

The Sword of Wisdom

For Thoroughly Ascertaining Reality

You have not the slightest confusion about philosophy,
And have completely abandoned every fault,
Your mind has no doubts about the three points [\[1\]](#)—
Before Mañjushri, the treasure of wisdom, I bow. (1)

Profound, vast and difficult to realize
Is the nectar-like teaching of the sugatas—
To those who long to taste it,
I here grant the light of intelligence. (2)

The Dharma taught by the Buddha
Depends entirely upon the two levels of truth,
The relative truth of the mundane
And the truth of the ultimate meaning. [\[2\]](#)(3)

If one is to apply an unerring and certain mind
To the nature of these two truths,
One must cultivate the excellent vision
Of the two flawless valid cognitions. [\[3\]](#)(4)

These appearances in all their rich variety
Arise through dependent origination.
Something that is truly independent,
Like a lotus in the sky, will not appear. (5)

It is a complete gathering of causes
That functions to bring about an effect.
All effects, whatsoever they may be,
Depend upon their own particular causes. (6)

It is by knowing what is or is not the case
In terms of causes and their effects
That we pursue one thing and avoid another,
Whether in crafts or in philosophy— (7)

They all have this as their starting point.
This includes not only worldly disciplines,
But also the training that transcends the world.
All phenomena, arisen in mutual dependence, (8)

Naturally possess their own particular
Characteristics, which are uniquely theirs.
The plain and simple facts of the conventional—
Solidity, fluidity, warmth and so on—are incontestable. (9)

Even just a single thing has countless properties,
And can be classified in infinite ways,
Based on affirmation and negation.
These are natural features of the thing itself. (10)

An object that is perceived clearly and directly,
Has properties that seem separate and distinct,
But these distinctions are mental designations,
Distinguished and engaged with by conceptual mind. (11)

Actual substance and what is imputed conceptually—
These are two ways in which one can understand
All that can be known, and many are the categories
That come from further elaborating on these two. (12)

Just so, they have their own causes, effects and natures,
But when phenomena are investigated authentically,
That which brings about arising can not be observed,
Nor is there anything that arises in dependence. (13)

Each thing appears with its own identity,
Yet is empty by its very nature,
Absolute space with threefold liberation,
The very nature of the ultimate. (14)

How something functions and how it depends
Are both aspects of its particular nature,
So it is with a thing's nature that reasoning ends,
And it would be futile to enquire any further. [\[4\]](#)(15)

This kind of evaluation of things in their nature,
According to each of the two levels of reality,
Is proven by the basic facts of how things are,
So it is reasoning that establishes what is tenable. (16)

How things appear or how they ultimately abide,
Can be known through perceiving their nature directly,
Or it can be inferred unerringly based on
Something else which is clearly apparent. (17)

Direct perception itself is of four kinds:
Unmistaken sensory, mental, self-awareness
And yogic; all of which are non-conceptual,
Since their objects appear with specific characteristics. (18)

Without these direct perceptions

There would be no evidence and hence no inference,
And any perception of things arising from causes
And then ceasing would become impossible. (19)

If that were the case, how could we ever
Understand them to be empty and so on?
Without relying upon the conventional,
There can be no realization of the ultimate. [\[5\]](#)(20)

Cognitions brought about by the five senses
Clearly experience their own objects.
Without this direct sensory perception,
Like blind folk, we would fail to see. (21)

Mental direct perception arises from the faculty of mind,
And clearly determines both outer and inner objects.
Without it, there would be no aspect of consciousness
Capable of perceiving all types of phenomena. (22)

Yogic direct perception is the culmination of meditation
Practised properly and according to the instructions.
It clearly experiences its own objects, and without it
There would be no vision of objects beyond the ordinary. (23)

Just as this direct experience can eliminate
Misperceptions about outer forms and the like,
This is also how it is within the mind itself,
If there were some other knower, there would be no end to them. (24)

A mind that is cognizant and aware
Naturally knows its objects, but at the same time
Is also aware of itself, without relying upon something else,
And this is what is termed “self-awareness.” (25)

Any experience of the other direct perceptions
Is only determined to be actual direct perception
By means of self-awareness; without this
There would be no way of establishing it. (26)

The root of inference lies in direct perception,
And direct perception is determined by self-awareness.
It all comes down to the experience of an undeluded mind;
There are no other means of establishment beyond this. (27)

Therefore, it is based on direct perceptions,
Which are non-conceptual and undeluded,
That misperceptions of apparent phenomena

Can be decisively eliminated. (28)

The conceptual mind is that which
Conceives of objects by way of general images,
Associating them with names to form concepts,
From which stem all manner of words and thoughts. (29)

Even for someone unaware of the proper expression, [\[6\]](#)
Generic images will appear in the mind,
Ready to be named, and through such concepts,
Objects can still be pursued or avoided. [\[7\]](#)(30)

Without this conceptual mind,
There could be no conventions of affirmation or denial,
And it would be impossible to infer anything
Or communicate the points of training. (31)

Conceptual thought enquires into and establishes
That which is not evident directly, such as future pursuits.
Without this ability to infer things conceptually,
We would all become like newborn babies. (32)

A reason is information that allows us to know something else. [\[8\]](#)
The reason must be a feature of the subject, [\[9\]](#)
And there must be positive and negative logical pervasion [\[10\]](#)—
When these three modes are present, there can be no delusion. (33)

From a reason that is arrived at through
Valid direct perception and valid inference,
What is hidden can be logically inferred,
And things can be proven by means of relationship. (34)

There are reasons that are results and natural reasons. [\[11\]](#)
When a thing is not observed or its opposite is seen,
Something is negated for the reason that it can not be observed—
Like this, there are three types of evidence in all. (35)

From a genuine perspective, all appearances
Are now, and always have been, the same;
And since a pure mind sees only purity,
Their nature remains entirely pure. (36)

Real functioning things dependently arise,
And what is unreal is dependently imputed;
Therefore both the real and the unreal
Are empty by their very nature. (37)

In the way things are, one can not separate
A thing which is empty from its own emptiness.
So appearance and emptiness are indivisibly united,
This is inexpressible—one must know it for oneself! (38)

Any affirmation, whatsoever it may be,
Must affirm either existence or identity;
And any negation, whatsoever it may be,
Must negate either existence or identity. (39)

Negations and affirmations based on what is valid
May be set out definitively in the proper way,
And then, while remaining logically consistent,
One can prove a point to others or make a refutation. (40)

When it comes to refutation, you can compose
Your own syllogisms including all three modes,
Or you can state the consequences that follow
From the opponent's very own assertions. (41)

Within the conventional, there is that which
We call "impure and narrow vision" because
Reality and appearances do not coincide,
And a vision in which things are purely seen. (42)

This makes two types of conventional validity,
Like seeing with eyes that are human and divine.
The difference between the two lies in their
Essential natures, causes, results and functions. (43)

One is an undeceived cognition of limited scope,
That arises from a correct perception of its object,
Clearing misperceptions of things in a narrow field of vision,
To bring a thorough apprehension of a given object. (44)

One is a pristine cognition of what is vast in nature,
That arises from an observation of precisely how things are,
Clearing misperceptions of objects beyond the imagination,
To bring the result of wisdom that knows all there is. (45)

The absolute as well has its two aspects:
Categorized and uncategorized conceptually,
And then to evaluate them, two types of validity
For looking into what is ultimately true. (46)

It is by relying on the former that one reaches the latter.
Like impaired vision that is healed and made pure,

When the eye of valid cognition is fully developed,
The truth of purity and equalness can be seen. (47)

It is because the mind, both with concepts and without,
Is sometimes deluded—as when perceiving two moons,
Dreaming or believing a rope is a snake [\[12\]](#)—and sometimes not,
That we have the categories of valid and invalid cognition. (48)

Without these categories of valid and invalid cognition,
A clear separation between the deluded and false
And the undeluded and true would be impossible,
And the tenets of philosophy could not be put forward. (49)

When we investigate on the level of reality,
In spite of all these conceptual elaborations,
Based on classifications such as direct perception,
Inference, valid and invalid cognition and so on, (50)

All is empty by its very nature.
And this natural simplicity itself
Is a feature of all conventional constructs,
Just as heat is a property of fire. (51)

So it is that appearance and emptiness
Are inseparable in all phenomena
As the method and its outcome, [\[13\]](#) which is why
You can not negate one and affirm the other. (52)

“Without investigating what is and is not valid,
But through mundane perception alone,
Can one enter into the ultimate?” you may ask.
It is true that this is not ruled out. (53)

Seeing how this thing is produced from that thing
Is the direct perception of ordinary people,
Based on which they infer and make predictions—
In fact, this is “pramana” in all but name. (54)

Without the two kinds of conventional valid cognition,
Pure visions would seem false, and, even for the impure,
It would be unfeasible to say of a conch shell,
“White is its true colour, and yellow it is not.” (55)

Without the two approaches to ultimate analysis,
We would not know the unity of the two truths,
The ultimate would fall into conceptual extremes,
And be a cause for its very own destruction. (56)

The relative, that which is examined, is not real.
So too the probing mind and self-awareness.
When we look, they are not there, like the moon in water—
This is the ultimate indivisibility of the two truths. (57)

This is the one truth, nirvana, the limit of reality,
It is the ultimate state of all phenomena,
Enlightened being wherein knowing and known are inseparable,
Pure wisdom experience, without limit or centre. (58)

Once the excellent eye of discriminating wisdom
Has opened to the profound and vast like this,
One sees the noble path travelled by
The bliss-gone buddhas and their heirs, (59)

Those enlightened beings of mighty intelligence.
This is the way of the sutra and mantra vehicles,
So difficult to find. When we have the opportunity,
Let us not fail to gain the result! (60)

Possessing in this way the four reasonings,
And endowed with the light of intelligence,
Let us not be deceived by others, but investigate
And be sure to follow the four reliances. (61)

If we do not have this understanding,
Then, like a blind man leaning on his staff,
We can rely on fame, mere words or what is easy to understand,
And go against the logic of the four reliances. (62)

Therefore do not rely on individuals,
But rely upon the Dharma.
Freedom comes from the genuine path that is taught,
Not from the one who teaches it. (63)

When the teachings are well presented,
It does not matter what the speaker is like.
Even the bliss-gone buddhas themselves
Appear as butchers and such like to train disciples. (64)

If he contradicts the Mahayana and so on,
Then however eloquent a speaker may seem,
He will bring you no real benefit,
Like a demon assuming Buddha's form. (65)

Whenever you study or contemplate the Dharma,

Rely not on the words, but on their meaning.
If the point is understood, it matters little
How eloquently or not the words were spoken. (66)

Once you have understood what the speaker
Intended to communicate, if you then continue
To think about each word and expression,
It is as if your elephant is found, yet still you search. (67)

If you misinterpret the words they will only increase,
And you'll never stop till you run out of thoughts,
All the while straying further and further from the point.
Like a child at play, you'll only end up exhausted. (68)

Even for a single phrase like "Fetch the wood!"
Out of context, there's no end to what it might mean.
Yet if you understand what is meant,
The need for the words ends just there. (69)

When a finger points to the moon,
The ignorant look at the finger itself.
Fools, who are attached to language alone,
May think they understand, but it will not be easy. (70)

When it comes to the meaning of what is taught,
You should know the provisional and definitive,
And rely not on any provisional meaning,
But only on the meaning that has certain truth. (71)

The All-Knowing One himself, in all his wisdom,
Taught in accord with students' capacities and intentions,
Presenting vehicles of various levels,
Just like the rungs of a ladder. (72)

Wisely, he spoke with certain intentions in mind,
As with the eight kinds of implied or indirect instructions.
If taken literally, these might be invalidated,
But they were spoken for specific reasons. (73)

From the four schools of buddhist philosophy
Through to the ultimate vajra vehicle,
Aspects not fully realized by the lower approaches,
Are made clear by those which are more advanced. (74)

Seeing it to be superior according to the texts and logic,
The intelligent seize the definitive meaning
Like a swan drawing milk from water,

And revel in the ocean of buddhist teachings. (75)

The teachings of the profound vajra vehicle are also sealed
By means of the six limits and four modes. [\[14\]](#)
But can be definitively established by stainless reasoning,
Accompanied by the pith instructions of the lineage. (76)

The inseparable union of the primordial purity
And great equalness of all phenomena
Is the point that is definitively established
By the two authentic valid cognitions. (77)

By applying the key points of the literal, general,
Hidden and ultimate meaning, without any conflict
In the approaches of the paramitas, development phase,
Completion phase and the Great Perfection, (78)

One gains the confidence of certainty about reality.
Then the supremely intelligent heirs of the buddhas
Come to master an inexhaustible treasury of Dharma,
As a sign of victory for the teachings of scripture and realization. (79)

When taking the definitive meaning into experience,
Do not rely upon the ordinary dualistic mind
That chases after words and concepts,
But upon non-dual wisdom itself. (80)

That which operates with conceptual ideas is the ordinary mind,
Whose nature is dualistic, involving 'perceiver' and 'perceived.'
All that it conceptualizes in this way is false,
And can never reach the actual nature of reality. (81)

Any idea of something real or unreal, both or neither—
Any such concept, however it's conceived—is still only a concept,
And whatever ideas we hold in mind,
They are still within the domain of Mara. (82)

This has been stated in the sutras.
It is not by any assertion or denial
That we will put an end to concepts.
But once we see without rejecting or affirming, there is freedom. (83)

Although it is without any perceiving subject or object perceived,
There is naturally occurring wisdom that is aware of itself,
And all ideas of existence, non-existence, both and neither have ceased completely—
This is said to be supreme primordial wisdom. (84)

Just like the orb of the sun to someone blind since birth,
This has never been seen by the spiritually immature.
However much they think about it, they fail to understand,
And so it is only a cause of fear in the minds of the foolish. (85)

Yet through scriptures of authentic origin,
Reasoning that refutes all four conceptual extremes,
And the force of the master's practical instructions,
It arises in our experience, like sight that is restored. (86)

At that time, with a faith that comes from savouring
The nectar-like taste of the Buddhadharma,
Our eyes open widely in purest joy
And we glimpse the buddhas' wisdom kaya. (87)

In this, all things without exception
Are seen in their ultimate state of equality,
And with this certainty about what is itself beyond expression,
Skillfully, one expresses the unending treasury of Dharma. (88)

Having become learned in the ways of the two truths,
When seeing the reality of their inseparable unity,
One knows that, just as a husk is removed to reveal the grain,
All the various methods are simply to lead one to this point. (89)

With the thought, "Skilled in means are the buddhas,
And all these methods make a genuine path,"
An irreversible sense of confidence will arise
In the teachers and their teachings. (90)

By gaining the supreme non-abiding wisdom,
Naturally one is freed from the extremes of existence and quiescence,
And the ornament of great and effortless compassion
Arises to pervade throughout the furthest reaches of space and time. (91)

When the correct approach to the two truths
Is realized through contemplating the four reasonings
In this way, it brings the four genuine reliances.
From such a supreme and flawless cause as this (92)

Comes the result of profound primordial wisdom.
When this experience is developed to its fullest
It releases the eight great treasures of confidence [\[15\]](#)
That were sealed within the absolute space of awareness. (93)

Scriptures heard and contemplated in the past
Are never forgotten—this is the treasure of recollection.

Knowing precisely their profound and vast points—
This is the treasure of intelligence. (94)

Understanding all the themes of the sutra and tantra collections—
This is the treasure of realization.
Never forgetting any detail from one's studies—
This is the treasure of retention. (95)

Satisfying all beings with excellent explanations—
This is the treasure of confidence.
Safeguarding the precious treasury of sacred teachings—
This is the treasure of Dharma. (96)

Not severing the continuous line of the Three Jewels—
This is the treasure of bodhichitta.
Gaining acceptance of the nature of equality beyond arising—
This is the treasure of accomplishment. (97)

Someone who has mastered these eight great inexhaustible treasures
Will never separate from them, and
Will be praised by the buddhas and their heirs
And become a sovereign of the three worlds. (98)

The valid teachings of the victorious buddhas
Are established by the valid cognitions,
So by developing confidence through the valid path,
The true result of the valid teachings will be seen. (99)

With noble vision, completely and utterly pure,
And great compassion that has reached perfection,
The bliss-gone buddha revealed the path
And said, "The taste of this nectar I have discovered (100)

Should be experienced by means of
The four reasonings and the four reliances."
Although a portion of this elixir has now been shared,
In this modern age rife with degeneration, (101)

Through all the methods that run counter to this approach,
It is difficult to savour the supreme taste of the teachings.
With this in mind, and with an altruistic intention
And a mind of supreme devotion for the teachings, (102)

I have here briefly explained how to generate
The immaculate wisdom that is born of reflection.
Through the merit of this may all beings
Become the very equal of Manjushri! (103)

Turned towards the sun of Manjushri's speech,
The water-born lotus of my heart opens in devotion,
May these golden honey drops of excellent explanation
Become a plentiful feast for the bees of good fortune! (104)

I had had the intention to write this for a while, but in accord with the recent request made by the learned scholar Lhaksam Gyaltzen, this was written in a single day by Jampal Gyepa on the twenty-ninth day of the third month of the Sakyong year (i.e. Wood Bird, 1885). Mangalam. There are one hundred and four verses. Virtue!

| Translated by Adam. 2004.

[1]Mipham Rinpoche in his own commentary, *don rnam par nges pa shes rab ral gri mchan bcas* (hereafter MR) says that this refers to the three modes of a valid inference.

[2]This verse appears in Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamikakarika*, XXIV, 8.

[3]MR: conventional and ultimate valid cognition.

[4]MR. For example, heat is the nature of fire. We don't need to look into why fire is hot; that is simply how it is.

[5]These last two lines are a quotation from Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamikakarika*, XXIV, 10.

[6]MR gives the example of a small child or even an animal.

[7]MR says for example fire is avoided and water sought after.

[8]MR says for example, through the presence of smoke we can know that there is fire behind the mountain.

[9]In the well-known syllogism, "Given the subject of sound, it is impermanent because it is created" this refers to the fact that sound is created.

[10]In the above example, positive logical pervasion would be the fact that whatever is created is impermanent. Negative logical pervasion refers to the fact that whatever is not impermanent it is not created.

[11]The three types of evidence are: resultant evidence, natural, and non-observation.

[12]MR. Seeing two moons is a deluded sensory perception, dreaming is deluded mental perception, both of which are non-conceptual, and mistaking a rope for a snake is deluded and conceptual.

[13]MR Appearance is the method, emptiness is the outcome.

[14]Six limits: 1) provisional meaning, 2) definitive meaning, 3) indirect, 4) not indirect, 5) literally true and 6) not literally true.

Four modes: 1) literal, 2) general, 3) hidden and 4) ultimate.

[15]These eight are mentioned in the *Lalitavistara Sutra* (*rgya cher rol pa*). This is all based on a quotation from that text.

