome by the countless carcasses strewn all over, of those victims who, losing the way, lost their lives. Similarly, the seeker of truth should have the three *vimokkhas*, leading to the *khinasava* state, as the only reliable

instrument or guide for his or her journey through the desert of *samsara* unto *Nibbana*. *Viimokkhas* are the positive antipodes of the *asavas*, as mentioned in the *Sabbasava Sutta*.

There are quite a number of verses in the *Dhammapada* which correctly deal with *asava*. They clearly show the exalted non-mundane state where the *asavas* come to an end, as well as the practical methods leading to it. These guidelines enable a practitioner to make a resolute, steady, step-by-step advancement from the *asava*-polluted *samsara* to that dimension utterly cleansed of *asava*, *Nibbana*.

There are at least ten verses that clearly enunciate both the goal and the path. There are also numerous verses dealing with *asava*, partially and indirectly or along with other themes. The most interesting and instructive aspect of the *Dhammapada*, however, is the abundant light it throws on the attributes, the specific qualities of those who have become *khinasavas*. What exactly happens to a *khinasava*, how he conducts himself, how he influences and society these are questions of tremendous practical importance. And the *Dhammapada* answer them lucidly indeed.

The *Dhammapada* may be called a friend, philosopher and guide on account of its mundane, social and moral value. To the simple and illiterate devotee, the *Dhammapada* is like a sympathetic and understanding counsellor, to a great scholar, bearing the academic burden; its wise sayings produce a most sobering effect, even as a true philosopher humbles a pretentious intellectual. And to the earnest seeker of truth it is a guide *par excellence*.

The stanza which most forcefully, clearly and eloquently present the basic philosophy of the *Dhammapada*, vis -a -vis the *asavas*, is the ninety -third *gatha*. The Blessed One pronounced this verse as the

epilogue of a discourse which he gave while staying at Veluvana, the famous royal bamboo grove at Rajagaha, gifted by King Bimbisara of Magadha. The Buddha declared:

*Yassasava parikkhina
ahare ca anissito:
sunnato animitto ca
Vimokkho yassa gocaro
akase' va sakuntanam
padam tassa durannayam*

Dhp.93

He, whose cankers are destroyed,
Who is no longer bound by food,
Who only resorts to that spiritual deliverance,
The void and the unconditioned *Nibbana*,
His path is untraceable,
Like that of birds in the air.²

THE WAY TO NIRVANA ACCORDING TO THE DHAMMAPADA

As a reliable and dependable guide to the seekers of *Nirvana*, the *Dhammapada* seems to present us with a complete perspective the Way to *Nirvana*. The purpose of the present paper is to describe this Way. According to some Buddhist scholars, the title *Dhammapada* has been interpreted in the sense of 'the Way to *Nirvana*'.

FUTILITY OF EXTERNAL ASCETICISM

Some of the Buddhist scholar believes that that the Buddhist Way to *Nirvana* is ascetic, and that *Nirvana* can be achieved only by the ascetic monks. This view seems to be based on a misunderstanding of the Way. It has to be remembered that

Sakyamuni had rejected the path of mortifying asceticism as fruitless. He had finally adopted the Middle Way, which led Him to Buddhahood. This Middle Way transcends both mortifying physical austerities and thoughtless indulgence in sense-pleasures. It advises us to remain in between two extremes: tough austerities and great attachment towards sense pleasure.

There is, nevertheless, a certain degree of ascetic discipline in the total structure of the way. This ascetic or yogic strand of the Way does not consist in external forms of asceticism; it consists in a systematic method of restraining the bodily, mental and vocal actions with a view to effecting total external and internal purification and in developing inner awakening. This can be achieved by the monks who have renounced the common mode of existence as well as by the lay people who are living in society.

Rejecting mere external asceticism, the Buddha declares: "Not wandering naked, nor matter locks, nor filth, nor fasting, nor lying on the ground, nor dust, nor ashes, nor striving squatting on the heels, can purify a mortal who has not overcome doubts" (verse 141). One cannot become a true monk merely by wearing ochre- robe. Defining a true monk, the Lord says: "He who, though richly decked, behaves impartially, is peaceful, subdued, settled (on the Way), of holy conduct, and has ceased to harm all living beings, is indeed a holy man, *sramana*, a *bhikshu*" (verse 142).

Mere yellow robe is not enough; ascetic discipline does not consist in external rituals and symbols of austerity. In one of sterner sayings in our Text we read the following: "What is the use of your matted hair, O fool! What is the use of your garment of antelope skin? Inside you are full of passions, but the outside you make clean"(verse 394). Corrupt monks were not unknown in ancient times. It is stated

that "Many men whose shoulders are covered with the yellow robe are of evil character and unrestrained; such evil-doers by their evil deeds go to hell" (verse 307).

NECESSITY OF SELF EFFORT

Self-effort is essential for the attainment of Nirvana. Self-dependence and self-reliance are necessary for attaining Nirvana. One who helps oneself becomes worthy of getting Nirvana. In many verses of our Text individual effort on the part of the seeker is declared essential. "What neither mother, nor father, nor any other relative-can do, a well-directed mind does and thereby elevates one" (verse43). In the two opening verses of the Text, the mind is declared to be forerunner of all our good and evil states and supremacy of what we think is emphasized (verses 1-2) . A wise man is he who purifies himself of the impurities of the mind (verse 88). Purification does not come from without; it comes from within and is achieved by oneself. Therefore, the Buddha says: "One, indeed, is one's master; what other master could there be? With oneself well subdued, one finds a master different to find" (verse 160).

Neither God nor any other higher power is recognized in the Buddhist Doctrine. Man himself fully responsible for his condition in the course of existence, and he is fully capable of affecting his liberation from that course. The Teacher of this principle of independence and self-reliance has encouraged His disciples in the following words; "Arouse yourself by yourself, examine yourself by yourself; thus self-guarded and mindful, O brother, you will live happily. Self, indeed, is the master of self. Self is the refuge of self. Therefore, subdue yourself as the merchant subdues a good horse" (verses 379- 380).

These doctrines of the Buddha have got some similarities with some ideas contained in the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Let us consider the following

three verses in this text: "One should elevate oneself by oneself: and should not debase oneself; for self is the only friend of self, and self is the only enemy of self. To him who has subdued self by his self, his self is friend; but to him who has not subdued self, his own self will behave inimically, like an enemy. He who is subdued and pacified, his supreme self remains concentrated in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, likewise in honors and disgrace" (*Bhagavad-gita*, VI. 5-7). Some modern translators, who were struck by these two sets of verses with almost parallel contents, have misinterpreted meaning of these verses of the *Dhammapada*. In the *Bhagavadgita* the first line of the seventh verse of the sixth chapter reads thus: *jitatmanaph prasantasya paramatama samahitah*, which we have rendered as "he who is self-subdued and pacified, his supreme self (*paramatma*) remains concentrated". Those who are wedded to the doctrine of "God" or Supreme Self" (*paramatma*) make here a distinction between lower *atma* and a higher *atma*, and think that the self subdued man becomes established in supreme Self or God (*paramatma samahitah*). This may be a possible interpretation in some form of theistic Vedanta in which an embodied self (*jivatma*) is destined to merge into the Supreme Self (*paramatma*). The *Bhagavadgita* itself teaches this belief in several of its verses. But this idea is not found in the verses quoted above. The self-subdued man remains stilled (*samahita*) and concentrated even when he encounters pairs of opposites because of his self-mastery and self-conquest (*jitatma*). His subdued self itself is called *paramatma* or supreme self; in other words, *jitatma*, *prasantatma* and *paramatma* are epithets of the same *yogin* who remains in absorption and is not disturbed by heat, cold, praise and insult.

When even on the evidence of the *Bhagavadgita*, VI. 5-7³ we can not find the theory of conquering lower self by another higher self, how can we find such a theory in the *Dhammapada* which is an authentic document of a non-Vedic and non-theistic tradition which has held

aloft the unique banner of *anatmavada* or the principle of not-self? Those who try to offer a *Vedantic* interpretation of Buddhist principles and practices seem to be engaged in what is called *vipallasa* or *viparyasa*.

When the Buddha says that self is the refuge of self, it simply means that one is the refuge of oneself, there is no other refuge. The duality between a lower and a higher self is foreign to Buddhist thought. This duality is opposed to the Buddhist principle of autonomy which tresses self-exertion, self-reliance, and ultimately self-transcendence. In *Nirvana* there is neither *atma* nor *paramatma*. The Buddhist *soteriology* differs radically from all other theistic soteriologies which teach surrender to God and make salvation dependent on his grace. The Buddhist way to Ultimate Release keeps man at the centre of the whole drama of *samsara* and seeks to release him not only from God, gods, and all kinds of foreign powers and fears. He who wants to be released ultimately must work for it diligently and with earnestness. The text stays: "By oneself, indeed, is evil done; by oneself is one defiled. By oneself is evil avoided; by oneself, indeed, is one purified. Purity and impurity depend on oneself. No one can purify another"(verse 165).

An individual having weak mind and weak intellect cannot total grasp these doctrines of Buddhism. The strength to follow the Buddha's Way comes from the capacity to renounce all that does not conduce to the realization of *Nirvana*. That whose strength lies in their self-love and who cherish ownership in any of its forms cannot renounce; they are indeed frightened and therefore seek some external assistance and refuge. "Driven by fear, people go to many a refuge, to hills, woods, groves, trees, and shrines. But that refuge that is not safe refuge. One is not delivered from all sufferings by resorting to such refuge" (verses 188-189). People do not know that the

ultimate protection or security from suffering and death can be achieved only by successfully traversing the Way to *Nirvana*. The text says: "Sons are no protection, nor father, no brother; for one who is seized by death the kinsmen are of no protection. Knowing this fact let a wise and good person immediately clear the way to Nirvana" (verses 288-289). The Buddhists have pointed out three things to be achieved—the Goal, the Teacher, and the Way; the disciple has to make the effort by himself to reach the Goal by following the Way pointed out by the Teacher. The Buddha says: "If you go on this way, you will make an end of suffering. I have taught the way having known the removal of the arrow of suffering. You yourself make an effort. The transcendent Ones (*Tathagatas*) are only teachers. The meditative ones, who enter the Way, are released from the bonds of Death" (verses 75-276).

ETHICAL PRACTICES

The Text occasionally refers to the Eightfold Way (verses 191 and 273); the Eight Factors of the way find mention here and there, and all of these factors are part of Buddhist ethical practices. The Eightfold way constitutes the fourth Holy Truth, and it is believed to include the triple course of training, viz. Ethical, Mental, and Intellectual (*sila, samadhi, prajna*). Right Speech, Right Action, and Right Livelihood, these three factors of the Eightfold Way constitute the Ethical training; Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration constitute the mental training, while perspective and Right Aim constitute the Intellectual training culminating in Wisdom.

The *Dhammapada* (verse 89) once refers to the Factors of Enlightenment (*sambodhyangas*). Like the Eight Factors of the Holy Way, the seven Factors of Enlightenment are included in a most ancient "list of Sramanic practices known as Thirty-seven Principles conducive to Enlightenment (*bodhipaksika-dharmas*). The seven Factors of Enlightenment are: Mindfulness, (*smrti*), Energy (*viriyā*), Joy

(*priti*), Serenity (*prasrabdhi*), Concentration (Samadhi), and Impartiality (*upeksa*). It needs no mention that several factors are common of these two lists of eight and seven factors. In many verses of our text almost all the seven Factors of Enlightenment find a pointed reference. The scheme of triple course of training noted above is again elaborated to some extent in the practice of Seven Factors.

One of the most important terms which is also one of the key-concepts of Buddhism is *sila*. It covers the entire range of ethical conduct and religious behaviour developed by the Buddhist Tradition. The *Dhammapada* repeatedly refers to numerous, facets of moral and religious culture summed up by the term *sila*.

It is acknowledged that the vast majority of people in the world are undisciplined; hence the seeker of *Nirvana* will have to endure abuse patiently (verse 320). Control of the mind and the sense organs is the key to successful observance of ethical principles. In all the eleven verses, the second chapter of our Text teaches the necessity of controlling the mind (verses 33-34). It is indeed said that those who subdue their mind are freed from the bonds of Mara (verse 37). Love is a virtue, which must be cultivated, for it is the only antidote to hatred (verse 5). Heedfulness, temperance, virtuous conduct, and truth are praised in many verses of the first' and second chapters (verses 9,10,16, 18, 21, 22, 31, 32), Pure deeds, actions with consideration, restraint, and living in conformity with the Teaching are recommended (verses 24, 86). He who has subdued his senses, is free from pride, and he who has eradicated evil propensities is considered superior to gods (verse 94). One must reflect peace through one's mind; speech and activities (verse 96). A man who is transparent in mind, speech and body is the embodiment of peace. That is, if a man can attain simplicity which reflects in his body, speech and mind can attain peace.

A few verses of our Text sum up the negative and positive contents of *sila*. "Not to do any evil deeds, to accomplish the good deeds, and to purify one's own mind – this is the Teaching of the Buddhas" (verse 183). Forbearing patience is declared to be the supreme form of austerity (verse 184). Another verse mentions the following principles of ethical conduct: "not to slander, not to harm, to observe the liberating code of conduct, to eat moderately, to sleep and sit in seclusion, and to cultivate higher thoughts –this is the Teaching of the Buddha" (verse 185).

In Buddhism the term *vasana* has been used in the sense of desire in many cases. In fact, the term *vasana* literally means fragrance. Metaphorically desire is called fragrance due to having the same characteristics like influencing other, etc.. Just fragrance in a cloth, if remains together, can make other cloth fragrant, a piece of desire, if fulfilled, gives rise to another one leading to our dissatisfaction. Among all the perfumes, the perfume of virtue is supreme; the perfume or fragrance of the virtuous people is supreme; it blows even amongst the gods; those who are endowed with virtuous conduct are beyond the reach of Mara (verses 55-57). Keeping company of the intelligent and wise men who detect and point out faults is part of ethical training (verse 76). The Text counsels thus: "Do not have evil-doers for friends: do not have mean people for friends. Have virtuous people for friends; have the best of men for friends (verse 78). The wise people control themselves; they are not ruffled by praise and blame; having heard the teachings, the wise people become serene like a deep, still, and clear lake (verses 80-82). The word *santa*, in the sense of good, quiescent and wise sage, occurs perhaps for the first time in the Pali Texts. It became popular and theologically significant in the medieval Indian texts of religious poetry. But in the ascetic and non-theistic Buddhist tradition a *santa* is identical with an *arhat*; he is also called *satpurusa*, good person, and *pandita*, wise. An

arhat or a *santa* is a kind of sage who has achieved liberation in this very life. He is not influenced by the world and its ills, although he lives in the world wearing his last body. The *santas* or sages are described thus: "The good persons renounce everything everywhere; the sages do not prattle longing for sense-pleasures. Whether touched by happiness or suffering, the wise people are neither elated nor depressed" (verse 83). All their actions of mind, speech, and body are characterized by peace (verse 96).

The observance of ethical precepts is accompanied by peace and happiness. More than one dozen verses of our Text are in praise of happiness (197- 208). Freedom from hatred, ailments, greed, possession, lust, and desire brings happiness. Hatred is described as the biggest evil, and peace is described as the supreme form of happiness. The real strength consists of the strength to forbear patiently (verse 399).

Good health, or freedom from disease is as much part of Buddhist ethical life as contentment and (verse 204). "Seeing and living with holy persons is constantly blessed; if a man did not see fools, he would be constantly happy" (verse 206). Several verses teach the avoidance of affection, attachment, lust and craving for obtaining freedom from suffering and fear (verses 213- 216). The practice of virtue not only secures freedom from suffering and fear but also ensures affability. "He who is endowed with moral virtue and insight, who is established in righteousness, knows the truth, and does what is his own duty, him the people hold dear" (verse 217), He who finds faults with others and is irritable, increases his own impurities (verse 253).

More than a dozen verses are devoted to a discussion of evils of anger (verse 221- 234). Anger and pride are the two chief enemies of

holy life. In a most remarkable verse the Buddha admonishes- thus: "Conquer anger by love; conquer evil by good; conquer stingy by liberality: conquer the lair by truth"(verse 223). In another verse, speaking the truth , not getting angry, and giving even from a scanty store to one who begs, these three steps are said to lead one to the presence of the gods(verse 224). Those who are controlled in their bodies and are inoffensive, such sages achieve the Indestructible position where they grieve not (verse 225). Control of body, speech, and mind is the mark of those steadfast people who are well controlled.

The celebrated five ethical precepts (*pancasila*) are highlighted in some verses. "He who destroys life, tells lies takes in this world what is not given to him, goes to another man's wife ,and who is addicted to intoxicating liquors such a one digs his own roots in this world" (verses 246- 247). Comparing oneself with others, one should neither strike nor cause to strike (verse 129). Envy, lust, hate, folly and greed are stated to be some of the greatest evils (verses 248-251). A wise and righteous person is one who discriminates between right and wrong, who leads other lawfully and impartially and who is the guardian of the law (verses 256-257). Forgiveness, friendliness and fearlessness are the characteristics of a wise man (verse 258). A holy or noble man is he who is inoffensive towards all living beings (verse 270). The principle of ahimsa is thus made the basis of holy life. At another place passionlessness is declared the best among the virtues (verse 273). Idleness, slothfulness and weakness of will are the obstruction on the way (verse 280). These should be removed. The Buddha asks us to uproot our self-love then only can we cherish the road to peace (verse 285). He who conquers himself is certainly a superman (verse 22). "The dull-witted man, when he is lazy, gluttonous, sleepy and rolls about lying like a large hog nourished on pigwash, obtains repeated births" (verse 325).

The virtue of faith is eulogized in some verses (38, 144, 303 and 333). It performs a necessary preliminary function. It is better to live alone rather than associate with a fool; with few wishes and without committing sins, let a man walk on alone (verse 330). The need of eradicating craving is stressed in some verses (334-337). False speech is a sure road to hell (verse 306) so is the courting of another's wife (verses 309-310). Desire for wealth, wife and sons is a bond stronger than those made of iron, wood or hemp (verse 345). Gifts bestowed on those who are free from lust, hate, delusion and craving bring great reward (verses 356-359). The gift of the Doctrine is said to excel all gifts (verse 354).

Destruction of impurities (*asravas*) is one of the major aims of ethical practice. The word restraint (*samvara*) sums up a large part of Buddhist ethics. Restraint in thought, speech, body and in all parts of the body and in all things is indeed said to be the Way of freedom from suffering (verses 360-563). While restraint is a negative measure, friendliness (*maitri*) is a positive virtue which should govern man's behaviour with other living beings – "He who abides in friendliness and is pleased in the Buddha's teaching, attains the blissful state of quiescence of the condition phenomena" (verse 368). To achieved perfection in good conduct and to radiate happiness everywhere are also means of ending misery (verse 376). Sense control, contentment, association with good friends (*kalyanamitra*) who are energetic and of pure livelihood, and observing restraint according to the liberating code of conduct (*pratimoska*), these are basic preliminaries of ethical practice.

MEDITATIONAL PRACTICES

The Buddhist religious culture has stressed control and purification of the mind to an extraordinary degree. Mind is declared

the forerunner and governor of all our good and evil states leading to happiness and suffering (verse 1-2). A well developed mind cannot be penetrated by passion (verse 14). He whose mind is well released is able to destroy attachment, hatred and delusion (verse 20). In order to attain release of the mind one must study, regulate and cleanse it thoroughly. This depends upon constant watchfulness (*apramada*), which is declared the way to deathlessness. "The wise people who are steadfast and ever meditative, possessed of strong powers, realized the supreme security that is Nirvana" (verse 23). Earnest meditation leads to abundant bliss (verse 27). So does a consoled and guarded mind (verses 35-36). Those who subdue the mind, which travels far, wanders alone, is bodiless and hides in the cave (of consciousness), are liberated from the bounds of Mara (verse 37). A wise man, therefore, purifies him of all impurities of mind (verse 88). "Those whose minds are well cultivated in the Factors of Enlightenment, who rejoice in renunciation of clinging and grasping, whose impurities have been destroyed, and who are luminous, they are released even in this world" (verse 89). A released sage is called *santa* and *upasanta*, quiet and quiescent. Unrest is a mark of bondage.

Even the deities love the Rightly Enlightened Ones who are mindful, wise, intent on meditation and who delight in renunciation and quiescence (verse 81). Meditation (*yoga*) produces wisdom, and in the absence of meditation, wisdom is lost (verse 282). Silence is good when it is accompanied by wisdom and virtue (verses 263-269). Mindfulness of the body coupled with constant reflection leads to the end of evils (verse 293). Constant contemplation on the Buddha, The Dharma, the Sangha, and the body, and constant delight in inoffensiveness and meditation are the regular practices of awakened and watchful disciples of the Buddha (verse 296-301).

Meditation (*samadhi*) and wisdom (*prajna*) are complementary. "He who has no wisdom lacks meditation and he who has no meditation lacks wisdom. He who has both meditation and wisdom, he is indeed in the presence of Nirvana" (verse 372). The process of ultimate release through meditation and insight is summed up in the following words: "The monk who retires to an empty abode, whose mind is quiescent and who perceives the doctrine rightly, experiences a joy transcending that of man. Whenever he reflects on the origination and cessation of compounded heaps, he attains the serene joy and happiness of those who know the Deathless" (verses 373-374). The importance of mindfulness and meditation practice in the Way to Nirvana can scarcely be overemphasized. The practice of meditation culminates in wisdom.

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM

The word *Buddha* means the wise, knower awakened or enlightened. Sakyamuni is known as Buddha after achieving the enlightenment, because of His perfection in knowledge and wisdom. The way to Nirvana may also be described as the Way to Wisdom (*bodhi*). Our text highlights the crucial role of knowledge and wisdom in the process of Enlightenment.

Spiritual ignorance (*avidya*) is stated to be greatest taint; The Buddha asks us to abandon this taint and become taintless (verse 243). Delusion (*moha*) is stated to be an incomparable snare (verse 251). It can be cut off only by the sword of wisdom. Right knowledge of essential sharing fruits of holy life (verse 20). Discarding heedlessness by heedfulness, a wise and sorrowless man ascends the high palace of wisdom and surveys the sorrowing people (verse 28). "He whose mind is unsteady, who does not know the true doctrine, and whose faith (*prasa*) wavers, his wisdom will not be perfect" (verse 38). Knowledge of the true doctrine and firm faith are necessary for

the perfection of wisdom. A disciple of the Rightly Enlightened One outshines the blind worldling in wisdom (verse 59). One must know that the way to Nirvana is different from the way to gain and praise (verse 75). Those who are released through truly knowing are often referred to as perfectly peaceful and wise (verse 96). Generally speaking, this world is blind and dark; those that can see are very few (verse 174).

The great mass of suffering can be destroyed, among other things, by investigating into the truth (*dharmaviniscaya*) and by obtaining knowledge (verse 144). He who having gone for refuge to *Buddha*, *The Dharma* and the *Sangha*, perceives with right knowledge the four Holy Truths – Suffering, Origin of Suffering, End of Suffering, and the Noble Eightfold way leading to the End of Suffering, is released from all sufferings (verse 190-192). “Here I shall live in rainy season, here in the autumn and in the summer: thus the fool thinks and does not know the dangers of life and death” (verse 286).

It is one of the well known Buddhist doctrines that false views (*mithyadrsti*) lead to suffering and spiritual decline (verses 316-318). Ultimate released cannot be achieved without destroying the four fundamentals evils – sensuality (*kama*), lust for life (*bhava*), speculative views (*drsti*) and spiritual ignorance (*avidya*). These evils called *asravas* have been translated as impurities, corruptions, cankers, outflows, deadly drugs, and defilements. The *Dhammapada* repeatedly dwells on the necessity of their extinction (verses 93, 94, 126, 253, 293, 386, 415, 420). Ethical practices, dedicational methods and the cultivation of wisdom have only one aim, namely, the complete destruction of *asravas* and attainment of Nirvana.

The awareness of the three factors like impermanence, sufferings, and non-self which characterized the whole lot of

conditioned things leads to the road to Purification (*visuddhi*). He, who, with wisdom, discerns this, becomes disgusted with suffering and goes along the Way to Nirvana (verses 277-279). He who knows the Four Holy Truths becomes master of everything and knower of everything. He is the Omniscient One, The Transcendent One, and the Released One. The Way terminates in Nirvana.

This is the brief analysis of the practical steps on the Way to Nirvana as found in the *Pali Dhammapada*. But the real understanding of the Way consists in actually traversing it and in reaching the end of journey. The Buddha has given the following warning. "Not merely by morality and austerities, nor again by much learning, nor by entering into meditation, nor yet by sleeping in an empty place do I realize the bliss of renunciation not known to the worldling. O brother! Do not be confident so long as you have not achieved the destruction of the *asravas*" (verses 271-272).

References:

1. D.C. Ahir (Ed): *Dhammapada: Meaning and Message*, Buddhist World Press, Delhi, 2009, pp.69-79
2. *Ibid.*
3. *Srimadbhagavadgita*, VI/5-7