

**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**



7. WISDOM-INSTILLING CONTEMPLATIONS REFUTING ALL ASPECTS OF "PLEASURE"  
 a. WHEN ONE REFRAINS FROM SENSE-OBJECT DISCRIMINATIONS, NO BLISS ARISES

051

As the five sense faculties engage the five sense objects as objective conditions,

If the mind refrains from discriminations in regard to them,  
 Then, even though they continue to be available as sense objects,  
 Still, one does not just then generate any bliss on their account.

- b. SENSE FACULTIES AND OBJECTS NOT FOCUSED ON ARE JUST THEN MEANINGLESS

052

When this particular sense object is being taken as an objective condition by its corresponding sense faculty,

Then the other [sense faculties and sense objects] aren't just then serving in any subjective or objective role.

Therefore, all of the remaining sense faculties and sense objects,  
 In terms of actual reality, are just then meaningless.

- c. MIND SEIZES ON THE PAST, DISCRIMINATES, PERCEIVES, AND IMAGINES "BLISS"

053

When this sense object is focused on by its sense faculty,

The mind then seizes on its particular past characteristics.

It then makes discriminations, calls forth perceptions of loveliness,  
 And generates blissful feelings associated with that [perception].<sup>130</sup>

- d. MIND AS SUBJECT AND SENSE DATUM AS OBJECT EXIST IN DIFFERENT TIMES

054

In this case of the single sense object being taken as an objective condition by the mind,

That [moment of focus on the part of the] mind exists in a different period of time from the sense object itself.

Since, apart from that [moment of focus on the part of the] mind, that [sense object] could not qualify as a sense object,

Then, apart from the sense object, that [moment of mental focus] could not qualify as a [subjectively perceiving] mind, either.

- e. REFUTATION OF FALSE CONCEPTIONS REGARDING REALITY OF SENSE EXPERIENCE

055

[Citing it as an analogy], taking the father and the mother as causes,  
 You state that there then exists a child which is born.

In like fashion, [you state that], based on the taking of the eye and visual forms as conditions,

One may speak of the production of [eye] consciousness and so forth.

056

Past and future sense faculties and sense objects

Do not qualify as valid because they are meaningless concepts.

Because they do not go beyond this dependence upon those other  
two periods of time,

Present-moment sense faculties and objects are meaningless concepts.

057

Just as the eye's seeing of a "wheel" in a firebrand's twirling

Occurs through an erroneous perception linked to the sense faculty,

Even so, in the sphere of present-time sense objects,

The sense faculty's engagement with sense objects is the same.<sup>131</sup>

058

The five sense faculties and the corresponding objective sense realms

Are of the class of objects subsumed in the four primary elements.

Because, taken individually, each and every one of the primary ele-  
ments is itself a false concept,

The sense faculties and sense objects themselves possess no valid  
existence either.<sup>132</sup>

059

If the primary elements each having a separate existence were valid,  
Then fire should be able to burn in the absence of any fuel.

If their existence were that of a mixed composite,<sup>133</sup> they would have  
no separate substance of their own.

The sense objects, too, are to be judged from this same perspective.

060

Because these two concepts [imputing "existence" of] the four ele-  
ments are false,

It is impossible to establish the valid existence of any composite phe-  
nomenon involving them.

Since, in reality, there is no such combination which occurs,

Form-aggregate sense objects cannot be established [as existents].

061

In the cases of the aggregates of consciousness, feeling, mental per-  
ceptions, and karmic formative factors,

In every case, their substance cannot be established [as existent].

There is no "combining" of them which occurs, for their "arising" is a  
phenomenon dependent upon conditions.

As they do not qualify as existents, no "combining" of them occurs.

062

In the same way that discriminations imputing joy and bliss  
 Occur through taking as their object only counteraction of suffering,  
 So too, this suffering which is reckoned to exist  
 Only manifests on account of the fading of bliss.

063

As for the craving for proximity to whatever is blissful,  
 If one focuses on signlessness, it ceases.  
 As for the desire for separation from whatever involves suffering,  
 Spurred by this, one should contemplate non-arising.<sup>134</sup>

064

If one relies on the conventional worldly explanation,  
 It is the mind which is able to perceive.  
 This is wrong. In the absence of something perceived,  
 Something able to perceive is not [validly] established.

065

When, in the practice of contemplation, one sees the world  
 As like an illusion and as, in reality, not existing,  
 One ceases grasping, ceases discriminations,  
 And, like a fire [deprived of fuel], realizes *parinirvāṇa*.

066

The bodhisattva's vision is of this very sort,  
 Making him irreversibly destined to realize bodhi.  
 Yet, due to being drawn forth by the great compassion,  
 He continues on thereafter, all the way to buddhahood.

#### 8. THE GRAVE KARMIC ERROR OF THOSE WHO SLANDER THE GREAT VEHICLE

067

The bodhisattva's cultivation of the Path  
 Was described by the Buddha in the Great Vehicle teachings.  
 Those persons devoid of wisdom or possessed by hatefulness  
 Bring harm to themselves by casting it aside, refusing to accept it.

068

Some may fail to distinguish meritorious qualities and faults.  
 Some imagine that what is in fact meritorious is possessed of faults,  
 Yet others feel hatred for its having become dominant.<sup>135</sup>  
 It is for such reasons that people slander the Great Vehicle.

069

If they realize that karmic offenses are what bring harm to others  
 And know meritorious deeds are those able to bring about benefit,  
 One can only say of those engaging in such slanders  
 That they are oblivious to the distinction and hence hate the good.

070

Because its proponents disregard their own welfare  
 Considering it to be of a single flavor with benefiting others,  
 The Great Vehicle is a repository of manifold meritorious qualities.  
 Hence its slanderers are bound to be reduced to coals and ashes.

071

For those with faith, it may be due to seizing on the unorthodox.  
 For those who have no faith, it may be due to hatefulness.  
 But even the faithful, through slanders, may be destined to burn.  
 How much more true is this of those compelled by hatred or envy?

9. ON THE DEFENSIBILITY OF ENDURING SUFFERINGS IN SPIRITUAL CULTIVATION

072

Mixing together toxic ingredients for the sake of treating poisoning  
 Accords with the discourses on medical formulae.  
 Suffering's role in the cessation of evil is just the same.  
 How could this statement be considered contradictory?

073

In all dharmas, it is the mind which acts first,  
 Because it is the mind which serves as one's primary guide.  
 As for using suffering in causing cessation of other evils—  
 If done by those devoted to goodness, what fault is there in this?

074

If involvement in some suffering may be beneficial,  
 One should choose it. How much the more so if bliss is the option?  
 In a circumstance where benefit may accrue to both self and other,  
 This action is [verified as right by] the dharma of the ancients.<sup>136</sup>

075

In a case where, from being able to dispense with minor pleasure,  
 One would later be able to experience great happiness,  
 The wise would relinquish the [current] minor pleasure  
 Through contemplating the great happiness bound to follow.

076

If one cannot bear these words,  
 Then even the physician's dispensing of bitter medicines<sup>137</sup>  
 Should be deemed an unforgivable crime.  
 Therefore your ideas on this matter are invalid.<sup>138</sup>

## 10. ON THE GREAT VEHICLE'S NATURE AND THE UNJUSTIFIABILITY OF DISPARAGING IT

077

One may come upon circumstances one views as unfitting.  
 Here the wise rely on right principle to guide the course of actions,  
 In some cases exercising restraint, in others allowing exceptions.  
 This principle is found again and again [in scripture].

078

In the actions associated with a bodhisattva's deportment,  
 Compassion takes precedence and wisdom ensures their perfection.  
 As for the Great Vehicle's explanations of this sort—  
 On what basis could they be disparaged?

079

Through ignorance, one may sink into bewilderment  
 On meeting the vast and deep meaning of the Supreme Vehicle,<sup>139</sup>  
 Therefore disparaging the Great Vehicle  
 And becoming the adversary of both self and others.

080

Giving, moral virtue, patience, vigor,  
 Meditative discipline, wisdom and compassion form its substance.  
 The Buddha proclaimed the Great Vehicle as being precisely that.  
 What errors does it possess that one might claim it has omissions?

081

It is through giving and moral virtue that one benefits others  
 And through patience and vigor that one benefits self.  
 Meditative discipline and wisdom liberate both self and others.  
 This in brief encompasses the meaning of the Great Vehicle.

082

To state it in brief, the authentic teachings of the Buddha  
 Are held to be those producing liberation of both self and others.  
 These six perfections are the repository containing them.  
 Hence who could deny the validity of these?

o83

Merit and wisdom are the primary categories of practice  
 In the path to bodhi proclaimed by the Buddha.  
 He established this we refer to as the Great Vehicle.  
 It is such as those blinded by delusion are unable to bear.

o84

It is as unfathomable in its vastness as space.  
 Because they are created through the practice of merit and wisdom,  
 The meritorious qualities of buddhas are therefore inconceivable.  
 Thus one prays you will patiently accommodate the Great Vehicle.

o85

If for the *ārya*, Śāriputra,  
 Even the moral virtue of a buddha was beyond his comprehension,  
 The qualities of a buddha must therefore be inconceivable [as well].  
 Why then are you unable to acquiesce in this?<sup>140</sup>

o86

That which in the Great Vehicle is known as "the unproduced,"  
 Is described by the Small Vehicle as "cessation via seeing emptiness."  
 This "unproduced" and this "cessation" are in essence the same.  
 Their inherent meaning is such as one must not find contradictory.

o87

Given that true emptiness and the meritorious qualities of buddhas  
 Have been correctly analyzed in accordance with Dharma  
 In the doctrines of both traditions, the Great and Small Vehicles,  
 What bases for disputation could there be among the wise?

o88

Even the Buddha's non-ultimate teachings  
 Are not such as lesser persons would find easy to comprehend.  
 As for the contents of the One-Vehicle and Three-Vehicle teachings,  
 For your own karmic safety, avoid anything which may harm them.<sup>141</sup>

o89

In remaining neutral, there is nothing non-meritorious.  
 Hatefulness, however, is evil and devoid of any good aspects.  
 Thus if one is inclined to cherish his own personal welfare,  
 He should refrain from any disparaging of the Great Vehicle.

## 11. FACTORS UNIQUE TO THE GREAT VEHICLE

090

The vows and practices of the bodhisattva,  
Dedication of merit and such—they don't exist in those teachings.  
Thus, if one were to rely on the Small Vehicle in one's cultivation,  
How could one become a bodhisattva?

091

The Bodhisattva Path and its four reliances<sup>142</sup>  
Are not described in the Small Vehicle's teachings.  
For which of those dharmas cultivated by the Buddha  
Might they be better able to explain them than he?

092

As for reliance on the truths and the auxiliary Path factors—<sup>143</sup>  
If the Buddha himself had practiced in a way identical to that—  
Since the causes he cultivated would then have been no different,  
How could those fruits he realized reach so especially far beyond?

093

The general and specific aspects of the practices leading to bodhi  
Are not described within the Small Vehicle's teachings.  
However, they were completely delineated in the Great Vehicle.  
Thus the wise should have faith in them and should accept them.

## 12. THE BUDDHA'S RATIONALE IN SETTING FORTH DIFFERENT TEACHINGS

094

In works such as the *Vyākaraṇa*,<sup>144</sup>  
They first offer instruction in the study of the alphabet.  
As the Buddha's establishment of teachings was comparable to this,  
He adapted to differing capacities to accept transforming teaching.

095

There were some circumstances where he proclaimed the Dharma  
So that others would abandon the many forms of evil.  
In some cases he did so to inspire the creation of merit,  
And in still other cases he did so to accomplish both priorities.

096

In some cases, he did so to banish these duality-based concepts,  
Teaching extreme profundities alarming those of inferior capacity.  
Sometimes emptiness and compassion were set forth as supreme  
To allow others to gain perfect realization of bodhi.<sup>145</sup>

## 13. CONCLUDING DISCUSSION ON CULTIVATING THE GREAT VEHICLE

097

Therefore the intelligent person  
 Should relinquish any hostility toward the Great Vehicle.  
 One ought to generate a supreme degree of faith and acceptance  
 For the sake of realizing the unequaled enlightenment.

098

Through believing in and accepting the Great Vehicle  
 And then practicing the teachings of the Great Vehicle,  
 One thereby perfects the unsurpassed Path,  
 While enjoying the many varieties of happiness in the interim.

099

Giving, moral virtue, and patience  
 Were in large part proclaimed for edification of the householder.<sup>146</sup>  
 In this Dharma, it is compassion which is supreme.  
 One prays you will so cultivate it that it becomes your very nature.

100

Because of the inequalities existing in the world,  
 The King's throne could involve actions incompatible with Dharma.  
 In order to preserve one's fine name as well as the Dharma,  
 Matters could evolve to where leaving the householder's life is best.