

GAUTAMA UPANISHAD:
HEED THE BUDDHA, AND AWAKEN

Compiled by Joseph Molleur, Vedanta Society of Iowa, August, 2007

“I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha’s heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He reached the same state of perfection to which others come by Bhakti Yoga, or Jnana. Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Perfection comes through the disinterested performance of action.” (*Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, vol. IV, pp. 136–137)

PEACE INVOCATION

May all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy-minded.

Whatever living beings there are, either feeble or strong,

either long or great, middle-sized, short, small or large,

either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near,

either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded.

Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place,

let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.¹

OM. Peace, peace, peace be unto all.

I. SELF-CONQUEST

1. Well-makers lead the water (wherever they like); fletchers bend the arrow; carpenters bend a log of wood; wise people fashion themselves.²
2. Let a wise man blow off the impurities of his self, as a smith blows off the impurities of silver one by one, little by little, and from time to time. (239)
3. The wise who control their body, who control their tongue, the wise who control their mind, are indeed well controlled. (234)
4. Him I call indeed a Brahmin³ who does not offend by body, word, or thought, and is controlled on these three points. (391)
5. Watching his speech, well restrained in mind, let a man never commit any wrong with his body! Let a man but keep these three roads of action clear, and he will achieve the way which is taught by the wise. (281)
6. Self is the lord of self, who else could be the lord? With self well subdued, a man finds a lord such as few can find. (160)
7. If a man make himself as he teaches others to be, then, being himself well subdued, he may subdue (others); one's own self is indeed difficult to subdue. (159)

8. If one man conquer in battle a thousand times thousand men, and if another conquer himself, he is the greatest of conquerors. One's own self conquered is better than all other people; not even a god, a Gandharva,⁴ not Mara⁵ with Brahman could change into defeat the victory of a man who has vanquished himself, and always lives under restraint. (103–105)
9. Mules are good, if tamed, and noble Sindhu horses, and elephants with large tusks; but he who tames himself is better still. (322)
10. Rouse thyself by thyself, examine thyself by thyself, thus self-protected and attentive wilt thou live happily! For self is the lord of self, self is the refuge of self; therefore curb thyself as the merchant curbs a good horse. (379–380)
11. Not the perversities of others, not their sins of commission or omission, but his own misdeeds and negligences should a sage take notice of. (50)
12. The fault of others is easily perceived, but that of oneself is difficult to perceive; a man winnows his neighbor's faults like chaff, but his own fault he hides, as a cheat hides the bad die from the gambler. If a man looks after the faults of others, and is always inclined to be offended, his own passions will grow, and he is far from the destruction of passions. (252–253)

13. What ought to be done is neglected, what ought not to be done is done; the desires of unruly, thoughtless people are always increasing. But they whose whole watchfulness is always directed to their body, who do not follow what ought not to be done, and who steadfastly do what ought to be done, the desires of such watchful and wise people will come to an end. (292–293)

II. EQUANIMITY

1. As a solid rock is not shaken by the wind, wise people falter not amidst blame and praise. (81)

2. This is an old saying, this is not only of today: “They blame him who sits silent, they blame him who speaks much, they also blame him who says little; there is no one on earth who is not blamed.” There never was, there never will be, nor is there now, a man who is always blamed, or a man who is always praised. (227–228)

3. “All created things perish,” he who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way to purity. “All created things are grief and pain,” he who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way that leads to purity. “All forms are unreal,” he who knows and sees this becomes passive in pain; this is the way that leads to purity. (277–279)

4. Let no man ever look for what is pleasant, or what is unpleasant. Not to see what is pleasant is pain, and it is pain to see what is unpleasant. (210)

5. From pleasure comes grief, from pleasure comes fear; he who is free from pleasure knows neither grief nor fear. (212)

6. No one should attack a Brahmin, but no Brahmin (if attacked) should let himself fly at his aggressor! Woe to him who strikes a Brahmin, more woe to him who flies at his aggressor! (389)

7. Let us live happily then, not hating those who hate us! among men who hate us let us dwell free from hatred! (197)

III. RENUNCIATION

1. If by leaving a small pleasure one sees a great pleasure, let a wise man leave the small pleasure, and look to the great. (290)

2. Restraint in the eye is good, good is restraint in the ear, in the nose restraint is good, good is restraint in the tongue. In the body restraint is good, good is restraint in speech, in thought restraint is good, good is restraint in all things. A Bhikshu,⁶ restrained in all things, is freed from all pain. (360–361)

3. Let a man leave anger, let him forsake pride, let him overcome all bondage! No sufferings befall the man who is not attached to name and form, and who calls nothing his own.

(221)

4. He who never identifies himself with name and form, and does not grieve over what is no more, he indeed is called a Bhikshu. (367)

5. Him I call indeed a Brahmin who fosters no desires for this world or for the next, has no inclinations, and is unshackled. (410)

IV. LUST AND GREED

1. There is no satisfying lusts, even by a shower of gold pieces; he who knows that lusts have a short taste and cause pain, he is wise. (186)

2. A creature's pleasures are extravagant and luxurious; sunk in lust and looking for pleasure, men undergo (again and again) birth and decay. (341)

3. Men, driven on by lust, run about like a snared hare; held in fetters and bonds, they undergo pain for a long time, again and again. (342)

4. So long as the desire of man towards women, even the smallest, is not destroyed, so long is his mind in bondage, as the calf that drinks milk is to its mother. (284)

5. Four things does a reckless man gain who covets his neighbor's wife—a bad reputation, an uncomfortable bed, thirdly, punishment, and lastly, hell.⁷ (309)

6. He who having got rid of the forest (of lust) (i.e. after having reached Nirvana) gives himself over to forest-life (to lust), and who, when removed from the forest (from lust), runs to the forest (to lust), look at that man! though free, he runs into bondage. (344)

7. Cut down the whole forest (of lust), not a tree only! Danger comes out of the forest (of lust). When you have cut down both the forest (of lust) and its undergrowth, then you will be rid of the forest and free! (283)

8. Follow not after vanity, nor after the enjoyment of love and lust! He who is earnest and meditative, obtains ample joy. (27)

9. From lust comes grief, from lust comes fear; he who is free from lust knows neither grief nor fear. (214)

10. The fields are damaged by weeds, mankind is damaged by lust: therefore a gift bestowed on those who are free from lust brings great reward. (359)

11. There is no fire like passion, there is no shark like hatred, there is no snare like folly, there is no torrent like greed. (251)

12. Riches destroy the foolish, if they look not for the other shore;⁸ the foolish by his thirst for riches destroys himself, as if he were his own enemy. (355)
13. “One is the road that leads to wealth, another the road that leads to Nirvana”; if the Bhikshu, the disciple of Buddha, has learned this, he will not yearn for honor, he will strive after separation from the world. (75)
14. O man, know this, that the unrestrained are in a bad state; take care that greediness and vice do not bring thee to grief for a long time! (248)
15. From greed comes grief, from greed comes fear; he who is free from greed knows neither grief nor fear. (216)
16. Let us live happily then, free from greed among the greedy! among men who are greedy let us dwell free from greed! (199)
17. Wise people do not call that a strong fetter which is made of iron, wood, or hemp; far stronger is the care for precious stones and rings, for sons and a wife. (345)
18. “These sons belong to me, and this wealth belongs to me,” with such thoughts a fool is tormented. He himself does not belong to himself; how much less sons and wealth? (62)

19. Let us live happily then, though we call nothing our own! We shall be like the bright gods,
feeding on happiness! (200)

V. KARMA

1. By oneself the evil is done, by oneself one suffers; by oneself evil is left undone, by oneself
one is purified. Purity and impurity belong to oneself, no one can purify another. (165)

2. Bad deeds, and deeds hurtful to ourselves, are easy to do; what is beneficial and good, that is
very difficult to do. (163)

3. He who destroys life, who speaks untruth, who in this world takes what is not given him, who
goes to another man's wife; and the man who gives himself to drinking intoxicating
liquors, he, even in this world, digs up his own root. (246–247)

4. A fool does not know when he commits his evil deeds: but the wicked man burns by his own
deeds, as if burned by fire. (136)

5. As long as the evil deed done does not bear fruit, the fool thinks it is like honey; but when it
ripens, then the fool suffers grief. (69)

6. An evil deed, like newly-drawn milk, does not turn (suddenly); smoldering, like fire covered
by ashes, it follows the fool. (71)

7. If a man commits a sin, let him not do it again; let him not delight in sin: pain is the outcome of evil. If a man does what is good, let him do it again; let him delight in it: happiness is the outcome of good. (117–118)
8. Even an evil-doer sees happiness as long as his evil deed has not ripened; but when his evil deed has ripened, then does the evil-doer see evil. Even a good man sees evil days, as long as his good deed has not ripened; but when his good deed has ripened, then does the good man see happy days. (119–120)
9. Let no man think lightly of evil, saying in his heart, “It will not come near me.” Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; the fool becomes full of evil, even if he gather it little by little. Let no man think lightly of good, saying in his heart, “It will not come near me.” Even by the falling of water-drops a water-pot is filled; the wise man becomes full of good, even if he gather it little by little. (121–122)
10. Like a beautiful flower, full of color, but without scent, are the fine but fruitless words of him who does not act accordingly. But, like a beautiful flower, full of color and full of scent, are the fine and fruitful words of him who acts accordingly. (51–52)
11. He whose evil deeds are covered by good deeds, brightens up this world, like the moon when freed from clouds. (173)

12. Kinsmen, friends, and lovers salute a man who has been long away, and returns safe from afar. In like manner his good works receive him who has done good, and has gone from this world to the other—as kinsmen receive a friend on his return. (219–220)

VI. MIND

1. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with an evil thought, pain follows him, as the wheel follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. All that we are is the result of what we have thought: it is founded on our thoughts, it is made up of our thoughts. If a man speaks or acts with a pure thought, happiness follows him, like a shadow that never leaves him. (1–2)

2. The disciples of Gautama are always well awake, and their mind day and night always delights in compassion. (300)

3. Not to commit any sin, to do good, and to purify one's mind, that is the teaching of (all) the Awakened.⁹ (183)

4. This mind of mine went formerly wandering about as it liked, as it wanted, as it pleased; but I shall now hold it in thoroughly, as the rider who holds the hook holds in the furious elephant. (326)

5. It is good to tame the mind, which is difficult to hold in and flighty, rushing wherever it wants;
a tamed mind brings happiness. (35)

6. As rain breaks through an ill-thatched house, passion will break through an unreflecting mind.
As rain does not break through a well-thatched house, passion will not break through a
well-reflecting mind. (13–14)

7. Whatever a hater may do to a hater, or an enemy to an enemy, a wrongly-directed mind will
do us greater mischief. Not a mother, not a father will do so much, nor any other relative;
a well-directed mind will do us greater service. (42–43)

VII. KNOWLEDGE

1. If a man for a hundred years worship Agni (fire) in the forest, and if he but for one moment
pay homage to a man whose soul is grounded (in true knowledge), better is that homage
than sacrifice for a hundred years. (107)

2. Pleasant is virtue lasting to old age, pleasant is a faith firmly rooted; pleasant is attainment of
intelligence, pleasant is avoiding of sins. (333)

3. But there is a taint worse than all taints—ignorance is the greatest taint. O mendicants! throw
off that taint, and become taintless! (243)

4. Through zeal knowledge is gotten, through lack of zeal knowledge is lost; let a man who knows this double path of gain and loss thus place himself that knowledge may grow.

(282)

5. Him I call indeed a Brahmin whose knowledge is deep, who possesses wisdom, who knows the right way and the wrong, and has attained the highest end. (403)

VIII. MEDITATION

1. Without knowledge there is no meditation, without meditation there is no knowledge: he who has knowledge and meditation is near unto Nirvana. (372)

2. The disciples of Gautama are always well awake, and their mind day and night always delights in meditation. (301)

3. Even the gods envy those who are awakened and not forgetful, who are given to meditation, who are wise, and who delight in the repose of retirement (from the world). (181)

4. He who gives himself to vanity, and does not give himself to meditation, forgetting the real aim (of life) and grasping at pleasure, will in time envy him who has exerted himself in meditation. (209)

IX. LIBERATION

1. You yourself must make an effort. The Tathagatas (Buddhas) are only preachers. The thoughtful who enter the way are freed from the bondage of Mara. (276)
2. Speak the truth, do not yield to anger; give, if thou art asked for little; by these three steps thou wilt go near the gods. (224)
3. Him I call indeed a Brahmin who, after leaving all bondage to men, has risen above all bondage to the gods, and is free from all and every bondage. (417)
4. Few are there among men who arrive at the other shore (become Arhats); the other people here run up and down the shore. (85)
5. Him I call indeed a Brahmin who has traversed this miry road; the impassable world and its vanity, who has gone through, and reached the other shore, is thoughtful, guileless, free from doubts, free from attachment, and content. (414)

X. VARIOUS TEACHINGS

1. The best of ways is the eightfold; the best of truths the four words; the best of virtues passionlessness; the best of men he who has eyes to see.¹⁰ (273)

2. Let no one forget his own duty for the sake of another's, however great; let a man, after he has discerned his own duty, be always attentive to his duty. (166)
3. If anything is to be done, let a man do it, let him attack it vigorously! A careless pilgrim only scatters the dust of his passions more widely. (313)
4. A man does not become a Brahmin by his platted hair, by his family, or by birth; in whom there is truth and righteousness, he is blessed, he is a Brahmin. (393)
5. Not in the sky, not in the midst of the sea, not if we enter into the clefts of the mountains, is there known a spot in the whole world where death could not overcome (the mortal). (128)
6. A supernatural person (a Buddha) is not easily found, he is not born everywhere. Wherever such a sage is born, that race prospers. (193)

PEACE INVOCATION

May all beings be happy and secure, may they be happy-minded.

Whatever living beings there are, either feeble or strong,

either long or great, middle-sized, short, small or large,

either seen or which are not seen, and which live far (or) near,

either born or seeking birth, may all creatures be happy-minded.

Let no one deceive another, let him not despise (another) in any place,
let him not out of anger or resentment wish harm to another.

OM. Peace, peace, peace be unto all.

1. *Sutta Nipata* I.8.3-6, trans. V. Fausböll, in vol. X of *The Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1881).

2. *Dhammapada*, verse 80, trans. F. Max Müller. The *Dhammapada* is one of the earliest Buddhist scriptures, considered by many scholars as preserving the closest thing we have to the actual words of the Buddha. All subsequent references are to verse numbers in Müller's translation of this text (with a few minor emendations), first published, with the *Sutta Nipata*, in vol. X of *The Sacred Books of the East*. Editions of the *Dhammapada* are readily available in bookstores; it can also be found online at the Internet Sacred Text Archive (a treasure-laden website, well worth visiting): <http://www.sacred-texts.com/bud/sbe10/index.htm>.

3. By Brahmin ("Brahmana" in Müller's text) the Buddha, who was "caste-blind," does not mean a member of the highest caste in the Hindu social order, but rather an *arhat*, or liberated person—what Vedantists would call a *jivanmukta*.

4. Celestial musician.

5. "The Tempter"—Buddhism's version of Satan.

6. Mendicant; monk.

7. Not a realm of everlasting or permanent torment, as in the western monotheistic faiths, but rather (as in Hinduism) a "place" of temporary anguish preceding a wicked person's disadvantageous rebirth.

8. "The other shore" is a common Buddhist metaphor for Nirvana, which consists in extinction of desires and liberation from *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth.

9. The title "Buddha" literally means "awakened being."

10. The Buddha here refers to the core components of his teaching, the Noble Eightfold Path and the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are: (1) every aspect of our existence involves us in suffering (*dukkha*); (2) the cause of suffering is craving or desires (*tanha*); (3) liberation from suffering (Nirvana) consists in the extinction of craving/desires; and (4) the way leading to liberation from suffering is the Noble Eightfold Path, comprised of Right Understanding, Right Intent, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Meditation.