

**A STRAND OF DHARMA JEWELS  
AS ADVICE FOR THE KING**

*The Rāja Parikathā Ratnāvalī*

**Composed by Ārya Nāgārjuna**

**Sanskrit-to-Chinese Translation by Tripiṭaka Master Paramārtha**

**English Translation by Bhikshu Dharmamitra**



e. CLINGING TO REALITY OF THE WORLD IS FOOLISH AND PREVENTS LIBERATION  
056

The world is comparable to a mirage.  
If one seizes on it as being truly existent or non-existent,  
This is just ignorance.  
It is due to delusion that one remains without liberation.

6. POLAR ATTACHMENTS BEGET SAṂSĀRA; REALITY COGNITION BEGETS LIBERATION  
057

By seizing on “non-existence,” one may fall to the wretched destinies.  
By seizing on “existence,” one may be reborn in the good destinies.  
If one is able to know things in accordance with reality,  
One gains the liberation not reliant on dualities.<sup>41</sup>

a. REFUTATION: DISINCLINATION TO ATTACHMENT DOES NOT ENTAIL NIHILISM  
058

Disinclination to seize on [views asserting] existence or non-existence  
Originates with discernment of the meaning of reality.  
If [one claims this entails] falling into a “non-existence” attachment,  
Why not [also] claim this entails falling into “existence” attachment?<sup>42</sup>

059

If one claims that, by refuting [views validating] “existence,”  
One falls by force of logic into implicitly validating “non-existence,”  
Then, following this same logic, by refuting “non-existence,”  
Why wouldn’t one fall into implicitly validating “existence”?<sup>43</sup>

060

This non-validation of words, actions, or thoughts [as ultimately real]  
Is a result of reliance on bodhi.  
If one claims this entails an implicit fall into validating non-existence,  
Why would that not also entail a fall into validating existence?<sup>44</sup>

7. THE UNIQUENESS OF BUDDHISM’S TRANSCENDENCE OF DUAL CONCEPTS  
061

As for the Sāṃkhya, the Vaiśeṣikas,  
The Nirgranthas, those who assert aggregate-based personhood,  
And the worldly traditions—you should interrogate them all  
As to whether their claims transcend existence and non-existence.<sup>45</sup>

062

As for this ineffable Dharma,  
Because it transcends both “existence” and “non-existence,”  
You should realize it is the extremely profound  
Sweet-dew ambrosia (*amṛta*) of the Buddha’s orthodox teaching.

## 8. UNREALITY OF THREE TIMES AND THREE MARKS (ARISING, ABIDING, DESTRUCTION)

063

If one understands [the world] has no going thither [into the past],  
 No coming hither [from the future], no abiding for even an instant—  
 If its essential nature transcends even the three periods of time—  
 What world might one then claim possesses any real existence?<sup>46</sup>

064

The two times, [past and future], involve no going or coming,  
 And, in reality, there is no abiding in the present,  
 [lokānirvāṇāyos tasmād viśeṣaḥ ka ivārthataḥ]: (64c-d via Sanskrit.)  
 [How could it be then that the world and nirvāṇa  
 Possess any differences which are real?]<sup>47</sup>

065

[sthīter abhāvād udayo nirodhaś ca na tattvataḥ]: (65a-b via Sanskrit.)  
 [Since “abiding” doesn’t exist,  
 “Production” and “cessation” are also not real.]  
 As for the world’s “production,” its “abiding,” and its “cessation,”  
 How could such designations correspond to reality?<sup>48</sup>

## 9. ON CONSTANT INSTANT-BY-INSTANT DESTRUCTION AND CHANGE

066

If there is a constantly occurring process of change,  
 What dharma would not undergo instant-by-instant destruction?  
 If no instant-by-instant destruction occurred,  
 How could there exist any process of change?

067

If one asserts that instant-by-instant destruction  
 Is by partial destruction in either parts or the whole—  
 Because they involve views validating inconsistencies,  
 These two theories are groundless.

068

If instant-by-instant destruction involved cessation of the whole,  
 How could any “old” things ever exist?  
 And if there were absolutely no instant-by-instant destruction,  
 How then could old things become so?

## 10. DECONSTRUCTION OF INSTANTS AND REFUTATION OF THE WORLD'S ABIDING

069

If the end of a *kṣaṇa*<sup>49</sup> (an instant) exists,  
 Then the beginning and middle exist as well.  
 Because of the three components of a *kṣaṇa*,  
 There is no abiding of the world even for an instant.

070

As for the three component phases of this single instant,  
 One should analyze each such phase just as one does the instant.  
 As for those three phases, beginning, middle, and end,  
 They are neither self-created nor other-created.

## 11. DECONSTRUCTION OF UNITARY ENTITIES; DEPENDENCE OF DUAL DESIGNATIONS

071

Because they have parts, instants are not unitary entities.  
 If they do not exist as such, how could any parts exist?  
 Without the “singular,” how could there be the “many”?  
 Without “existence,” what dharma could be “non-existent”?

## 12. AS “EXISTENCE” IS A FALLACY, HOW COULD ANY ENTITY BE “NON-EXISTENT”?

072

If one claims that, either through destruction or counteraction,  
 Something which exists may become non-existent—  
 As for this “non-existence” [by destruction] or “counteraction,”  
 What dharma’s “existence” might thence become “non-existent”?<sup>50</sup>

## 13. RECONDITE DHARMA AND THE COMMON PERSON’S MISAPPREHENSION OF IT.

## a. NON-EXISTENCE OF THE WORLD AND NIRVĀṆA AND THE BUDDHA’S SILENCE

073

Therefore, since the world and nirvāṇa  
 Are not establishable through reason as “existing,”  
 When the question, “Does the world have an end point?”  
 Was asked of him by others, the Buddha simply remained silent.<sup>51</sup>

## b. RECONDITE DHARMAS WERE NOT DISCUSSED WITH THOSE UNFIT

074

This was to preserve respect for [the ineffability of] omniscience.  
 Hence the wise recognize that the Buddha,  
 Because this is an extremely recondite dharma,  
 Wouldn’t speak of it to those with no capacity to comprehend it.<sup>52</sup>

## c. THE ABSENCE OF DEPENDENCIES IN BUDDHA’S PROFOUND DHARMAS

075

Dharmas connected with liberation such as these  
 Are extremely profound and unsubsumed by any other.  
 Because the Buddhas are omniscient,  
 Their discourse is free of any dependent bases.

## d. THE WORLDLY, FRIGHTENED BY TRANSCENDENT DHARMA, FALL TO RUIN

076

Faced with this Dharma free of dependencies or attachments  
 And beyond the two extremes, "existence" and "non-existence,"  
 People of the world, subscribing to dependencies and attachments,  
 Due to delusion, are frightened by it, and thereby come to ruin.

## e. HAVING MET RUIN THEMSELVES, BE WARNED: THEY VISIT RUIN ON OTHERS

077

Having wrought their own destruction, they bring ruin on others,  
 Causing them to be frightened of what is free of dependent bases.  
 One prays, O King, that you will remain unmoved,  
 You mustn't bring ruin on yourself through the influence of others.

## f. THROUGH TRUTH, ONE AVOIDS INVERTED VIEWS AND ATTACHMENTS

078

That you may become invulnerable to ruin,  
 I shall proceed to explain what is true.  
 By relying on this, one avoids involvement in inverted views  
 And abandons two attachments, "existence" and "non-existence."<sup>53</sup>

## g. THIS TEACHING IS PROFOUND, UNSUITED FOR THOSE CLINGING TO THE SUPERFICIAL

079

This goes beyond both merit and non-merit,<sup>54</sup>  
 And embodies the extremely profound meaning with utter clarity.  
 As for persons viewing body as self or fear-struck by emptiness—  
 It is not such as should be explained in the vicinity of those two.<sup>55</sup>

## 14. REFUTATION OF INHERENT EXISTENCE IN THE SIX ELEMENTS

080

The four primary elements along with space and consciousness,  
 Whether alone or aggregated, don't qualify as a "person."  
 If, either united or separate, they don't qualify as a "person,"  
 How could one seize upon the existence of a "person" in them?<sup>56</sup>

081

Just as these six elements together do not qualify as a person  
 Because, being a mere assemblage, they are false and not real,  
 So too, each and every element, on its own, is just the same:  
 Because each is a mere assemblage, it does not qualify as real.

## a. DISMISSAL OF THE AGGREGATES AS CONSTITUTING A SELF

082

The aggregates do not qualify as a self or as possessions of a self.  
 Apart from the aggregates, a “self” does not appear.  
 Because they are not mixed in the manner of fuel and fire,<sup>57</sup>  
 On what basis then could the aggregates constitute a self?

083

The earth element isn’t the same as any of the three other elements,  
 Nor do any of those three exist within the earth element,  
 Nor does the earth element exist within any of those three.  
 Nor [is their existence] establishable either separately or mutually.

084

Each of the primary elements of earth, water, fire, and wind  
 Is not established as possessing its own inherently existing nature.  
 Just as any one is not establishable separate from the other three,  
 So too is this the case for any three when separated from any one.

085

If any one relative to the other three and three relative to any one  
 Can’t be established [as existing] when separated from others,  
 And each can’t be established [as inherently existent] on its own,  
 How could that one even be separated from the others in any case?

086

If each could be independently established when separated,  
 Why is there no burning once fire is separated from its fuel?  
 As for [the qualities of] motility, obstruction, and cohesion,  
 They depend on water, wind, and earth in the same manner.

087

Since fire cannot be established on its own,  
 How could any of the other three stand on their own either?  
 As three elements serve the principle of production via conditions,  
 On what basis might one prove incompatibility with this in the other?

088

If they each could be established as independently existent,  
 How could they each additionally exist interdependently?  
 Also, if each cannot be established as independently existent,  
 How could it serve a role in mutually-established existence either?

089

Were one to claim they do not abide separately from each other,  
 Even as each element’s existence is independently established—  
 If they are not interrelated, then they have no conjoint existence.  
 And if they are interrelated, isolated existence can’t be established.

090

If the existence of each element is not independently established,  
 How could each possess its own inherent characteristics?  
 If independently established, they can't manifest predominance.<sup>58</sup>  
 Therefore their "characteristics" are mere artificial designations.

15. ANALYSIS OF THE 6 SENSE OBJECTS, 18 REALMS, AND 12-FOLD CAUSAL CHAIN IS  
 SIMILAR

091

As for visible forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and touchables,  
 The principles are analyzed in the same manner as the elements.  
 Also: eye, form, consciousness, [eighteen sense realms], ignorance,  
 Action, birth, [the twelve causal links]—their analysis is the same.<sup>59</sup>

16. SO TOO THE AGENT OF ACTIONS, KARMA, PHENOMENA, NUMBERS, CONJUNCTION,  
 CAUSE, EFFECT, TIME, SHORT AND LONG, DESIGNATIONS, THOUGHT, ETC.

092

The agent of actions, karmic action, and objective phenomena—  
 Numbers, conjunction, cause, effect, and the periods of time—  
 Short and long, as well as naming, perceptive thought,  
 And non-perception—they should be analyzed in the same way.

17. WISDOM DEMOLISHES THE ELEMENTS, DUALITIES, GOOD, EVIL, WORDS, CONSCIOUS-  
 NESS, KNOWLEDGE

093

Earth, water, wind, fire, and so forth—  
 Long and short as well as small and large—  
 Good, evil, words, consciousness, and knowledge—  
 They are so demolished by wisdom that no trace remains.

a. LIKE THE STATION OF BOUNDLESS CONSCIOUSNESS, THIS WISDOM EXTENDS EVERY-  
 WHERE, DEMOLISHING EVERYTHING

094

Just as no forms exist in the station of boundless consciousness,  
 And just as it is boundless and universally pervasive,  
 So too in this [wisdom]: Earth and the other primary elements  
 Are all brought to complete destruction.

095

In this wisdom cognizing signlessness,  
 Short and long, good and evil, karmic actions,  
 Name-and-form, and also the aggregates—  
 As with these others, they are so demolished as to leave no trace.

096

Phenomena such as these manifest to consciousness  
Due to the prior existence of "ignorance."  
If one brings wisdom to bear in one's consciousness,  
All such [delusion-based perceptions] are finally caused to cease.<sup>60</sup>

097

Dharmas of the world such as these  
Are fuel for a fire burning up [deluded] consciousness.  
Producing a fiery illumination able to fathom reality,  
The fuel of worldly consciousness is entirely burned up.

098

Due to delusion, one discriminated existence versus non-existence,  
Yet subsequently may be able to skillfully discern true suchness.  
Since, even searching for bases of existence, one can't find them,  
How then could "non-existence" be amenable to apprehension?

099

Because it is established only through an absence of form,  
"Space" is therefore but a mere designation.  
Apart from the primary elements, of what might "form" consist?  
Therefore the form aggregate too is but a mere designation.

100

Feeling, perception, karmic formative factors, and consciousness  
Should be contemplated in the same way as the four elements.  
The four elements, as in the case of the "self," are false concepts.  
The six elements don't qualify as dharmas constituting a "person."