

The
Fundamental
Wisdom
of the
Middle
Way

Nāgārjuna's
Mūlamadhyamakakārikā

TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY BY
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*I dedicate this work,
with profound gratitude
and respect,
to the Most Ven. Professor Samdhong Rinpoche:
scholar, educator, statesman, public servant
and shining exemplar of monastic life.*

PART ONE

The Text of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*

Dedicatory Verses

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
The best of teachers, who taught that
Whatever is dependently arisen is
Unceasing, unborn,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Not coming, not going,
Without distinction, without identity,
And free from conceptual construction.

Chapter I

Examination of Conditions

1. Neither from itself nor from another,
Nor from both,
Nor without a cause,
Does anything whatever, anywhere arise.
2. There are four conditions: efficient condition;
Percept-object condition; immediate condition;
Dominant condition, just so.
There is no fifth condition.
3. The essence of entities
Is not present in the conditions, etc
If there is no essence,
There can be no otherness-essence.
4. Power to act does not have conditions.
There is no power to act without conditions.
There are no conditions without power to act.
Nor do any have the power to act.
5. These give rise to those,
So these are called conditions.
As long as those do not come from these,
Why are these not non-conditions?

6. For neither an existent nor a non-existent thing
Is a condition appropriate.
If a thing is non-existent, how could it have a
condition?
If a thing is already existent, what would a condition
do?
7. When neither existents nor
Non-existents nor existent non-existents are
established,
How could one propose a “productive cause?”
If there were one, it would be pointless.
8. An existent entity (mental episode)
Has no object.
Since a mental episode is without an object,
How could there be any percept-condition?
9. Since things are not arisen,
Cessation is not acceptable.
Therefore, an immediate condition is not reasonable.
If something has ceased, how could it be a condition?
10. If things did not exist
Without essence,
The phrase, “When this exists so this will be,”
Would not be acceptable.
11. In the several or united conditions
The effect cannot be found.
How could something not in the conditions
Come from the conditions?
12. However, if a nonexistent effect
Arises from these conditions,
Why does it not arise
From non-conditions?

13. If the effect's essence is the conditions,
But the conditions don't have their own essence,
How could an effect whose essence is the conditions
Come from something that is essenceless?

14. Therefore, neither with conditions as their essence,
Nor with non-conditions as their essence are there any
effects.
If there are no such effects,
How could conditions or non-conditions be evident?

Chapter II

Examination of Motion

1. **What has been moved is not moving.
What has not been moved is not moving.
Apart from what has been moved and what has not
been moved,
Movement cannot be conceived.**
2. **Where there is change, there is motion.
Since there is change in the moving,
And not in the moved or not-moved,
Motion is in that which is moving.**
3. **How would it be acceptable
For motion to be in the mover?
When it is not moving, it is not acceptable
To call it a mover.**
4. **For whomever there is motion in the mover,
There could be non-motion
Evident in the mover.
But having motion follows from being a mover.**
5. **If motion is in the mover,
There would have to be a twofold motion:**

One in virtue of which it is a mover,
And one in virtue of which it moves.

6. If there were a twofold motion,
The subject of that motion would be twofold.
For without a subject of motion,
There cannot be motion.
7. If without a mover
It would not be correct to say that there is motion,
Then if there were no motion,
How could there be a mover?
8. Inasmuch as a real mover does not move,
And a non-mover does not move,
Apart from a mover and a non-mover,
What third thing could move?
9. When without motion,
It is unacceptable to call something a mover,
How will it be acceptable
To say that a mover moves?
10. For him from whose perspective a mover moves,
There would be the consequence that
Without motion there could be a mover.
Because a mover moves.
11. If a mover were to move,
There would be a twofold motion:
One in virtue of which he is a mover,
And one in virtue of which the mover moves.
12. Motion does not begin in what has moved,
Nor does it begin in what has not moved,
Nor does it begin in what is moving.
In what, then, does motion begin?

13. Prior to the beginning of motion,
There is no beginning of motion in
The going or in the gone.
How could there be motion in the not-gone?
14. Since the beginning of motion
Cannot be conceived in any way,
What gone thing, what going thing,
And what non-going thing can be posited?
15. Just as a moving thing is not stationary,
A non-moving thing is not stationary.
Apart from the moving and the non-moving,
What third thing is stationary?
16. If without motion
It is not appropriate to posit a mover,
How could it be appropriate to say
That a moving thing is stationary?
17. One does not halt from moving,
Nor from having moved or not having moved.
Motion and coming to rest
And starting to move are similar.
18. That motion just is the mover itself
Is not correct.
Nor is it correct that
They are completely different.
19. It would follow from
The identity of mover and motion
That agent and action
Are identical.
20. It would follow from
A real distinction between motion and mover
That there could be a mover without motion
And motion without a mover.

21. When neither in identity
Nor in difference
Can they be established,
How can these two be established at all?
22. The motion by means of which a mover is manifest
Cannot be the motion by means of which he moves.
He does not exist before that motion,
So what and where is the thing that moves?
23. A mover does not carry out a different motion
From that by means of which he is manifest as a mover.
Moreover, in one mover
A twofold motion is unacceptable.
24. A really existent mover
Doesn't move in any of the three ways.
A non-existent mover
Doesn't move in any of the three ways.
25. Neither an entity nor a non-entity
Moves in any of the three ways.
So motion, mover and
And route are non-existent.

Chapter III

Examination of the Senses

1. Seeing, hearing, smelling,
Tasting, touching, and mind
Are the six sense faculties.
Their spheres are the visible objects, etc. . . .
2. That very seeing does not see
Itself at all.
How can something that cannot see itself
See another?
3. The example of fire
Cannot elucidate seeing.
Along with the moved and not-moved and motion
That has been answered.
4. When there is not even the slightest
Nonseeing seer,
How could it makes sense to say
That seeing sees?
5. Seeing itself does not see.
Nonseeing itself does not see.
Through seeing itself
The clear analysis of the seer is understood.

6. Without detachment from vision there is no seer.
Nor is there a seer detached from it.
If there is no seer
How can there be seeing or the seen?
7. Just as the birth of a son is said to occur
In dependence on the mother and father,
So consciousness is said to arise
In dependence on the eye and material form.
8. From the nonexistence of seeing and the seen it follows
that
The other four faculties of knowledge do not exist.
And all the aggregates, etc.,
Are the same way.
9. Like the seen, the heard, the smelled,
The tasted, and the touched,
The hearer, sound, etc.,
And consciousness should be understood.

Chapter IV

Examination of the Aggregates

1. **Apart from the cause of form,
Form cannot be conceived.**
**Apart from form,
The cause of form is not seen.**
2. **If apart from the cause of form, there were form,
Form would be without cause.
But nowhere is there an effect
Without a cause.**
3. **If apart from form
There were a cause of form,
It would be a cause without an effect.
But there are no causes without effects.**
4. **When form exists,
A cause of the arising of form is not tenable.
When form is non-existent,
A cause of the arising of form is not tenable.**
5. **Form itself without a cause
Is not possible or tenable.
Therefore, think about form, but
Do not construct theories about form.**

6. The assertion that the effect and cause are similar
Is not acceptable.
The assertion that they are not similar
Is also not acceptable.
7. Feelings, discriminations, and dispositions
And consciousness and all such things
Should be thought of
In the same way as material form.
8. When an analysis is made through emptiness,
If someone were to offer a reply,
That reply will fail, since it will presuppose
Exactly what is to be proven.
9. When an explanation is made through emptiness,
Whoever would find fault with it
Will find no fault, since the criticism will presuppose
Exactly what is to be proven.

Chapter V

Examination of Elements

1. Prior to a characteristic of space
There is not the slightest space.
If it arose prior to the characteristic
Then it would, absurdly, arise without a characteristic.
2. A thing without a characteristic
Has never existed.
If nothing lacks a characteristic,
Where do characteristics come to be?
3. Neither in the uncharacterized nor in the characterized
Does a characteristic arise.
Nor does it arise
In something different from these two.
4. If characteristics do not appear,
Then it is not tenable to posit the characterized object.
If the characterized object is not posited,
There will be no characteristic either.
5. From this it follows that there is no characterized
And no existing characteristic.
Nor is there any entity
Other than the characterized and the characteristic.

6. If there is no existent thing,
Of what will there be nonexistence?
Apart from existent and nonexistent things
Who knows existence and nonexistence?
7. Therefore, space is not an entity.
It is not a nonentity.
Not characterized, not without character.
The same is true of the other five elements.
8. Fools and reificationists who perceive
The existence and nonexistence
Of objects
Do not see the pacification of objectification.

Chapter VI

Examination of Desire and the Desirous

1. If prior to desire
And without desire there were a desirous one,
Desire would depend on him.
Desire would exist when there is a desirous one.
2. Were there no desirous one, moreover,
Where would desire occur?
Whether or not desire or the desirous one exist,
The analysis would be the same.
3. Desire and the desirous one
Cannot arise together.
In that case, desire and the desirous one
Would not be mutually contingent.
4. In identity there is no simultaneity.
A thing is not simultaneous with itself.
But if there is difference,
Then how would there be simultaneity?

5. If in identity there were simultaneity,
Then it could occur without association.
If in difference there were simultaneity,
It could occur without association.
6. If in difference there were simultaneity,
How could desire and the desirous one,
Being different, be established?
If they were, they would be simultaneous.
7. If desire and the desirous one
Are established as different,
Then why would you think
That they are simultaneous?
8. Since difference is not established,
If you assert that they are simultaneous,
Since they are established as simultaneous,
Do you also assert that they are different?
9. Since nothing different has been established,
If one is asserting simultaneity,
Which different thing
Do you want to say is simultaneous?
10. Thus desire and the desirous one
Cannot be established as simultaneous or not
simultaneous.
So, like desire, nothing whatever
Can be established either as simultaneous or as
nonsimultaneous.

Chapter VII

Examination of the Conditioned

1. If arising were produced,
Then it would also have the three characteristics.
If arising is not produced,
How could the characteristics of the produced exist?
2. If the three, arising, etc., are separate,
They cannot function as the characteristics of the
produced.
But how could they be joined
In one thing simultaneously?
3. If arising, abiding, and ceasing
Have characteristics other than those of the produced,
There would be an infinite regress.
If they don't, they would not be produced.
4. The arising of arising only gives rise
To the basic arising.
The arising of the basic arising
Gives rise to arising.
5. If, as you say, the arising of arising
Gives rise to the basic arising,

How, according to you, does this,
Not arisen from the basic arising, give rise to that?

6. If, as you say, that which is arisen from basic arising
Gives rise to the basis,
How does that nonarisen basis
Give rise to it?
7. If this nonarisen
Could give rise to that,
Then, as you wish,
It will give rise to that which is arising.
8. Just as a butterlamp
Illuminates itself as well as others,
So arising gives rise to itself
And to other arisen things.
9. In the butterlamp and its place,
There is no darkness.
What then does the butterlamp illuminate?
For illumination is the clearing of darkness.
10. If the arising butterlamp
Does not reach darkness,
How could that arising butterlamp
Have cleared the darkness?
11. If the illumination of darkness occurs
Without the butterlamp reaching darkness,
All of the darkness in the world
Should be illuminated.
12. If, when it is illuminated,
The butterlamp illuminates itself and others,
Darkness should, without a doubt,
Conceal itself and others.

13. How could this arising, being nonarisen,
Give rise to itself?
And if it is arisen from another,
Having arisen, what is the need for another arising?
14. The arisen, the nonarisen, and that which is arising
Do not arise in any way at all.
Thus they should be understood
Just like the gone, the not-gone, and the going.
15. When there is arising but not yet
That which is arising,
How can we say that that which is arising
Depends on this arising?
16. Whatever is dependently arisen,
Such a thing is essentially peaceful.
Therefore that which is arising and arising itself
Are themselves peaceful.
17. If a nonarisen entity
Anywhere exists,
That entity would have to arise.
But if it were nonexistent, what could arise?
18. If this arising
Gave rise to that which is arising,
By means of what arising
Does that arising arise?
19. If another arising gives rise to this one,
There would be an infinite regress.
If something nonarisen is arisen,
Then all things could arise in this way.
20. Neither an existent nor a nonexistent
Can be properly said to arise.

As it is taught before with
“For neither an existent nor a nonexistent.”

21. The arising of a ceasing thing
Is not tenable.
But to say that it is not ceasing
Is not tenable for anything.
22. A static existent does not endure.
A nonstatic existent does not endure.
Stasis does not endure.
What nonarisen can endure?
23. The endurance of a ceasing entity
Is not tenable.
But to say that it is not ceasing
Is not tenable for anything.
24. Inasmuch as the nature of all things
Is aging and death,
Without aging and death,
What existents can endure?
25. Stasis cannot endure through itself
Or through another stasis.
Just as arising cannot arise from itself
Or from another arising.
26. The ceasing of what has ceased does not happen.
What has not yet ceased does not cease.
Nor does that which is ceasing.
What nonarisen can cease?
27. The cessation of what is static
Is not tenable.
Nor is the cessation of
Something not static tenable.

28. Being static does not cease
Through being static itself.
Nor does being static cease
Through another instance of being static.
29. When the arising of any entity
Is not tenable,
Then the cessation of any entity
Is not tenable.
30. For an existent thing
Cessation is not tenable.
A single thing being an entity and
A nonentity is not tenable.
31. Moreover, for a nonentity,
Cessation would be untenable.
Just as a second beheading
Cannot be performed.
32. Cessation does not cease by means of itself.
Nor does it cease by means of another.
Just as arising cannot arise from itself
Or from another arising.
33. Since arising, ceasing, and abiding
Are not established, there are no compounded things.
If all compounded things are unestablished,
How could the uncompounded be established?
34. Like a dream, like an illusion,
Like a city of Gandharvas,
So have arising, abiding,
And ceasing been explained.

Chapter VIII

Examination of the Agent and Action

- 1.** This existent agent
Does not perform an existent action.
Nor does some nonexistent agent
Perform some nonexistent action.

- 2.** An existent entity has no activity.
There would also be action without an agent.
An existent entity has no activity.
There would also be agent without action.

- 3.** If a nonexistent agent
Were to perform a nonexistent action,
Then the action would be without a cause
And the agent would be without a cause.

- 4.** Without a cause, the effect and
Its cause will not occur.
Without this, activity and
Agent and action are not possible.

5. If activity, etc., are not possible,
Entities and nonentities are not possible.
If there are neither entities nor nonentities,
Effects cannot arise from them.

6. If there are no effects, liberation and
Paths to higher realms will not exist.
So all of activity
Would be without purpose.

7. An existent and nonexistent agent
Does not perform an existent and nonexistent action.
Existence and nonexistence cannot pertain to the same
thing.
For how could they exist together?

8. An actual agent
Does not perform a nonactual action.
Nor by a nonactual one is an actual one performed.
From this, all of those errors would follow.

9. An existent agent
Does not perform an action that
Is unreal or both real and unreal
As we have already agreed.

10. A nonexistent agent
Does not perform an action that
Is unreal or both real and unreal
As we have already agreed.

11. An existent and nonexistent agent
does not perform an action that
Is unreal or both real and unreal
As we have agreed.

12.

Action depends upon the agent.
The agent itself depends on action.
One cannot see any way
To establish them differently.
13.

From this elimination of agent and action,
One should elucidate appropriation in the same way.
Through action and agent
All remaining things should be understood.

Chapter IX

Examination of the Prior Entity

- 1.** Since sight and hearing, etc., and
Feeling, etc., exist,
He who has and uses them
Must exist prior to those, some say.

- 2.** If there were no existent thing,
How could seeing, etc., arise?
It follows from this that prior to this,
there is an existent thing.

- 3.** How is an entity existing prior to
Seeing, hearing, etc., and
The felt, etc.,
Itself known?

- 4.** If it can abide
Without the seen, etc.,
Then, without a doubt,
They can abide without it.

- 5.** Someone is disclosed by something.
Something is disclosed by someone.
Without something how can someone exist?
Without someone how can something exist?

6. While prior to all of seeing, etc.,
That prior entity doesn't exist,
Through seeing, etc., by another one,
That other one becomes disclosed.
7. If prior to all of seeing, etc.,
No prior entity exists,
How could an entity prior
To each seeing exist?
8. If the seer itself is the hearer itself,
And the feeler itself, at different times,
Prior to each of these he would have to arise.
But this makes no sense.
9. If the seer itself is distinct,
The hearer is distinct and the feeler is distinct,
Then when there is a seer there would also be a hearer,
And there would have to be many selves.
10. Seeing and hearing, etc.,
And feeling, etc.,
And that from which these are arisen:
There is no existent there.
11. Seeing and hearing, etc.,
And feeling, etc.,
If that to which they belong does not exist,
they themselves do not exist.
12. For whomever prior to,
Simultaneous with, or after seeing, etc., there is
nothing,
For such a one, assertions like "it exists" or "it does not
exist"—
Such conceptions will cease.

Chapter X

Examination of Fire and Fuel

1. If fuel were fire
Then agent and action would be one.
If fire were different from fuel,
Then it could arise without fuel.
2. It would be forever aflame;
Flames could be ignited without a cause.
Its beginning would be meaningless.
In that case, it would be without any action.
3. Since it would not depend on another
Ignition would be without a cause.
If it were eternally in flames,
Starting it would be meaningless.
4. So, if one thinks that
That which is burning is the fuel,
If it is just this,
How is this fuel being burned?
5. If they are different, and if one not yet connected isn't
connected,
The not yet burned will not be burned.

They will not cease.
If they do not cease
Then it will persist with its own characteristic.

6. Just as a man and a woman
Connect to one another as man and woman,
So if fire were different from fuel,
Fire and fuel would have to be fit for connection.
7. And, if fire and fuel
Preclude each other,
Then fire being different from fuel,
It must still be asserted that they connect.
8. If fire depends on fuel,
And fuel depends on fire,
On what are fire and fuel established as dependent?
Which one is established first?
9. If fire depends on fuel,
It would be the establishment of an established fire.
And the fuel could be fuel
Without any fire.
10. If that on which an entity depends
Is established on the basis
Of the entity depending on it,
What is established in dependence on what?
11. What entity is established through dependence?
If it is not established, then how could it depend?
However, if it is established merely through
dependence,
That dependence makes no sense.
12. Fire is not dependent upon fuel.
Fire is not independent of fuel.
Fuel is not dependent upon fire.
Fuel is not independent of fire.

13. Fire does not come from something else,
Nor is fire in fuel itself.
Moreover, fire and the rest are just like
The moved, the not-moved, and the goer.
14. Fuel is not fire.
Fire does not arise from anything different from fuel.
Fire does not possess fuel.
Fuel is not in fire, nor vice versa.
15. Through discussion of fire and fuel,
The self and the aggregates, the pot and cloth
All together,
Without remainder have been explained.
16. I do not think that
Those who teach that the self
Is the same as or different from the entities
Understand the meaning of the doctrine.

Chapter XI

Examination of the Initial and Final Limits

- 1.** When asked about the beginning,
The Great Sage said that nothing is known of it.
Cyclic existence is without end and beginning.
So there is no beginning or end.

- 2.** Where there is no beginning or end,
How could there be a middle?
It follows that thinking about this in terms of
Prior, posterior, and simultaneous is not appropriate.

- 3.** If birth came first,
And then old age and death,
Then birth would be ageless and deathless,
And a deathless one would be born.

- 4.** If birth were to come after,
And old age and death first,
How could there be a causeless aging and death
Of one not born?

5. Birth and age and death
Cannot occur at one time.
Then what is being born would be dying
And both would occur without cause.
6. When the series of the prior, simultaneous, and
posterior
Is not possible,
Why are you led to posit
This birth, aging, and death?
7. Not only is cyclic existence itself without beginning,
No existent has a beginning:
Neither cause and effect;
Nor character and characterized . . .
8. Nor feeling and the feeler;
Whatever there is:
All entities
Are without beginning.

Chapter XII

Examination of Suffering

1. Some say suffering is self-produced,
Or produced from another or from both.
Or that it arises without a cause.
It is not the kind of thing to be produced.
2. If suffering came from itself,
Then it would not arise dependently.
For those aggregates
Arise in dependence on these aggregates.
3. If those were different from these,
Or if these were different from those,
Suffering could arise from another.
These would arise from those others.
4. If suffering were caused by a person himself,
Then who is that person—
By whom suffering is caused—
Who exists distinct from suffering?
5. If suffering comes from another person,
Then who is that person—
When suffering is given by another—
Who exists distinct from suffering?

6. If another person causes suffering,
Who is that other one
Who bestowed that suffering,
Distinct from suffering?
7. When self-caused is not established,
How could suffering be caused by another?
Whoever caused the suffering of another
Must have caused his own suffering.
8. No suffering is self-caused.
Nothing causes itself.
If another is not self-made,
How could suffering be caused by another?
9. If suffering were caused by each,
Suffering could be caused by both.
Not caused by self or by other,
How could suffering be uncaused?
10. Not only does suffering not exist
In any of the fourfold ways:
No external entity exists
In any of the fourfold ways.

Chapter XIII

Examination of Compounded Phenomena

1. The Victorious Conqueror has said that whatever
Is deceptive is false.
Compounded phenomena are all deceptive.
Therefore they are all false.

2. If whatever is deceptive is false,
What deceives?
The Victorious Conqueror has said about this
That emptiness is completely true.

3. All things lack entitihood,
Since change is perceived.
There is nothing without entity
Because all things have emptiness.

4. If there is no entitihood,
What changes?
If there were entity,
How could it be correct that something changes?

5. A thing itself does not change.
Something different does not change.
Because a young man doesn't grow old,
And because and an old man doesn't grow old either.
6. If a thing itself changed,
Milk itself would be curd.
Or curd would have come to be
An entity different from milk.
7. If there were even a trifle nonempty,
Emptiness itself would be but a trifle.
But not even a trifle is nonempty.
How could emptiness be an entity?
8. The victorious ones have said
That emptiness is the relinquishing of all views.
For whomever emptiness is a view,
That one will accomplish nothing.

Chapter XIV

Examination of Connection

1. The seen, seeing, and the seer:
These three—pairwise or
All together—
Do not connect to one another.
2. Similarly desire, the desirous one, the object of desire,
And the remaining afflictions
And the remaining sources of perception
Are understood in this threefold way.
3. Since different things connect to one another,
But in seeing, etc.,
There is no difference,
They cannot connect.
4. Not only in seeing, etc.,
Is there no such difference:
When one thing and another are simultaneous,
It is also not tenable that there is difference.
5. A different thing depends on a different thing for its
difference.
Without a different thing, a different thing wouldn't be
different.

It is not tenable for that which depends on something else
To be different from it.

6. If a different thing were different from a different thing,
Without a different thing, a different thing could exist.
But without that different thing, that different thing does not exist.
It follows that it doesn't exist.
7. Difference is not in a different thing.
Nor is it in a nondifferent thing.
If difference does not exist,
Neither different nor identical things exist.
8. That does not connect to itself.
Nor do different things connect to one another.
Neither connection nor Connected nor connector exist.

Chapter XV

Examination of Essence

1. Essence arising from
Causes and conditions makes no sense.
If essence came from causes and conditions,
Then it would be fabricated.
2. How could it be appropriate
For fabricated essence to come to be?
Essence itself is not artificial
And does not depend on another.
3. If there is no essence,
How can there be difference in entities?
The essence of difference in entities
Is what is called the entity of difference.
4. Without having essence or otherness-essence,
How can there be entities?
If there are essences and entities
Entities are established.
5. If the entity is not established,
A nonentity is not established.
An entity that has become different
Is a nonentity, people say.

6. Those who see essence and essential difference
And entities and nonentities,
They do not see
The truth taught by the Buddha.
7. The Victorious One, through knowledge
Of reality and unreality,
In the *Discourse to Katyāyāna*,
Refuted both “it is” and “it is not.”
8. If existence were through essence,
Then there would be no nonexistence.
A change in essence
Could never be tenable.
9. If there is no essence,
What could become other?
If there is essence,
What could become other?
10. To say “it is” is to grasp for permanence.
To say “it is not” is to adopt the view of nihilism.
Therefore a wise person
Does not say “exists” or “does not exist.”
11. “Whatever exists through its essence
Cannot be nonexistent” is eternalism.
“It existed before but doesn’t now”
Entails the error of nihilism.

Chapter XVI

Examination of Bondage

1. If compounded phenomena transmigrate,
They do not transmigrate as permanent.
If they are impermanent they do not transmigrate.
The same approach applies to sentient beings.
2. If someone transmigrates,
Then if, when sought in the fivefold way
In the aggregates and in the sense spheres and in the
elements,
He is not there, what transmigrates?
3. If one transmigrates from grasping to grasping, then
One would be nonexistent.
Neither existent nor grasping,
Who could this transmigrator be?
4. How could compounded phenomena pass into nirvāṇa?
That would not be tenable.
How could a sentient being pass into nirvāṇa?
That would not be tenable.
5. All compounded phenomena, as arising and ceasing
things,
Are not bound and not released.

For this reason a sentient being
Is not bound, not released.

6. If grasping were bondage,
Then the one who is grasping would not be bound.
But one who is not grasping is not bound.
In what circumstances will one be bound?
7. If prior to binding
There is a bound one,
There would be bondage, but there isn't.
The rest has been explained by the gone, the not-gone,
and the goer.
8. Whoever is bound is not released.
Whoever is not bound does not get released.
If a bound one were being released,
Bondage and release would occur simultaneously.
9. "I, without grasping, will pass beyond sorrow,
And I will attain nirvāṇa," one says.
Whoever grasps like this
Has a great grasping.
10. When you can't bring about nirvāṇa,
Nor the purification of cyclic existence,
What is cyclic existence,
And what is the nirvāṇa you examine?

Chapter XVII

Examination of Actions and Their Fruits

1. **Self-restraint and benefiting others**
With a compassionate mind is the Dharma.
This is the seed for
Fruits in this and future lives.

2. **The Unsurpassed Sage has said**
That actions are either intention or intentional.
The varieties of these actions
Have been announced in many ways.

3. **Of these, what is called “intention”**
Is mental desire.
What is called “intentional”
Comprises the physical and verbal.

4. **Speech and action and all**
Kinds of unabandoned and abandoned actions,
And resolve
As well as . . .

5. Virtuous-and nonvirtuous actions
Derived from pleasure,
As well as intention and morality:
These seven are the kinds of action.
6. If until the time of ripening
Action had to remain in place, it would have to be
permanent.
If it has ceased, then having ceased,
How will a fruit arise?
7. As for a continuum, such as the sprout,
It comes from a seed.
From that arises the fruit. Without a seed,
It would not come into being.
8. Since from the seed comes the continuum,
and from the continuum comes the fruit,
The seed precedes the fruit.
Therefore there is neither nonexistence nor
permanence.
9. So, in a mental continuum,
From a preceding intention
A consequent mental state arises.
Without this, it would not arise.
10. Since from the intention comes the continuum,
And from the continuum the fruit arises,
Action precedes the fruit.
Therefore there is neither nonexistence nor
permanence.
11. The ten pure paths of action
Are the method of realizing the Dharma.
These fruits of the Dharma in this and other lives
Are the five pleasures.

12. If such an analysis were advanced,
There would be many great errors.
Therefore, this analysis
Is not tenable here.
13. I will then explain what is tenable here:
The analysis propounded by all
Buddhas, self-conquerors
And disciples according to which . . .
14. Action is like an uncancelled promissory note
And like a debt.
Of the realms it is fourfold.
Moreover, its nature is neutral.
15. By abandoning, that is not abandoned.
Abandonment occurs through meditation.
Therefore, through the nonexpired,
The fruit of action arises.
16. If abandonment occurred through abandoning, and
If action were destroyed through transformation,
The destruction of action, etc.,
And other errors would arise.
17. From all these actions in a realm,
Whether similar or dissimilar,
At the moment of birth
Only one will arise.
18. In this visible world,
All actions of the two kinds,
Each comprising action and the unexpired separately,
Will remain while ripening.
19. That fruit, if extinction or death
Occurs, ceases.

Regarding this, a distinction between the stainless
And the stained is drawn.

20. Emptiness and nonannihilation;
Cyclic existence and nonpermanence:
That action is nonexpiring
Is taught by the Buddha.
21. Because action does not arise,
It is seen to be without essence.
Because it is not arisen,
It follows that it is nonexpiring.
22. If action had an essence,
It would, without doubt, be eternal.
Action would be uncreated.
Because there can be no creation of what is eternal.
23. If an action were uncreated,
Fear would arise of encountering something not done.
And the error of not preserving
One's vows would arise.
24. All conventions would then
Be contradicted, without doubt.
It would be impossible to draw a distinction
Between virtue and evil.
25. Whatever is mature would mature
Time and time again.
If there were essence, this would follow,
Because action would remain in place.
26. While this action has affliction as its nature
This affliction is not real in itself.
If affliction is not in itself,
How can action be real in itself?

27. Action and affliction
Are taught to be the conditions that produce bodies.
If action and affliction
Are empty, what would one say about bodies?
28. Obstructed by ignorance,
And consumed by passion, the experiencer
Is neither different from the agent
Nor identical with it.
29. Since this action
Is not arisen from a condition,
Nor arisen causelessly,
It follows that there is no agent.
30. If there is no action and agent,
Where could the fruit of action be?
Without a fruit,
Where is there an experiencer?
31. Just as the teacher, by magic,
Makes a magical illusion, and
By that illusion
Another illusion is created,
32. In that way are an agent and his action:
The agent is like the illusion.
The action
Is like the illusion's illusion.
33. Afflictions, actions, bodies,
Agents and fruits are
Like a city of Gandharvas and
Like a mirage or a dream.

Chapter XVIII

Examination of Self and Entities

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 (properties) be?
From the pacification of the self and what belongs to it,
One abstains from grasping onto "I" and "mine."
3. One who does not grasp onto "I" and "mine,"
That one does not exist.
One who does not grasp onto "I" and "mine,"
He does not perceive.
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. Action and misery having ceased, there is nirvāṇa.
Action and misery come from conceptual thought.
This comes from mental fabrication.
Fabrication 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 nonself.
7. What language expresses is nonexistent.
The sphere of thought is nonexistent.
Unarisen and unceased, like nirvāna
Is the nature of things.
8. Everything is real and is not real,
Both real and not real,
Neither real nor not real.
This is Lord Buddha's teaching.
9. Not dependent on another, peaceful and
Not fabricated by mental fabrication,
Not thought, without distinctions,
That is the character of reality (that-ness).
10. Whatever comes into being dependent on another
Is not identical to that thing.
Nor is it different from it.
Therefore it is neither nonexistent in time nor
permanent.
11. By the buddhas, patrons of the world,
This immortal truth is taught:
Without identity, without distinction;
Not nonexistent in time, not permanent.
12. When the fully enlightened ones do not appear,
And when the disciples have disappeared,
The wisdom of the self-enlightened ones
Will arise completely without a teacher.

Chapter XIX

Examination of Time

- 1.** If the present and the future
Depend on the past,
Then the present and the future
Would have existed in the past.
- 2.** If the present and the future
Did not exist there,
How could the present and the future
Be dependent upon it?
- 3.** If they are not dependent upon the past,
Neither of the two would be established.
Therefore neither the present
Nor the future would exist.
- 4.** By the same method,
The other two divisions—past and future,
Upper, lower, middle, etc.,
Unity, etc., should be understood.
- 5.** A nonstatic time is not grasped.
Nothing one could grasp as
Stationary time exists.
If time is not grasped, how is it known?

6. If time depends on an entity,
Then without an entity how could time exist?
There is no existent entity.
So how can time exist?

Chapter XX

Examination of Combination

- 1.** If, arising from the combination of
Causes and conditions,
The effect is in the combination,
How could it arise from the combination?

- 2.** If, arising from the combination of
Causes and conditions,
The effect is not in the combination,
How could it arise from the combination?

- 3.** If the effect is in the combination
Of causes and conditions,
Then it should be grasped in the combination.
But it is not grasped in the combination.

- 4.** If the effect is not in the combination
Of causes and conditions,
Then actual causes and conditions
Would be like noncauses and nonconditions.

- 5.** If the cause, in having its effect,
Ceased to have its causal status,

**There would be two kinds of cause:
With and without causal status.**

6. If the cause, not yet having
Produced its effect, ceased,
Then having arisen from a ceased cause,
The effect would be without a cause.
7. If the effect were to arise
Simultaneously with the collection,
Then the produced and the producer
Would arise simultaneously.
8. If the effect were to arise
Prior to the combination,
Then, without causes and conditions,
The effect would arise causelessly.
9. If, the cause having ceased, the effect
Were a complete transformation of the cause,
Then a previously arisen cause
Would arise again.
10. How can a cause, having ceased and dissolved,
Give rise to a produced effect?
How can a cause joined with its effect produce it
If they persist together?
11. Moreover, if not joined with its cause,
What effect can be made to arise?
Neither seen nor unseen by causes
Are effects produced.
12. There is never a simultaneous connection
Of a past effect
With a past, a nonarisen,
Or an arisen cause.

13. There is never a simultaneous connection
 Of an arisen effect
 With a past, a nonarisen,
 Or an arisen cause.
14. There is never a simultaneous connection
 Of a nonarisen effect
 With a past, a nonarisen,
 Or an arisen cause.
15. Without connecting,
 How can a cause produce an effect?
 Where there is connection,
 How can a cause produce an effect?
16. If the cause is empty of an effect,
 How can it produce an effect?
 If the cause is not empty of an effect,
 How can it produce an effect?
17. A nonempty effect does not arise.
 The nonempty would not cease.
 This nonempty would be
 The nonceased and the nonarisen.
18. How can the empty arise?
 How can the empty cease?
 The empty will hence also
 Be the nonceased and nonarisen.
19. For cause and effect to be identical
 Is not tenable.
 For cause and effect to be different
 Is not tenable.
20. If cause and effect were identical,
 Produced and producer would be identical.

If cause and effect were different,
Cause and non-cause would be alike.

21. If an effect had entitihood,
What could have caused it to arise?
If an effect had no entitihood,
What could have caused it to arise?
22. If something is not producing an effect,
It is not tenable to attribute causality.
If it is not tenable to attribute causality,
Then of what will the effect be?
23. If the combination
Of causes and conditions
Is not self-produced,
How does it produce an effect?
24. Therefore, not made by combination,
And not without a combination can the effect arise.
If there is no effect,
Where can there be a combination of conditions?

Chapter XXI

Examination of Becoming and Destruction

1. **Destruction does not occur without becoming.**
It does not occur together with it.
Becoming does not occur without destruction.
It does not occur together with it.

2. **How could there be destruction**
Without becoming?
How could there be death without birth?
There is no destruction without becoming.

3. **How could destruction and becoming**
Occur simultaneously?
Death and birth
Do not occur simultaneously.

4. **How could there be becoming**
Without destruction?
For impermanence
Is never absent from entities.

5. How could destruction
And becoming occur simultaneously?
Just as birth and death
Do not occur simultaneously.
6. How, when things cannot
Be established as existing,
With, or apart from one another,
Can they be established at all?
7. There is no becoming of the disappeared.
There is no becoming of the nondisappeared.
There is no destruction of the disappeared.
There is no destruction of the nondisappeared.
8. When no entities exist,
There is no becoming or destruction.
Without becoming and destruction,
There are no existent entities.
9. It is not tenable for the empty
To become or to be destroyed.
It is not tenable for the nonempty
To become or to be destroyed.
10. It is not tenable
That destruction and becoming are identical.
It is not tenable
That destruction and becoming are different.
11. If you think you see both
Destruction and becoming,
Then you see destruction and becoming
Through impaired vision.
12. An entity does not arise from an entity.
An entity does not arise from a nonentity.
A nonentity does not arise from a nonentity.
A nonentity does not arise from an entity.

13. An entity does not arise from itself.
 It is not arisen from another.
 It is not arisen from itself and another.
 How can it be arisen?
14. If one accepts the existence of entities,
 Permanence and the view of complete nonexistence
 follow.
 For these entities
 Must be both permanent and impermanent.
15. If one accepts the existence of entities
 Nonexistence and permanence will not follow.
 Cyclic existence is the continuous
 Becoming and destruction of causes and effects.
16. If cyclic existence is the continuous
 Becoming and destruction of causes and effects,
 Then from the nonarising of the destroyed
 Follows the nonexistence of cause.
17. If entities exist with entitihood,
 Then their nonexistence would make no sense.
 But at the time of nirvāṇa,
 Cyclic existence ceases completely, having been
 pacified.
18. If the final one has ceased,
 The existence of a first one makes no sense.
 If the final one has not ceased,
 The existence of a first one makes no sense.
19. If when the final one was ceasing,
 Then the first was arising,
 The one ceasing would be one.
 The one arising would be another.

20. If, absurdly, the one arising
And the one ceasing were the same,
Then whoever is dying with the aggregates
Is also arising.
21. Since the series of cyclic existence is not evident
In the three times,
If it is not in the three times,
How could there be a series of cyclic existence?

Chapter XXII

Examination of the Tathāgata

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

2. If the Buddha depended on the aggregates,
He would not exist through an essence.
Not existing through an essence,
How could he exist through otherness-essence?

3. Whatever is dependent on another entity,
Its selfhood is not appropriate.
It is not tenable that what lacks a self
Could be a Tathāgata.

4. If there is no essence,
How could there be otherness-essence?
Without possessing essence or otherness-essence,
What is the Tathāgata?

5. If without depending on the aggregates
There were a Tathāgata,
Then now he would be depending on them.
Therefore he would exist through dependence.
6. Inasmuch as there is no Tathāgata
Dependent upon the aggregates,
How could something that is not dependent
Come to be so?
7. There is no appropriation.
There is no appropriator.
Without appropriation
How can there be a Tathāgata?
8. Having been sought in the fivefold way,
What, being neither identical nor different,
Can be thought to be the Tathāgata
Through grasping?
9. Whatever grasping there is
Does not exist through essence.
And when something does not exist through itself,
It can never exist through otherness-essence.
10. Thus grasping and grasper
Together are empty in every respect.
How can an empty Tathāgata
Be known through the empty?
11. “Empty” should not be asserted.
“Nonempty” should not be asserted.
Neither both nor neither should be asserted.
They are only used nominally.
12. How can the tetralemma of permanent and
impermanent, etc.,
Be true of the peaceful?

How can the tetralemma of finite, infinite, etc.,
Be true of the peaceful?

13. One who grasps the view that the Tathāgata exists,
Having seized the Buddha,
Constructs conceptual fabrications
About one who has achieved nirvāṇa.
14. Since he is by nature empty,
The thought that the Buddha
Exists or does not exist
After nirvāṇa is not appropriate.
15. Those who develop mental fabrications with regard to
the Buddha,
Who has gone beyond all fabrications,
As a consequence of those cognitive fabrications,
Fail to see the Tathāgata.
16. Whatever is the essence of the Tathāgata,
That is the essence of the world.
The Tathāgata has no essence.
The world is without essence.

Chapter XXIII

Examination of Errors

1. Desire, hatred and confusion all
Arise from thought, it is said.
They all depend on
The pleasant, the unpleasant, and errors.
2. Since whatever depends on the pleasant and the
unpleasant
Does not exist through an essence,
The defilements
Do not really exist.
3. The self's existence or nonexistence
Has in no way been established.
Without that, how could the defilements'
Existence or nonexistence be established?
4. The defilements are somebody's.
But that one has not been established.
Without that possessor,
The defilements are nobody's.
5. View the defilements as you view your self:
They are not in the defiled in the fivefold way.

**View the defiled as you view your self:
It is not in the defilements in the fivefold way.**

6. The pleasant, the unpleasant, and the errors
Do not exist through essence.
Which pleasant, unpleasant, and errors
could the defilements depend upon?
7. Form, sound, taste, touch,
Smell, and concepts of things: These six
Are thought of as the foundation of
Desire, hatred, and confusion.
8. Form, sound, taste, touch,
Smell, and concepts of things: These six
Should be seen as only like a city of the Gandharvas
and
Like a mirage or a dream.
9. How could the
Pleasant and unpleasant arise
In those that are like an illusory person
And like a reflection?
10. We say that the unpleasant
Is dependent upon the pleasant,
Since without depending on the pleasant there is none.
It follows that the pleasant is not tenable.
11. We say that the pleasant
Is dependent upon the unpleasant.
Without the unpleasant there wouldn't be any.
It follows that the unpleasant is not tenable.
12. Where there is no pleasant,
How can there be desire?
Where there is no unpleasant,
How can there be anger?

13. If to grasp onto the view
“The impermanent is permanent” were an error,
Since in emptiness there is nothing impermanent,
How could that grasping be an error?
14. If to grasp onto the view
“The impermanent is permanent” were an error,
Why isn’t grasping onto the view
“In emptiness there is nothing impermanent” an error?
15. That by means of which there is grasping, and the
grasping,
And the grasper, and all that is grasped:
All are being relieved.
It follows that there is no grasping.
16. If there is no grasping,
Whether erroneous or otherwise,
Who will come to be in error?
Who will have no error?
17. Error does not develop
In one who is in error.
Error does not develop
In one who is not in error.
18. Error does not develop
In one in whom error is arising.
In whom does error develop?
Examine this on your own!
19. If error is not arisen,
How could it come to exist?
If error has not arisen,
How could one be in error?
20. Since an entity does not arise from itself,
Nor from another,

Nor from another and from itself,
How could one be in error?

21. If the self and the pure,
The permanent and the blissful existed,
The self, the pure, the permanent,
And the blissful would not be deceptive.
22. If the self and the pure,
The permanent and the blissful did not exist,
The nonself, the impure, the permanent,
And suffering would not exist.
23. Thus, through the cessation of error
Ignorance ceases.
When ignorance ceases
The compounded phenomena, etc., cease.
24. If someone's defilements
Existed through his essence,
How could they be relinquished?
Who could relinquish the existent?
25. If someone's defilements
Did not exist through his essence,
How could they be relinquished?
Who could relinquish the nonexistent?

Chapter XXIV

Examination of the Four Noble Truths

1. If all of this is empty,
Neither arising nor ceasing,
Then for you, it follows that
The Four Noble Truths do not exist.
2. If the Four Noble Truths do not exist,
Then knowledge, abandonment,
Meditation and manifestation
Will be completely impossible.
3. If these things do not exist,
The four fruits will not arise.
Without the four fruits, there will be no attainers of the
fruits.
Nor will there be the faithful.
4. If so, the spiritual community will not exist.
Nor will the eight kinds of person.
If the Four Noble Truths do not exist,
There will be no true Dharma.

5. If there is no doctrine and spiritual community,
How can there be a Buddha?
If emptiness is conceived in this way,
The three jewels are contradicted.
6. Hence you assert that there are no real fruits.
And no Dharma. The Dharma itself
And the conventional truth
Will be contradicted.
7. We say that this understanding of yours
Of emptiness and the purpose of emptiness
And of the significance of emptiness is incorrect.
As a consequence you are harmed by it.
8. The Buddha's teaching of the Dharma
Is based on two truths:
A truth of worldly convention
And an ultimate truth.
9. Those who do not understand
The distinction drawn between these two truths
Do not understand
The Buddha's profound truth.
10. Without a foundation in the conventional truth,
The significance of the ultimate cannot be taught.
Without understanding the significance of the ultimate,
Liberation is not achieved.
11. By a misperception of emptiness
A person of little intelligence is destroyed.
Like a snake incorrectly seized
Or like a spell incorrectly cast.
12. For that reason—that the Dharma is
Deep and difficult to understand and to learn—
The Buddha's mind despaired of
Being able to teach it.

13. You have presented fallacious refutations
That are not relevant to emptiness.
Your confusion about emptiness
Does not belong to me.

14. For him to whom emptiness is clear,
Everything becomes clear.
For him to whom emptiness is not clear,
Nothing becomes clear.

15. When you foist on us
All of your errors
You are like a man who has mounted his horse
And has forgotten that very horse.

16. If you perceive the existence of all things
In terms of their essence,
Then this perception of all things
Will be without the perception of causes and
conditions.

17. Effects and causes
And agent and action
And conditions and arising and ceasing
And effects will be rendered impossible.

18. Whatever is dependently co-arisen
That is explained to be emptiness.
That, being a dependent designation,
Is itself the middle way.

19. Something that is not dependently arisen,
Such a thing does not exist.
Therefore a nonempty thing
Does not exist.

20. If all this were nonempty, as in your view,
There would be no arising and ceasing.
Then the Four Noble Truths
Would become nonexistent.
21. If it is not dependently arisen,
How could suffering come to be?
Suffering has been taught to be impermanent,
And so cannot come from its own essence.
22. If something comes from its own essence,
How could it ever be arisen?
It follows that if one denies emptiness
There can be no arising (of suffering).
23. If suffering had an essence,
Its cessation would not exist.
So if an essence is posited,
One denies cessation.
24. If the path had an essence,
Cultivation would not be appropriate.
If this path is indeed cultivated,
It cannot have an essence.
25. If suffering, arising, and
Ceasing are nonexistent,
By what path could one seek
To obtain the cessation of suffering?
26. If nonunderstanding comes to be
Through its essence,
How will understanding arise?
Isn't essence stable?
27. In the same way, the activities of
Relinquishing, realizing, and meditating

And the four fruits
Would not be possible.

28. For an essentialist,
Since the fruits through their essence
Are already unrealized,
In what way could one attain them?
29. Without the fruits, there are no attainers of the fruits,
Or enterers. From this it follows that
The eight kinds of persons do not exist.
If these don't exist, there is no spiritual community.
30. From the nonexistence of the Noble Truths
Would follow the nonexistence of the true doctrine.
If there is no doctrine and no spiritual community,
How could a Buddha arise?
31. For you, it would follow that a Buddha
Arises independent of enlightenment.
And for you, enlightenment would arise
Independent of a Buddha.
32. For you, one who through his essence
Was unenlightened,
Even by practicing the path to enlightenment
Could not achieve enlightenment.
33. Moreover, one could never perform
Right or wrong actions.
If this were all nonempty what could one do?
That with an essence cannot be produced.
34. For you, from neither right nor wrong actions
Would the fruit arise.
If the fruit arose from right or wrong actions,
According to you, it wouldn't exist.

35. If, for you, a fruit arose
 From right or wrong actions,
 Then, having arisen from right or wrong actions,
 How could that fruit be nonempty?
36. If dependent arising is denied,
 Emptiness itself is rejected.
 This would contradict
 All of the worldly conventions.
37. If emptiness itself is rejected,
 No action will be appropriate.
 There would be action which did not begin,
 And there would be agent without action.
38. If there is essence, the whole world
 Will be unarising, unceasing,
 And static. The entire phenomenal world
 Would be immutable.
39. If it (the world) were not empty,
 Then action would be without profit.
 The act of ending suffering and
 Abandoning misery and defilement would not exist.
40. Whoever sees dependent arising
 Also sees suffering
 And its arising
 And its cessation as well as the path.

Chapter XXV

Examination of Nirvāṇa

1. If all this is empty,
Then there is no arising or passing away.
By the relinquishing or ceasing of what
Does one wish nirvāṇa to arise?
2. If all this is nonempty,
Then there is no arising or passing away.
By the relinquishing or ceasing of what
Does one wish nirvāṇa to arise?
3. Unrelinquished, unattained,
Unannihilated, not permanent,
Unarisen, unceased:
This is how nirvāṇa is described.
4. Nirvāṇa is not existent.
It would then have the characteristics of age and death.
There is no existent entity
Without age and death.
5. If nirvāṇa were existent,
Nirvāṇa would be compounded.
A noncompounded existent
Does not exist anywhere.

6. If nirvāṇa were existent,
How could nirvāṇa be nondependent?
A nondependent existent
Does not exist anywhere.
7. If nirvāṇa were not existent,
How could it be appropriate for it to be nonexistent?
Where nirvāṇa is not existent,
It cannot be a nonexistent.
8. If nirvāṇa were not existent,
How could nirvāṇa be nondependent?
Whatever is nondependent
Is not nonexistent.
9. That which comes and goes
Is dependent and changing.
That, when it is not dependent and changing,
Is taught to be nirvāṇa.
10. The teacher has spoken of relinquishing
Becoming and dissolution.
Therefore, it makes sense that
Nirvāṇa is neither existent nor nonexistent.
11. If nirvāṇa were both
Existential and nonexistent,
Passing beyond would, impossibly,
Be both existential and nonexistent.
12. If nirvāṇa were both
Existential and nonexistent,
Nirvāṇa would not be nondependent.
Since it would depend on both of these.
13. How could nirvāṇa
Be both existential and nonexistent?
Nirvāṇa is uncompounded.
Both existents and nonexistents are compounded.

14. How could nirvāṇa
Be both existent and nonexistent?
These two cannot be in the same place.
Like light and darkness.
15. Nirvāṇa is said to be
Neither existent nor nonexistent.
If the existent and the nonexistent were established,
This would be established.
16. If nirvāṇa is
Neither existent nor nonexistent,
Then by whom is it expounded
“Neither existent nor nonexistent”?
17. Having passed into nirvāṇa, the Victorious Conqueror
Is neither said to be existent
Nor said to be nonexistent.
Neither both nor neither are said.
18. So, when the victorious one abides, he
Is neither said to be existent
Nor said to be nonexistent.
Neither both nor neither are said.
19. There is not the slightest difference
Between cyclic existence and nirvāṇa.
There is not the slightest difference
Between nirvāṇa and cyclic existence.
20. Whatever is the limit of nirvāṇa,
That is the limit of cyclic existence.
There is not even the slightest difference between
them,
Or even the subtlest thing.
21. Views that after cessation there is a limit, etc.,
And that it is permanent, etc.,

Depend upon nirvāṇa, the final limit,
And the prior limit.

22. Since all existents are empty,
What is finite or infinite?
What is finite and infinite?
What is neither finite nor infinite?
23. What is identical and what is different?
What is permanent and what is impermanent?
What is both permanent and impermanent?
What is neither?
24. The pacification of all objectification
And the pacification of illusion:
No Dharma was taught by the Buddha
At any time, in any place, to any person.

Chapter XXVI

Examination of the Twelve Links

1. Wrapped in the darkness of ignorance,
One performs the three kinds of actions
Which as dispositions impel one
To continue to future existences.
2. Having dispositions as its conditions,
Consciousness enters transmigration.
Once consciousness has entered transmigration,
Name and form come to be.
3. Once name and form come to be,
The six sense spheres come into being.
Depending on the six sense spheres,
Contact comes into being.
4. That is only dependent
On eye and form and apprehension.
Thus, depending on name and form,
And which produces consciousness—
5. That which is assembled from the three—
Eye and form and consciousness,
Is contact. From contact
Feeling comes to be.

6. Conditioned by feeling is craving.
Craving arises because of feeling.
When it appears, there is grasping,
The four spheres of grasping.

7. When there is grasping, the grasper
Comes into existence.
If he did not grasp,
Then being freed, he would not come into existence.

8. This existence is also the five aggregates.
From existence comes birth,
Old age and death and misery and
Suffering and grief and . . .

9. Confusion and agitation.
All these arise as a consequence of birth.
Thus this entire mass of suffering
Comes into being.

10. The root of cyclic existence is action.
Therefore, the wise one does not act.
Therefore, the unwise is the agent.
The wise one is not because of his insight.

11. With the cessation of ignorance
Action will not arise.
The cessation of ignorance occurs through
Meditation and wisdom.

12. Through the cessation of this and that
This and that will not be manifest.
The entire mass of suffering
Indeed thereby completely ceases.

Chapter XXVII

Examination of Views

1. The views “in the past I was” or “I was not”
And the view that the world is permanent, etc.,
All of these views
Depend on a prior limit.
2. The view “in the future I will become other” or “I will
not do so”
And that the world is limited, etc.,
All of these views
Depend on a final limit.
3. To say “I was in the past”
Is not tenable.
What existed in the past
Is not identical to this one.
4. According to you, this self is that,
But the appropriator is different.
If it is not the appropriator,
What is your self?
5. Having shown that there is no self
Other than the appropriator,
The appropriator should be the self.
But it is not your self.

6. Appropriating is not the self.
It arises and ceases.
How can one accept that
Future appropriating is the appropriator?
7. A self that is different
From the appropriating is not tenable.
If it were different, then in a nonappropriator
There should be appropriation. But there isn't.
8. So it is neither different from the appropriating
Nor identical to the appropriating.
There is no self without appropriation.
But it is not true that it does not exist.
9. To say “in the past I wasn’t”
Would not be tenable.
This person is not different
From whoever existed in previous times.
10. If this one were different,
Then if that one did not exist, I would still exist.
If this were so,
Without death, one would be born.
11. Annihilation and the exhaustion of action would follow;
Different agents’ actions
Would be experienced by each other.
That and other such things would follow.
12. Nothing comes to exist from something that did not
exist.
From this errors would arise.
The self would be produced
Or, existing, would be without a cause.
13. So, the views “I existed,” “I didn’t exist,”
Both or neither,

In the past
Are untenable.

14. To say "in the future I will exist or
Will not exist,"
Such a view is like
Those involving the past.
15. If a human were a god,
On such a view there would be permanence.
The god would be unborn.
For any permanent thing is unborn.
16. If a human were different from a god,
On such a view there would be impermanence.
If the human were different from the god,
A continuum would not be tenable.
17. If one part were divine and
One part were human,
It would be both permanent and impermanent.
That would be irrational.
18. If it could be established that
It is both permanent and impermanent,
Then it could be established that
It is neither permanent nor impermanent.
19. If anyone had come from anyplace
And were then to go someplace,
It would follow that cyclic existence was beginningless.
This is not the case.
20. If nothing is permanent,
What will be impermanent,
Permanent and impermanent,
Or neither?

21. If the world were limited,
 How could there be another world?
 If the world were unlimited,
 How could there be another world?
22. Since the continuum of the aggregates
 Is like the flame of a butterlamp,
 It follows that neither its finitude
 Nor its infinitude makes sense.
23. If the previous were disintegrating
 And these aggregates, which depend
 Upon those aggregates, did not arise,
 Then the world would be finite.
24. If the previous were not disintegrating
 And these aggregates, which depend
 Upon those aggregates, did not arise,
 Then the world would be infinite.
25. If one part were finite and
 One part were infinite,
 Then the world would be finite and infinite.
 This would make no sense.
26. How could one think that
 One part of the appropriator is destroyed
 And one part is not destroyed?
 This position makes no sense.
27. How could one think that
 One part of the appropriation is destroyed
 And one part is not destroyed?
 This position makes no sense.
28. If it could be established that
 It is both finite and infinite,

Then it could be established that
It is neither finite nor infinite.

29. So, because all entities are empty,
Which views of permanence, etc., would occur,
And to whom, when, why, and about what
Would they occur at all?
30. I prostrate to Gautama
Who through compassion
Taught the true doctrine,
Which leads to the relinquishing of all views.