

Knowing Reality: Nagarjuna's Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way

Sanskrit: Mūlamadhyamakakārikā
Tibetan: Tsawa Sherab

Teachings with Geshe Tenzin Namdak

June 26: Chapter 26 - The 12 Links of Dependent Origination

July 18: Chapter 18 - Self and Entities

Sept. 19: Chapter 22 - The Tathagata

SHANTIDEVA CENTER



432 6th Avenue
Brooklyn, New York 11215
info@shantidevanyc.org

CHAPTER 26

EXAMINATION OF THE TWELVE LINKS OF (SAMSARIC) EXISTENCE

1. The obscuring *ignorance* propels (one) into (Samsaric) *birth*.

The three compositional factors

Enhance the formation (of births).

These *actions* impel (one) into the state of migrators.

2. Having composition as its condition,

Consciousness enters transmigration.

Once *consciousness* has entered transmigration,

Name and form come into being.

3. Once *name and form* come to be,

The *six sense sources* come into being.

Depending on the *six sense sources*,

Contact, unwaveringly, comes into being.

4. Arising is only dependent

Upon eye, form and attention.

Thus, depending on *name and form*,

Consciousness is produced.

5. That which is assembled from the three -

Eye, form and *consciousness* -

Is *contact*.

From *contact* arises *feeling*.

6. Conditioned by *feeling*, arises *craving*.

Craving arises because of *feeling*.

When it arises, there is *grasping*,

Which comprises the four.

7. When there is *grasping*,

The *existence* of the one who craves comes into being.

If there is no *grasping*,

Then being freed, he would not take (Samsaric) *birth*.

8. This birth is comprised of five aggregates.

From *existence* arises *birth*,

Old age and death and misery,

Moaning and suffering

9. Grief and confusion.

All these arise entirely because of *birth*.

In this way this very mass of suffering

Comes into being.

10. The root of cyclic existence is compositional (factor).
Therefore, the wise do not engage in compositional (factor).
Thus, the unwise are the agents.
The wise see reality.

11. With the cessation of *ignorance*,
Compositional (factor) will not arise.
The cessation of *ignorance* occurs through
Insight and meditation.

12. Through the cessation of these,
Those will not be manifest.
The entire mass of suffering
Indeed, thereby, completely ceases.

CHAPTER 18

EXAMINATION OF SELF AND PHENOMENON

1. If the self were the aggregates,
It would have arising and ceasing (as properties).
If it were different from the aggregates,
It would not have the characteristics of the aggregates.

2. If there were no self,
Where would the self's (possessions) be?
From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,
One is freed from grasping onto 'I' and 'mine'.

3. One who does not grasp onto 'I' and 'mine',
That one does not exist.
One who views non-grasping onto 'I' and 'mine'
He does not perceive (the reality).

4. When views of 'I' and 'mine' are extinguished,
Whether with respect to the internal or external,
The appropriator ceases.
This having ceased, birth ceases.

5. Ceasing of action and affliction leads to Nirvana.
Action and affliction come from conceptual thought.
This comes from (mental) elaboration.
Elaboration ceases through emptiness.

6. That there is a self has been taught,
And the doctrine of no-self,
By the Buddhas, as well as the
Doctrine of neither self nor non-self.

7. What language expresses is non-existent.
The apprehension of mind is non-existent.
(Because of being) unarisen and unceased, like Nirvana
Is the nature of things.

8. Everything is real and is not real,
Both real and not real,
Neither real nor not real.
This, the Lord Buddha taught accordingly.
Neither nihilism nor eternalism.

9. Not dependent upon another, peaceful and
Not elaborated by elaboration,
Not thought, without distinctions,
These are the characteristics of thatness.

10. Whatever comes into being, dependent upon another,
Is not identical to that thing.
Nor is it different from it.
Therefore it is neither nihilistic nor eternalistic.

11. This nectar of the teachings
Of the Buddhas, patrons of the world,
Is (understood as) without identity, without distinction,
Neither nihilism nor eternalism.

12. When the fully enlightened ones do not appear,
And when the Hearers have disappeared,
The wisdom of self-enlightenment
Will arise completely without dependence.

CHAPTER 22

EXAMINATION OF THE TATHAGATA

1. Neither the aggregates, nor different from the aggregates (is the Tathagata).
The aggregates are not in him, nor is he in the aggregates.
The Tathagata does not possess the aggregates.
What is the Tathagata?

2. If the Buddha depended on the aggregates,
He could not exist through his self-nature.
That which does not exist through its self-nature,
How could it exist through (the power of) other things?

3. Whatever is dependent upon another entity,
Its selfhood is not feasible.
How could it be a Tathagata
Which lacks a self?

4. If there is no self-nature,
How could there be an other-thing?
What is the Tathagata
Other than the self-nature or other (than that)?
5. If, without depending upon the aggregates,
There were a Tathagata,
Then now (it should be feasible that) he would be depending upon them.
Therefore, he would exist through dependence.
6. In as much as there is no Tathagata
Not dependent upon the aggregates,
Since there is not anything which is not dependent,
How can it be appropriating (others)?
7. Where there is no appropriation,
How is it not the (case) with the appropriated (then, of its absence)?
Without the appropriated,
How can there be a Tathagata?
8. Having searched through the fivefold means,
And finding it neither identical nor different (from the appropriated),
(Then) how can the Tathagata
Be designated through (the power of) the appropriated?
9. All those appropriated
Do not exist through self-nature.
When something does not exist through itself,
It cannot possibly exist through other things.
10. Thus (both) the appropriated and the appropriator
Are empty in every respect.
How can an empty Tathagata's (arising) be feasible
Through (the power of something which is) not existent?
11. 'Emptiness' (of Tathagata) is not asserted,
Nor is 'non-emptiness' asserted.
Neither both nor neither are asserted.
They are (merely) asserted on the basis of labelling.
12. How can the tetralemma of permanent, impermanent, etc.,
Be true in this peacefulness (of inherent existence)?
How can the tetralemma of finite, infinite, etc.,
Be true in this peacefulness (of inherent existence)?
13. The one who is caught up in strong grasping
At the existence of the Tathagata,
Will conceptualize, in his thought,
The non-existence of (Tathagata) at Nirvana.

14. In that which is empty of self-nature,
The thought that the Buddha
Exists or does not exist
After Nirvana is inappropriate.

15. Those (beings) who develop (mental) fabrications towards the Buddha,
Who is free of fabrications, and devoid of exhaustion
Those who are undermined by (obsession to) fabrication,
Will fail to see the Tathagata.

16. Whatever is the nature of the Tathagata,
Is (also) the nature of migrators.
The Tathagata has no self-nature.
Migrators (also) have no self-nature.

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