

IN PRAISE OF DHARMADHATU

Arya Nagarjuna



1. There is something which as long as left unknown
Results in life's three planes of vicious circle.
Beyond all doubt, it dwells in every being.
To the dharmadhatu I devoutly bow.
2. When that which forms the cause for all samsara
Is purified along the stages of the path,
This purity itself is nirvana;
Precisely this, the dharmakaya, too.
3. As butter, though inherent in the milk,
Is mixed with it and hence does not appear,
Just so the dharmadhatu is not seen
As long as it is mixed together with afflictions.
4. And just as the inherent butter essence
When the milk is purified is no more disguised,
When afflictions have been completely purified,
The dharmadhatu will be without any stain at all.
5. As a butter lamp that burns inside a vase
Would not even be slightly visible,
As long as left inside afflictions' vase,
The dharmadhatu is not visible.
6. If one perforates the surface of the vase,
Whatever holes are made in whichever directions,
Through those and in precisely those directions
Light will shine, as is its nature to.

7. At the moment when the vajra-like samadhi
Is able to obliterate the vase,
At that very moment the light burning inside
Will shine throughout the reaches of all space.

8. The dharmadhatu was never born,
Nor will it ever cease.
At all times it is free of all afflictions;
At the beginning, middle, and end, free from stain.

9. As sapphire, the precious gem,
Shines with brilliant light all the time,
But when confined within a grosser stone,
We do not see its bright light shine,

10. Just so, although obscured behind afflictions,
The dharmadhatu has no trace of flaw.
While samsara blocks its light, it does not illuminate;
Nirvana gained, its light will brilliantly shine.

11. If the fundamental element is present,
Work will yield the sight of purest gold;
If the fundamental element were lacking,
The labor would produce no fruit but woe.

12. As kernels are not considered to be rice
As long as they are enveloped in their husks,
Just so the name of "buddha" is not given
To all of those whom afflictions still enfold.

13. And just as when loosened from the husk,
The rice itself is what appears,
Just so the dharmakaya itself,
When loosened from afflictions, freely shines.

14. It is said, "Banana trees are void of pith."
One uses this example in the world.
But the fruit of such a tree has pith indeed;
When eaten, it is sweet upon the tongue.

15. Just so, samsara has no pith,
And if beings can remove affliction's peel,
The fruit within is buddhahood itself,
The nectar for all corporal beings to taste.

16. And just as from a given kind of seed
A fruit results resembling its cause,
Who with common sense would seek to prove
A fruit exists without its specific seed as cause?

17. The basic element which serves as seed
Is seen as the support of all great qualities.
Through gradual refinement, step by step,
The stage of buddhahood will be attained.

18. Although the sun and moon are unstained,
Five veils exist which manage to obscure them.
These consist of clouds and fog and smoke,
The face of Rahu and dust as well.

19. And so it is, as well, for mind's clear light.
Five obscurations manage to obscure it:
Desire, laziness, and ill intent,
And agitation too, as well as doubt.

20. And just as fire can clean a soiled cloth
Miscolored with various marks and stains,
And just as when submerged within the fire
The marks are burnt away but not the cloth,

21. In just this way the mind, which is radiant clarity,
Is soiled by desire and the other stains,
But the fire of primordial awareness burns up these afflictions,
Without, however, burning away the radiant clarity.

22. In the sutras of the Teacher,
In whatever ways the Victor described emptiness,
All of these ways can rectify afflictions;
None can diminish the potential.

23. Just as water deep inside the earth
Lies untouched and perfectly clean,
Just so can primordial awareness rest within affliction
And remain completely free of any flaw.

24. The dharmadhatu is not the self.
It is neither man nor woman either;
And being beyond everything perceivable,
Just how could it be thought of as oneself?

25. Within phenomena, all free of passion,
Male and female cannot be seen.
For the sake of taming those that desire blinds,
Terms like male and female are taught.

26. "Impermanent" and "suffering" and "empty":
Three designations purifying mind;
But what refines the mind unto its utmost
Is the teaching that nothing has any self-nature.

27. As a child in a pregnant woman's womb
Is there and yet is not yet visible,
Likewise when covered by afflictions,
The dharmadhatu is not visible.

28. From thinking "I" and "mine,"
And from thinking of names and grounds for these,
Four conceptual patterns come to be—
Due to elements and compounds too.

29. The buddhas do not perceive
Any characteristics of their aspiration prayers,
Because the buddhas are of the nature of self-awareness
And have their own permanently pure being.

30. Just as the horns on rabbits' heads
Do not exist except in the imagination,
Phenomena are all precisely like that,
Merely imagined, having no existence.

31. Because they are not made of solid atoms
The horns of oxen cannot be seen, either.
Since not even tiny atoms exist,
How could one imagine that something made of atoms exists?

32. Since arising is a dependent occurrence
And cessation is a dependent occurrence,
There is not one single thing that exists—
How could the naive believe that there is?

33. Using examples like rabbits' and oxen's horns,
The Thus Gone One has proven
That all phenomena are nothing other than the Middle Way.

34. Just as one sees
The forms of the sun, moon, and stars
Reflected in vessels of perfectly clear water,
So is the consummation of signs and characteristics.

35. That which is virtuous in the beginning, middle, and end
Is undeceiving and is marked by constancy,
And is free from self in this very way.
How could that be thought of as "I" or "mine"?

36. Just as water, during the summertime,
Is spoken of as being something warm,
And the very same water, throughout the winter season,
Is spoken of as being something cold,

37. Those ensnared in the net of the afflictions
Are referred to by the label, "sentient beings";
The very same when freed of states afflicted
As "buddhas" are revered.

38. When eye and form assume their right relation,
Appearances appear without a blur.
Since these neither arise nor cease,
They are the dharmadhatu, though they are imagined to be otherwise.

39. When sound and ear assume their right relation,
A consciousness free of thought occurs.
These three are in essence the dharmadhatu, free of other characteristics,
But they become "hearing" when thought of conceptually.

40. Dependent upon the nose and an odor, one smells.
And as with the example of form there is neither arising nor cessation,
But in dependence upon the nose-consciousness's experience,
The dharmadhatu is thought to be smell.

41. The tongue's nature is emptiness.
The sphere of taste is voidness as well.
These are in essence the dharmadhatu
And are not the causes of the taste consciousness.

42. The pure body's essence,
The characteristics of the object touched,
The tactile consciousness free of conditions—
These are called the dharmadhatu.

43. The phenomena that appear to the mental consciousness, the chief of them all,
Are conceptualized and then superimposed.
When this activity is abandoned, phenomena's lack of self-essence is known.
Knowing this, meditate on the dharmadhatu.

44. And so is all that is seen or heard or smelled,
Tasted, touched, and imagined,
When yogis [and yoginis]* understand these in this manner,
All their wonderful qualities are brought to consummation.

45. Perception's doors in eyes and ears and nose,
In tongue and body and the mental gate—
All these six are utterly pure.
These consciousnesses' purity itself is suchness' defining characteristic.

46. See how the mind has two aspects:
It can be worldly, it can transcend the world.
From clinging to a self comes samsara;
When there is self-awareness, there is suchness.

47. The ceasing of desire is nirvana,
As is stupidity's and anger's end.
For these to cease is buddhahood itself,
The refuge of ennobled beings.

48. One either proceeds with knowledge or proceeds without—
Samsara and nirvana both have their source in the body.
Either you are bound by your own thinking,
Or, if you know the true nature, you are free.

49. Enlightenment is neither near nor far.
It does not go away nor come to you.
Right there within the cage of your afflictions,
Either you will see it or you will not.

50. Abiding in the lamp of prajna
Will lead to peace, the most sublime there is;
Examining for self is the way to abide.
This is taught in scores of sutra texts.

51. The strengths, all ten, assist the immature
With a blessing force like that of the full moon.
But as long as they are caught up in afflictions,
Beings will fail to see the Thus Gone Ones.

52. Just as those in hungry spirit realms
See the sea as dry before their eyes,
Just so with those in ignorance's grip
Who think the buddhas don't exist.

53. For lesser beings and those with lesser merit,
No matter what transcendent conquerors do,
It is like placing a precious jewel
In the hands of someone never known to see.

54. For beings who have amassed sufficient merit
The signs are radiant with shining light.
All thirty-two ablaze with brilliant glory—
Beings like these in buddhas' presence dwell.

55. The protectors inhabit forms of bodily dimension
For many kalpas, and many yet to come;
However, in order to tame disciples
They demonstrate different activities in the expanse that tames.

56. On definitely targeting its goal
Consciousness engages in its object,
Within the purity of self-awareness
The bodhisattvas' grounds all inherently abide.

57. The mighty lords' magnificent abode,
The beautiful domain of Akanistha,
And consciousness, the three of these together
Can be blended into one, I dare to say.

58. For the immature it renders total knowledge,
For noble ones affords variety,
To the mighty gods it grants long life,
It is the cause for life spanning kalpas' long march.

59. It is that which guards the outer realm of beings,
And preserves their lives as well through countless kalpas,
It is that which makes it possible for life
To persevere within all living beings;

60. This the very cause that knows no end;
The results of such a cause are endless too;
When imperceptibility is realized,
Prajna becomes the condition for nirvana's dawning.

61. Enlightenment should not be thought far off
Nor should it be considered close at hand;
When objects, six in kind, do not appear,
The genuine is known just as it is.

62. Just as milk and water mixed together
Are present in the very same container
But a crane would drink the milk and not the water,
The case of transformation is like this:

63. There is primordial awareness, there are covering afflictions,
Where both are found together in one body.
But the primordial awareness is what yogis [and yoginis] choose to take
And leave the ignorance behind.

64. For as long as "I" and "mine" are held to exist
And the outside is imagined as well;
When both forms of selflessness are seen
The seed of existence is destroyed;

65. The dharmadhatu is the ground
For buddhahood, nirvana, purity, and permanence;
The immature impute the two kinds of self,
And yogis [and yoginis] abide without these two.

66. In giving one endures a range of hardships,
And ethics gathers in the benefit of beings,
Through patience one performs the good of all,
These three will cause the potential to unfold.

67. Through being diligent in all the teachings
And steeping mind in meditative samadhi,
Through thorough reliance on prajna,
Enlightenment will grow and flourish.

68. Prajna endowed with skillful means,
Prayers of aspiration that purify,
The mastery of strengths, and thereby wisdom,
These four will cause the potential to unfold.

69. "Do not commit yourselves to bodhicitta";
There are some who speak such dire word.
But were there no bodhisattvas to develop,
The dharmakaya would be out of reach.

70. One who throws away the seed of sugarcane
But wants to taste the sweetness its fruit yields
Will, without the seed,
Have no sugar at all.

71. When someone values seed from sugarcane,
Maintains them well, and works to make them grow,
A crop of sweetest sugar can be harvested.
And just as what has come about like this,

72. Through valuing the bodhicitta fully,
Maintaining it, and working with it well,
The arhats and pratyeka-buddhas arise
As so the perfectly enlightened buddhas.

73. Just as seeds of rice and other plants
Are treated by the farmer with great care,
Aspirants who wish to make the greatest journey
Are treated by their guides with greatest care.

74. Just as on the fourteenth day of waning,
The moon is barely visible at all,
For aspirants who wish to make the greatest journey
The kayas are but barely visible.

75. Just as the moon when it is new
Visibly grows larger bit by bit,
Those who have reached the bhumis
See the dharmakaya more and more.

76. Just as on the fifteenth day of waxing
The moon has reached completion and is full,
Just so for those who've reached the bhumis' end point
The dharmakaya shines complete and clear.

77. The bodhicitta, perfectly engendered,
Through stable and consistent dedication
To the buddha, to the dharma, and to the sangha
Does not decrease, and develops more and more.

78. When the four meaner deeds have been relinquished,
And the four better deeds have been embraced,
Just then is thatness definitely realized.
This is what "the joyful" thoroughly signifies.

79. "The stained" are those whom shifting patterns mark
With the constant stains of desire and the rest;
Whoever has grown free of flaw is pure,
And this is what "the stainless" signifies.

80. Once afflictions' net is rent asunder,
A flawless wisdom shines, and with its light
Purifies all darkness past all limit,
Removing it, and hence "illuminates."

81. It shines with light that is always pure;
Primordial awareness, which eliminates diversion,
Is steeped in light which shines on every side.
This bhumi hence is known as "radiant."

82. Since awareness, feats, and crafts are mastered here,
The range of meditative concentrations themselves,
And kleshas difficult to purify completely have been vanquished,
So "difficult to overcome" is its name.

83. With enlightenment of all three types included,
And everything perfected and complete,
With birth no more, disintegration finished,
This level is "directly manifest."

84. Since the bodhisattvas' web of brilliant light with its display
Reaches every point in their surroundings,
And since they have crossed samsara's swampy ocean,
They are called "the ones who reach far."

85. Definitively guided by the buddhas,
In contact with primordial awareness's sea,
Spontaneous and free of any effort,
"Unshaken" by the maras' echelons.

86. Since yogis [and yoginis] at this level have perfected
The dialectics used to teach all points
Connected with precise correct awareness,
It takes the name, "select intelligence."

87. The body at this point is made of primordial awareness,
Is equal to an unpolluted sky;
The vigilance afforded by the buddhas
Forms the "cloud of dharma" everywhere.

88. The ground of the qualities of buddhas,
The fruits of training fully held in hand,
The transformation, when perfectly completed,
Is given "dharmakaya" as its name.

89. Samsara's tendencies are ponderable,
Freedom from tendencies is not;
You are completely inconceivable.
Who could ever have the power to know you?

90. Beyond the pale of speech entirely,
And not an object senses' powers grasp,
Realizing you takes the mind's awareness.
I bow in praise of all that you embrace.

91. The illustrious heirs of the buddhas,
By following the path step by step,
With the primordial awareness that attends the "cloud of dharma,"
Can see emptiness, the pure mode of being.

92. As soon as mind has utterly been cleansed,
Samsara's caged confinement broken through,
These will then assume their rightful place,
Upon a wondrous lotus flower seat,

93. Utterly surrounded on all sides
By lotus flowers, many tens of millions,
Each endowed with tantalizing anthers,
Their leaves alight with many precious gems.

94. The buddhas with ten powers are replete.
Their fearlessness sets others' minds at ease.
Their qualities are inconceivable.
From simplicity's domain they never fall.

95. Through excellently practicing all paths,
They've gathered merit, garnered wisdom full.
So they are like the harvest moon on high
Surrounded by its court, the clustered stars.

96. With a hand like the sun,
Buddha holds a flawless gem with light ablaze.
With this the Enlightened One empowers the most senior heirs,
This abhisheka greatest of them all.

97. The mighty yogis [and yoginis] living on this plane
Look with god-like eyes on worldly beings,
Inferior because of mental blindness,
Whom suffering can frighten and distract.

98. And having seen them, light rays from their bodies
Shine, without the slightest strain at all,
And open up what gates there are for all
Who wander in their own confusion's dark.

99. Those who have reached nirvana with remainder
Believe they have reached nirvana that's without;
The nirvana that is reached in this tradition
Is a freeing of the mind of any flaw.

100. Sentient beings' essence free of substance
Is the sphere that is encountered on this plane.
Seeing this is the royal bodhicitta,
The dharmakaya free of every flaw.

101. When the dharmakaya is seen in all its purity
This is transformation, wisdom's sea,
And from its depths a wealth of precious jewels
Fulfill beings' needs as they have always wished.

In Praise of the Dharmadhatu composed by the great
Acharya Nagarjuna is hereby completed.
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