The Awakened One (The Buddha)

He whose victory has never been surpassed nor even equalled — which path can lead to Him, the Pathless, the Awakened One who dwells within the Infinite?

One in whom there is neither greed nor desire, how can he be led astray? Which path can lead to Him, the Pathless, the Awakened One who dwells within the Infinite?

Even the gods envy the sages given to meditation, the Awakened Ones, the Vigilant who live with delight in renunciation and solitude.

It is difficult to attain to human birth. It is difficult to live this mortal life. It is difficult to obtain the good fortune of hearing the True Doctrine. And difficult indeed is the advent of the Awakened Ones.

Abstain from evil; cultivate good and purify your mind. This is the teaching of the Awakened Ones.

Of all ascetic practices patience is the best; of all states the most perfect is Nirvana, say the Awakened Ones. He who harms others is not a monk. He who oppresses others is not a true ascetic.

Neither to offend, nor to do wrong to anyone, to practise discipline according to the Law, to be moderate in eating, to live in seclusion, and to merge oneself in the higher consciousness, this is the teaching of the Awakened Ones.
Even a rain of gold would not be able to quench the thirst of desire, for it is insatiable and the origin of sorrows. This the sage knows.

Even the pleasures of heaven are without savour for the sage. The disciple of the Buddha, of the Perfectly Awakened One, rejoices only in the extinction of all desire.

Impelled by fear, men seek refuge in many places, in the mountains, in the forests, in the groves, in sanctuaries.

But this is not a safe refuge; this is not the supreme refuge. Coming to this refuge does not save a man from all sufferings.

One who takes refuge in the Buddha, in the Dhamma\textsuperscript{1} and the Sangha,\textsuperscript{2} with perfect knowledge, perceives the Four Noble Truths:

Suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering and the Noble Eightfold Path which leads to cessation of suffering.

In truth, this is the sure refuge, this is the sovereign refuge. To choose this refuge is to be liberated from all suffering.

It is difficult to meet the Perfectly Noble One. Such a being is not born everywhere. And where such a sage is born, those around him live in happiness.

Happy is the birth of the Buddhas, happy the teaching of the true Law. Happy is the harmony of the Sangha, happy the discipline of the United.

\textsuperscript{1} The True Doctrine.
\textsuperscript{2} The community; the order of the Great Ones and the order of the monks.
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One cannot measure the merit of the man who reveres those who are worthy of reverence, whether the Buddha or his disciples, those who are free from all desire and all error, those who have overcome all obstacles and who have crossed beyond suffering and grief.

This concerns the Four Truths and the Eightfold Path that lead to the annihilation of suffering. Here are the details given in the text:

The Four Noble Truths are:

1. Life — taken in the sense of ordinary life, the life of ignorance and falsehood — is indissolubly linked with suffering: suffering of the body and suffering of the mind.
2. The cause of suffering is desire, which is caused by ignorance of the nature of separative life.
3. There is a way to escape from suffering, to put an end to pain.
4. This liberation is obtained by following the discipline of the Eightfold Path which gradually purifies the mind from the Ignorance. The fourth Truth is called the method of the Eightfold Path.

The Noble Path consists in a training in the following eight stages:

1. Correct seeing. To see things as they are, that is to say, a pure, accurate vision, the best vision.

Three conditions characterise existence: pain, impermanence, the absence of a fixed ego. So the Dhammapada says. But it is not quite that, it is rather the absence of a fixed, durable and separate personality in the psychological aggregate, the lack of a true continuity in the personal consciousness. It is for this reason that, for example, in the ordinary state one cannot remember one’s past lives nor have the sense of a conscious continuity through all one’s lives.

The first point then is to see correctly, and to see correctly is to see that pain is associated with ordinary life, that all things...
are impermanent and that there is no continuity in the personal consciousness.

(2) Correct intention or desire. But the same word “desire” should not have been used, because we have just been told that we should not have desire. It is rather “correct aspiration”. The word “desire” should be replaced by “aspiration”.

“To be freed from attachments and to have kind thoughts for everything that exists.” To be constantly in a state of kindness. To wish the best for all, always.

(3) Correct speech that hurts none. Never speak uselessly and scrupulously avoid all malevolent speech.

(4) Correct behaviour — peaceful, honest. From all points of view, not only materially, but morally, mentally. Mental honesty is one of the most difficult things to achieve.

(5) Correct way of living. Not to cause harm or danger to any creature. This is relatively easy to understand. There are people who carry this principle to the extreme, against all common sense. Those who put a handkerchief to their mouths, for example, so as not to swallow germs, who have the path in front of them swept so as not to step on an insect. This seems to me a little excessive, because the whole of life as it is at present is made up of destruction. But if you understand the text correctly, it means that one must avoid all possibility of doing harm, one must not deliberately endanger any creature. You can include here all living creatures and if you extend this care and this kindness to everything that lives in the universe, it will be very favourable to your inner growth.

(6) Correct effort. Do not make useless efforts for useless things, rather keep all the energy of your effort to conquer ignorance and free yourself from falsehood. That you can never do too much.

(7) The seventh principle comes to confirm the sixth: correct vigilance. You must have an active and vigilant mind. Do not live in a half-somnolence, half-unconsciousness — usually in life you let yourself go, come what may! This is what everyone does. Now and then you wake up and you realise that you have wasted your
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time; then you make a big effort only to fall back again, a minute later, into indolence. It would be better to have something less vehement but more constant.

(8) And finally, *correct contemplation*. Egoless thought concentrated on the essence of things, on the inmost truth and on the goal to be attained.

How often there is a kind of emptiness in the course of life, an unoccupied moment, a few minutes, sometimes more. And what do you do? Immediately you try to distract yourself, and you invent some foolishness or other to pass your time. That is a common fact. All men, from the youngest to the oldest, spend most of their time in trying not to be bored. Their pet aversion is boredom and the way to escape from boredom is to act foolishly.

Well, there is a better way than that — to remember.

When you have a little time, whether it is one hour or a few minutes, tell yourself, “At last, I have some time to concentrate, to collect myself, to relive the purpose of my life, to offer myself to the True and the Eternal.” If you took care to do this each time you are not harassed by outer circumstances, you would find out that you were advancing very quickly on the path. Instead of wasting your time in chattering, in doing useless things, reading things that lower the consciousness — to choose only the best cases, I am not speaking of other imbecilities which are much more serious — instead of trying to make yourself giddy, to make time, that is already so short, still shorter only to realise at the end of your life that you have lost three-quarters of your chance — then you want to put in double time, but that does not work — it is better to be moderate, balanced, patient, quiet, but never to lose an opportunity that is given to you, that is to say, to utilise for the true purpose the unoccupied moment before you.

When you have nothing to do, you become restless, you run about, you meet friends, you take a walk, to speak only of the best; I am not referring to things that are obviously not to be done. Instead of that, sit down quietly before the sky, before the sea or under trees, whatever is possible (here you have all of them) and
try to realise one of these things — to understand why you live, to
learn how you must live, to ponder over what you want to do and
what should be done, what is the best way of escaping from the
ignorance and falsehood and pain in which you live.

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