

Dhammapada (Senior Syllabus)

Verse 19: Learning Without Practice Is Of No Worth (Twin Verses – Yamaka Vagga)

Bahum pi ce sahitam bhāsamāno
extensively yet Buddha's words recites
(sacred text)

na takkaro hoti naro pamatto
does behaving (become) person slothful
not accordingly

Gopo'vo gāvo ganayam paresam
cowherd like cattles protecting of others

na bhāgavā sāmaññassa hoti
does partake of the renounced life
not

Note: na hoti = does not become

Translation: Though much he recites the Sacred Texts, but acts not accordingly, that heedless man is like a cowherd who counts others' kine (cattle). He has no share in the fruits (4 stages of sainthood) of the Holy Life (state of monk/ascetic).

Sacred Text = Buddha Tipitaka, the 3 baskets taught, that is, vinaya (discipline), sutta (discourse) & Abhidhamma (ultimate doctrine) pitaka.

Significance: Buddhism's not a mere philosophy nor a religion (belief in the worship of creator or God). It's a unique Path of Enlightenment. Buddhism is therefore rational and intensely practical. It's a system that cannot contain any mysterious or esoteric doctrine (teachings intended for a small group of individuals to understand).

Story: Buddha spoke verses 19 & 20 (twin) in Jetavana Grove regarding two monk-friends at Savatthi

- Two friends who became renounced to become monks after hearing the discourse from the Buddha
- They asked the Buddha about the Duties in his Religion, that is Duty of Study (Scriptures) and Duty of Meditation
- The older monk chose the Duty of Meditation as he acknowledged that he was getting old and wouldn't be able to fulfil his Duty of Study
- The older monk under the Buddha's instruction, strived and struggled hard finally succeeded in Arahatship
- The younger monk chose the Duty of Study, acquired the Tipitaka and hence preached reciting the Law to 500 monks and become preceptor of 18 large communities of monks.
- A company of monks went to the residence of the older monk after they obtained instructions from the Buddha about meditation. Under the faithful observance of the older monk's admonition, these monks gained arahatship too.
- These arahats took leave of the older monks to pay respect to the Buddha.
- The younger monk upon seeing these arahats asked what they have learnt from the older monk in terms of the Digha Nikaya and the other Nikaya.
- When the younger monk realised that none of the arahats knew a single stanza from the Scriptures, he decided that he would ask the older monk some questions on the Scriptures.

- The Buddha read the intentions of the younger monk. Out of compassion, he decided to pay a visit to the two monks.
- When the two monks saw the Buddha, they prepared a seat for the Teacher before they sat down.
- The Buddha asked the younger monk about the First Trance and the Second Trance which the younger monk was able to answer correctly.
- When the Buddha asked about the Path of Conversion, the younger monk was not able to answer. But, when this question was raised to the older monk, he was able to answer correctly. For the remaining three questions about the Path of Conversion, the older monk was able to answer correctly whilst the younger monk was not able to answer any of these questions.
- On four occasions, the Buddha applauded when the older monk answered questions on the Path of Conversion correctly.
- The pupils and the fellow-residents of the younger monks were offended that their teacher, who knew the Scriptures by heart and head of 500 monks was given no praise at all as compared to the older monk who knew nothing.
- Hence, the Buddha explained that the younger monk was like a man who tended cows for hire whilst the older monk was like a master who enjoyed the 5 products of the cow at his own good pleasure.