

Selections from

THE ITIVUTTAKA: THIS WAS SAID BY THE BUDDHA

Translated by Ajahn Ṭhanissaro

Arranged for Responsive Reading

From the translator's introduction:

The Itivuttaka, a collection of 112 short discourses, takes its name from the statement at the beginning of each of its discourses: this (iti) was said (vuttam) by the Blessed One. The collection as a whole is attributed to a laywoman named Khujjuttara, who worked in the palace of King Udena of Kosambi as a servant to one of his queens, Samavati. Because the Queen could not leave the palace to hear the Buddha's discourses, Khujjuttara went in her place, memorized what the Buddha said, and then returned to the palace to teach the Queen and her 500 ladies-in-waiting. For her efforts, the Buddha cited Khujjuttara as the foremost of his laywomen disciples in terms of her learning. She was also an effective teacher: when the inner apartments of the palace later burned down, killing the Queen and her entourage, the Buddha commented (in Udana VII.10) that all of the women had reached at least the first stage of Awakening.

Responsive Reading Instructions:

The whole group reads the parts marked "All." Pause for commas, long dashes, and in the verse section for large spaces and at new lines.

Source:

The full text of Ajahn Ṭhanissaro's translation of the Itivuttaka can be found (along with copyright information) on at www.accesstoinsight.org under Tipitaka>Itivuttaka. The text is available in print form from The Sait Center for Buddhist Studies, www.sati.org.

Minor changes to the formatting have been made to allow for responsive reading.

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§ 14.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "Monks, I don't envision even one other obstruction —

All: obstructed by which people go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time — like the obstruction of ignorance.

Leader 2: Obstructed with the obstruction of ignorance, people go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**No one other thing
so obstructs people
that they wander on, day & night,
as when they're ensnared
with delusion.**

**But those who, letting go of delusion,
shatter the mass of darkness,
wander no further.**

Their cause isn't found.

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 15.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "Monks, I don't envision even one other fetter —

All: fettered by which beings conjoined go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time — like the fetter of craving.

Leader 2: Fettered with the fetter of craving, beings conjoined go wandering & transmigrating on for a long, long time."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**With craving his companion, a man
wanders on a long, long time.**

Neither in this state here

nor anywhere else

does he go beyond

the wandering- on.

Knowing this drawback —

that craving brings stress into play —

free from craving,

devoid of clinging,

mindful, the monk

lives the mendicant life.

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 60.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "There are these three grounds for meritorious activity. Which three?"

All: The ground for meritorious activity made of giving, the ground for meritorious activity made of virtue, and the ground for meritorious activity made of development{*}.

Leader 2: These are the three grounds for meritorious activity."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**Train in acts of merit
that bring long-lasting bliss —
develop giving,
 a life in tune,
 a mind of good-will.**

**Developing these
three things
that bring about bliss,
 the wise reappear
 in a world of bliss
unalloyed.**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

* [meditation]

§ 26.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they would not eat without having given, nor would the stain of selfishness overcome their minds.

All: Even if it were their last bite, their last mouthful, they would not eat without having shared, if there were someone to receive their gift.

Leader 2: But because beings do not know, as I know, the results of giving & sharing, they eat without having given. The stain of selfishness overcomes their minds."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**If beings knew
what the Great Seer said,
how the result of sharing
has such great fruit,
then, subduing the stain of selfishness
with brightened awareness,
they'd give in season
 to the noble ones,
 where a gift bears great fruit.
Having given food
 as an offering
 to those worthy of offerings,
many donors,
when they pass away from here,
 the human state,
go to heaven.
They, having gone there
 to heaven,
 rejoice,
enjoying sensual pleasures.
Unselfish, they
partake of the result
 of sharing.**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 76.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "Aspiring to these three forms of bliss, a wise person should guard his virtue. Which three? [Thinking,] 'May praise come to me,'

All: a wise person should guard his virtue.

Leader 2: [Thinking,] 'May wealth come to me,'

All: a wise person should guard his virtue.

Leader 2: [Thinking,] 'At the break-up of the body, after death, may I reappear in a good destination, in heaven,'

All: a wise person should guard his virtue.

Leader 2: Aspiring to these three forms of bliss, a wise person should guard his virtue."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

Intelligent,
you should guard your virtue,
aspiring to three forms of bliss:
praise;
the obtaining of wealth;
and, after death, rejoicing
in heaven.

Even if you do no evil
but seek out one who does,
you're suspected of evil.

Your bad reputation

grows.

The sort of person you make a friend,
the sort you seek out,
that's the sort you yourself become —
for your living together is of
that sort.

The one associated with,
the one who associates,
the one who's touched,
the one who touches another
— like an arrow smeared with poison —

contaminates the quiver.

So, fearing contamination, the enlightened
should not be comrades
with evil people.

A man who wraps rotting fish
in a blade of kusa grass
makes the grass smelly:

so it is

if you seek out fools.

But a man who wraps powdered incense
in the leaf of a tree
makes the leaf fragrant:

so it is

if you seek out
the enlightened.

So,

knowing your own outcome
as like the leaf-wrapper's,
you shouldn't seek out
those who aren't good.
The wise would associate
with those who are.
Those who aren't good
lead you to hell.
The good help you reach
a good destination.

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 88.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "There are these three inside stains, inside enemies, inside foes, inside murderers, inside adversaries. Which three? Greed ...

All: ... is an inside stain, inside enemy, inside foe, inside murderer, inside adversary.

Leader 2: Aversion ...

All: ... is an inside stain, inside enemy, inside foe, inside murderer, inside adversary.

Leader 2: Delusion ...

All: ... is an inside stain, inside enemy, inside foe, inside murderer, inside adversary.

Leader 2: These are the three inside stains, inside enemies, inside foes, inside murderers, inside adversaries."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

Greed causes harm.

Greed provokes the mind.

**People don't realize it
as a danger born from within.**

**A person, when greedy,
doesn't know his own welfare;**

**when greedy,
doesn't see Dhamma.**

**Overcome with greed,
he's in the dark, blind.**

**But when one, abandoning greed,
feels no greed**

**for what would merit greed,
greed gets shed from him —**

**like a drop of water
off a lotus leaf.**

Aversion causes harm.

Aversion provokes the mind.

**People don't realize it
as a danger born from within.**

A person, when aversive,

doesn't know his own welfare;

when aversive,

doesn't see Dhamma.

Overcome with aversion

he's in the dark, blind.

**But when one, abandoning aversion,
feels no aversion**

for what would merit aversion,

aversion drops away from him —

like a palm leaf from its stem.

Delusion causes harm.

Delusion provokes the mind.

**People don't realize it
as a danger born from within.**

**A person, when deluded,
doesn't know his own welfare;**

**when deluded,
doesn't see Dhamma.**

Overcome with delusion

he's in the dark, blind.

**But when one, abandoning delusion,
feels no delusion**

**for what would merit delusion,
he disperses all delusion —**

as the rising of the sun, the dark.

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 90.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "There are these three supreme objects of confidence. Which three?" Among whatever beings there may be —

All: footless, two-footed, four-footed, many footed; with form or formless; percipient, non-percipient, neither percipient nor non-percipient —

Leader 2: the Tathāgata, worthy & rightly self-awakened, is considered supreme.

All: Those who have confidence in the Awakened One have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

Leader 2: "Among whatever qualities there may be,

All: fabricated or unfabricated,

Leader 2: the quality of dispassion — the subduing of intoxication, the elimination of thirst, the uprooting of attachment, the breaking of the round, the destruction of craving, dispassion, cessation, the realization of Unbinding — is considered supreme.

All: Those who have confidence in the quality of dispassion have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

Leader 2: "Among whatever fabricated qualities there may be,

All: the Noble Eightfold Path — right view, right resolve, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration —

Leader 2: is considered supreme.

All: Those who have confidence in the Noble Eightfold Path have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme is the result.

Leader 2: "Among whatever communities or groups there may be, the Sangha of the Tathāgata's disciples

is considered supreme — {that is}, the four [groups of noble disciples] when taken as pairs, the eight when taken as persons.

All: Those who have confidence in the Sangha have confidence in what is supreme; and for those with confidence in the supreme, supreme will be the result.

Leader 2: "These, monks, are the three supreme objects of confidence."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

**All:
With
confidence,
realizing the supreme Dhamma
to be supreme,
confidence in the supreme Buddha,
unsurpassed
in deserving offerings;
confidence in the supreme Dhamma,
the stilling of dispassion,
bliss;
confidence in the supreme Sangha,
unsurpassed
as a field of merit;
having given gifts to the supreme,
one develops supreme merit,
supreme long life & beauty,
status, honor,
bliss, & strength.**

**Having given to the supreme,
the wise person, centered
in supreme Dhamma,
whether becoming a divine or human being,
rejoices,
having attained the supreme.**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§17.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "With regard to external factors, I don't envision any other single factor like admirable friendship as doing so much for a monk in training,

All: who has not attained the heart's goal but remains intent on the unsurpassed safety from bondage.

Leader 2: A monk who is a friend with admirable people abandons what is unskillful and develops what is skillful."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**A monk with admirable people
as friends
— who's reverential, respectful,
doing what his friends advise —
mindful, alert,
attains step by step
the ending of all fetters.**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 100.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "I am a brahman, responsive to requests, open-handed, bearing my last body, an unsurpassed doctor & surgeon.

All: You are my children, my sons, born from my mouth, born of the Dhamma, created by the Dhamma, heirs to the Dhamma, not heirs in material things.

Leader 2: "There are these two kinds of gifts: a gift of material things & a gift of the Dhamma.

All: Of the two, this is supreme: a gift of the Dhamma.

Leader 2: "There are these two kinds of sharing:

sharing of material things & sharing of the Dhamma.

All: Of the two, this is supreme: sharing of the Dhamma.

Leader 2: "There are these two kinds of assistance: assistance with material things & assistance with the Dhamma.

All: Of the two, this is supreme: help with the Dhamma.

Leader 2: "There are these two kinds of mass-donations: a mass-donation of material things & a mass-donation of the Dhamma.

All: Of the two, this is supreme: a mass-donation of the Dhamma."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**He who, unstinting,
made the mass-donation of Dhamma,
the Tathāgata,
sympathetic to all beings:
to one of that sort
— the best of beings, human & divine —
living beings pay homage —
to one gone
to the beyond
of becoming.**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.

§ 112.

Leader 1: This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard:

Leader 2: "The world has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata.

All: From the world, the Tathāgata is disjoined.

Leader 2: The origination of the world has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata.

All: The origination of the world has, by the Tathāgata, been abandoned.

Leader 2: The cessation of the world has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata.

All: The cessation of the world has, by the Tathāgata, been realized.

Leader 2: The path leading to the cessation of the world has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata.

All: The path leading to the cessation of the world has, by the Tathāgata, been developed.

Leader 2: "Whatever in this world — with its devas, Maras, & Brahmas, its generations complete with contemplatives & priests, princes & men — is seen, heard, sensed, cognized, attained, sought after, pondered by the intellect, that has been fully awakened to by the Tathāgata.

All: Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

Leader 2: "From the night the Tathāgata fully awakens to the unsurpassed Right Self-awakening to the night he is totally unbound in the Unbinding property with no fuel remaining, whatever the Tathāgata has said, spoken, explained is just so (tatha) and not otherwise.

All: Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

Leader 2: "The Tathāgata is one who does in line with (tatha) what he teaches, one who teaches in line with what he does.

All: Thus he is called the Tathāgata.

Leader 2: "In this world with its devas, Maras, & Brahmas, its generations complete with contemplatives & priests, princes & men, the Tathāgata is the unconquered conqueror, all-seeing,

the wielder of power.

All: Thus he is called the Tathāgata."

Leader 1: This is the meaning of what the Blessed One said. So with regard to this it was said:

All:

**Directly knowing all the world,
all the world as it really is,
from all the world disjoined,
in all the world unmatched:**

**Conquering all
in all ways,
enlightened,
released from all bonds,
he touches the foremost peace —
Unbinding, free
from fear.**

**He is free of fermentation,
of trouble,
awakened,
his doubts cut through;
has attained the ending of action,
is released in the destruction of acquisitions.**

**He is blessed, awakened,
a lion, unsurpassed.
In the world with its devas
he set the Brahma-wheel going.
Thus divine & human beings
who have gone to the Buddha for refuge,
gathering, pay homage
to the great one, thoroughly mature:**

**'Tamed, he's the best
of those who can be tamed;
calm, the seer
of those who can be calmed;
released, supreme
among those who can be released;
crossed, the foremost
of those who can cross.'**

**Thus they pay homage
to the great one, thoroughly mature:
'In this world with its devas,
there's no one
to compare
with you.'**

Leader 1: This, too, was the meaning of what was said by the Blessed One, so I have heard.