

# THE FOUR SAGELY REALMS MNEMONIC VERSES

by David and Susan Rounds

*Note for students: Mnemonic (pronounced ne-mon-ic) verses are verses that aid the memory (from the Greek mnemon, mindful). These verses will help you remember some things about the four realms of Sages-- the Sound Hearers, Pratyekabuddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Buddhas. They are also in alliterative form, the verse-form that was written in England before the year 1000. Alliterative verse is the most natural verse for the English language. Instead of using rhyme, alliterative verse uses alliteration--which means the use of words that begin with the same sound. In alliterative verse, there are four strong beats in each line, with two beats in the first half of the line and two beats in the second half. At least one word that's on the beat in the first half must begin with the same sound as one word that's on the beat in the second half. (Thus: Pratyekabuddhas banish the world, /Casting off care, serene in a cave,/ Deep in the mountaintains they delve for true gold.) You must have two alliterative beats in a line, and you may have three, but four is considered too many. Can you write a short alliterative verse? It is much easier than writing rhymed verse. These alliterative verses gain their mnemonic quality because the alliteration progresses through the alphabet, which will make them easier to memorize.*

## I. THE REALM OF SOUND HEARERS

- A The Arhats hear a voice and awaken.
- B The voice is the Buddha's, awesome and brilliant,
- C Calm and bright. Clearly they learn,
- D The Dharmas for ending birth and death,
- E Existence is emptied, and so they escape,
- F The flow of samsara: true and false,
- G Good and evil, great and small,
- H Love and hate, he and she,
- I Inside, outside, you and I,
- J Joy and sorrow, judge, offender,
- K Killed and killer. Karma is ended.
- L All is leveled. They leave the world,
- M Amidst the strife their minds unmoving.
- N The Noble Truths lead to Nirvana.
- O One: this fleeting life of ours
- P Is *painful*. Two, the pain *piles up*
- Q Through quick desire. Three, we *quit*
- R The raging pain through refuge in
- S The *Sagely Path*. And so they're four.
- T These truths he taught are true today.
- U To understand and be unreturning.

V Gain victory in this first of Vehicles  
W And walk the road that's worthy of offerings.  
X Exhort yourself, exhaust your efforts,  
Y And yield where others cannot yield.  
Z With zeal go forth to find the zero!

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