

In Praise of Dharmadhātu

By Nāgārjuna

I pay homage to Youthful Mañjuśrī.

I bow to you, the dharmadhātu,
Who resides in every sentient being.
But if they aren't aware of you,
They circle through this triple being. [1]

Due to just that being purified
What is such circling's cause,
This very purity is then nirvāṇa.
Likewise, dharmakāya is just this. [2]

While it's blended with the milk,
Butter's essence appears not.
Likewise, in the afflictions' mix,
Dharmadhātu is not seen. [3]

Once you've cleansed it from the milk,
Butter's essence is without a stain.
Just so, with the afflictions purified,
The dharmadhātu lacks all stain. [4]

Just as a lamp that's sitting in a vase
Does not illuminate at all,
While dwelling in the vase of the afflictions,
The dharmadhātu is not seen. [5]

From whichever of its sides
You punch some holes into this vase,
From just these various places then,
Its light rays will beam forth. [6]

Once the vajra of samādhi
Has completely smashed this vase,
To the very limits of all space,
It will shine just everywhere. [7]

Unarisen is the dharmadhātu,
And never cease it will.
At all times without afflictions,
Stainless through beginning, middle, end. [8]

A blue beryl, that precious gem,
Is luminous at any time,

But if confined within its ore,
Its shimmer does not gleam. [9]

Just so, the dharmadhātu free of stain,
While it's obscured by the afflictions,
In saṃsāra doesn't shine its light,
But in nirvāṇa, it will beam. [10]

If this element exists, through our work,
We will see the purest of all gold.
Without this element, despite our toil,
Nothing but misery we will produce. [11]

Just as grains, when covered by their husks,
Are not considered rice that can be eaten,
While being shrouded in afflictions,
It is not named "buddhahood." [12]

Just as rice itself appears
When it is free from all its husks,
The dharmakāya clearly manifests,
Once it is free from the afflictions. [13]

"Banana trees don't have a pith"—
That's used as an example in the world,
But their fruits—their very pith—
In all their sweetness we do eat. [14]

Just so, when saṃsāra without pith
Is released from the afflictions' peel,
Its fruition, buddhahood itself,
Turns into nectar for all beings. [15]

Likewise, from all seeds there are,
Fruits are born that match their cause.
By which person could it then be proved
That there is a fruit without a seed? [16]

This basic element, which is the seed,
Is held to be the basis of all dharmas.
Through its purification step by step,
The state of buddhahood we will attain. [17]

Spotless are the sun and moon,
But obscured by fivefold stains:
These are clouds and smoke and mist,
Rahu's face and dust as well. [18]

Similarly, mind so luminous

Is obscured by fivefold stains.
They're desire, malice, laziness,
Agitation and doubt too. [19]

A garment that was purged by fire
May be soiled by various stains.
When it's put into a blaze again,
The stains are burned, the garment not. [20]

Likewise, mind that is so luminous
Is soiled by stains of craving and so forth.
The afflictions burn in wisdom's fire,
But its luminosity does not. [21]

The sūtras that teach emptiness,
However many spoken by the victors,
They all remove afflictions,
But never ruin this dhātu. [22]

Water dwelling deep within the earth
Remains untainted through and through.
Just so, wisdom in afflictions
Stays without a single stain. [23]

Since dharmadhātu's not a self,
Neither woman nor a man,
Free from all that could be grasped,
How could it be labeled "self"? [24]

In all the dharma that's without desire,
You see neither women nor a man.
"Men" and "women" are just taught
For guiding those plagued by desire. [25]

"Impermanence," "suffering," and "empty,"
These three, they purify the mind.
The dharma purifying mind the best
Is the lack of any nature. [26]

In a pregnant woman's womb,
A child exists but is not seen.
Just so, dharmadhātu is not seen,
When it's covered by afflictions. [27]

Through conceptions of a self and mine,
Discriminations of names, and reasons,
The four conceptions will arise,
Based on the elements and their outcome. [28]

Even the Buddhas' aspiration prayers
Lack appearance and characteristics.
Immersed in their very own awareness,
Buddhas have the nature of permanence. [29]

Any horns there on a rabbit's head
Are just imagined and do not exist.
Just so, all phenomena as well
Are just imagined and do not exist. [30]

Also the horns of an ox do not exist
As having the nature of particles.
Just as before, so it is after—
What's to be imagined there? [31]

Since [things] dependently originate
And in dependence too will cease,
If not even one [of them] exists,
How can fools imagine them? [32]

How the dharmas of the Sugata
Are established as the very middle
Is through the ox- and rabbit-horn examples. [33]

The forms of sun, moon, and the stars
Are seen as reflections upon water
Within a container that is pure—
Just so, the characteristics are complete. [34]

Virtuous throughout beginning, middle, end,
Undeceiving and so steady,
What's like that is just the lack of self—
So how can you conceive it as a self and mine? [35]

About water at the time of spring,
What we say is that it's "warm."
Of the very same [thing], when it's chilly,
We just say that it is "cold." [36]

Covered by the web of the afflictions,
It is called a "sentient being."
Once it's free from the afflictions,
It should be expressed as "Buddha." [37]

In dependence upon eye and form,
Appearances without a stain occur.
From being unborn and unceasing,
The dharmadhātu will be known. [38]

In dependence upon sound and ear,
Pure consciousness [comes forth],
All three dharmadhātu without signs.
Linked with thought, this will be hearing. [39]

Smelling in dependence upon nose and smell
Is an example for the lack of form.
Likewise, it's the nose's consciousness
That conceptualizes dharmadhātu. [40]

The nature of the tongue is emptiness,
And the dhātu of the taste is void—
Being of the dharmadhātu's nature,
Consciousness is nonabiding. [41]

From the nature of a body pure
And the characteristics of the tangible conditions,
What is free from such conditions
Is to be expressed as “dharmadhātu.” [42]

Once conception and its concepts are relinquished
With regard to phenomena whose principal is mind,
It's the very lack of nature of phenomena
That you should cultivate as dharmadhātu. [43]

What you see and hear and smell,
What you taste and touch, phenomena as well—
Once yogins realize them in this way,
The characteristics are complete. [44]

Eyes and ears and also nose,
Tongue and body and the mind as well—
The six āyatana fully pure.
This is true reality's own mark. [45]

Mind as such is seen as two:
Worldly and beyond the world.
Clinging [to it] as a self, it is saṃsāra—
In your very own awareness, true reality. [46]

Since desire is extinguished, it is nirvāṇa.
Hatred and ignorance are extinguished [too].
Since these have ceased, it's buddhahood itself,
The very refuge for all beings. [47]

Due to realization and its lack,
All is in this very body.
Through our own conceptions, we are bound,

But when knowing our nature, we are free. [48]

Enlightenment is neither far nor near,
And neither does it come nor go.
It's whether it is seen or not
Right in the midst of our afflictions. [49]

By dwelling in the lamp of prajñā,
It turns into peace supreme.
So the collection of the sūtras says:
"By exploring your self, you should rest!" [50]

Children blessed by tenfold powers' force,
[See them] like the crescent of the moon,
But those beings with afflictions
Do not see Tathāgatas at all. [51]

Just as ghosts with thirst and hunger
See the ocean to be dry,
Those obscured by ignorance
Think that Buddhas don't exist. [52]

What's the Bhagavat supposed to do
For inferiors and those whose merit's low?
It's just like the supreme of jewels
Put in the hand of one who's blind. [53]

But for beings who acquired merit,
The Buddha dwells before their eyes,
With the thirty-two marks shining bright
In their luminous and glorious light. [54]

Though the protector's rūpakāya
May remain for many eons,
For guiding those in need of guidance,
It is just this dhātu that is different. [55]

Ascertaining the object of the mind,
Consciousness will engage in it.
Once your very own awareness becomes pure,
You will dwell right in the bhūmis' nature. [56]

The great and mighty ones' supreme abode,
Akaniṣṭha that's so beautiful,
And consciousness, all three of them,
Fuse into a single one, I say. [57]

As for knowing all among the childish,
The diversity among the noble,

And the great and mighty, infinite in time—
What's the cause of time in eons? [58]

For sustaining the duration,
During eons truly infinite,
Of [all] beings' outer realms
And for creatures' life-force to remain,
This is what's the inexhaustive cause. [59]

In that whose fruition's inexhaustible,
Through the special trait of nonappearance,
Engage in full for prajñā's sake. [60]

Don't think enlightenment is far away,
And don't conceive it as close by.
With the sixfold objects not appearing,
It's awareness of reality just as it is. [61]

Just as from a mix of milk and water
That is present in a vessel,
Geese just sip the milk but not the water,
Which remains just as it is. [62]

Just so, being covered by afflictions,
Wisdom dwells within this body, one [with them].
But yogins just extract the wisdom
And leave the ignorance behind. [63]

As long as we still cling to "self" and "mine,"
We will conceive of outer [things] through this.
But once we see the double lack of self,
The seeds of our existence find their end. [64]

Since it is the ground for buddhahood, nirvāṇa,
Purity, permanence, and virtue too,
And because the childish think of two,
In the yoga of their nonduality, please rest. [65]

Generosity's multiple hardships,
Ethics gathering beings' good,
And patience benefitting beings—
Through these three, the dhātu blooms. [66]

Enthusiastic vigor for all dharmas,
Mind that enters meditative poise,
Prajñā as your permanent resort—
These too make enlightenment unfold. [67]

Prajñā that is joined with means,

Aspiration prayers very pure,
A firm stand in power, wisdom too—
These four dharmas make the dhātu flourish. [68]

“To bodhicitta, I pay no homage” —
Saying such is evil speech.
Where there are no bodhisattvas,
There will be no dharmakāya. [69]

Some dislike the seeds of sugar cane
But still wish to relish sugar.
Without seeds of sugar cane,
There will be no sugar. [70]

When these seeds of sugar cane
Are well guarded, fostered, and refined,
Molassis, sugar, candy too
Will then come forth from them. [71]

With bodhicitta, it is just the same:
When it’s guarded, fostered, and refined,
Arhats, conditioned realizers, Buddhas too
Will then arise and spring from it. [72]

Just as farmers guarding
Seeds of rice and others,
Thus, the leaders guard all those
Who’re aspiring to the supreme yāna. [73]

Just as, on the fourteenth day of waning,
Just a little bit of moon is seen,
Those aspiring to the supreme yāna
Will see a tiny bit of buddhakāya. [74]

Just as when the waxing moon
Is seen more in every moment,
Those who’ve entered on the bhūmis,
See its increase step by step. [75]

On the fifteenth day of waxing,
Eventually, the moon is full.
Just so, when the bhūmis’ end is reached,
The dharmakāya’s full and clear. [76]

Having generated this mind truly
Through continuous firm aspiration
For the Buddha, dharma, and the saṅgha,
Irreversibility shows time and again. [77]

Through the ground of darkness all relinquished
And the ground of brightness firmly seized,
It is ascertained right at this point.
Therefore, it is designated “Joy.” [78]

What’s been tainted through all times
By the stains of passion and so forth
And is pure [now], without stains,
That is called “The Stainless One.” [79]

Once the afflictions’ web pulls back,
Stainless prajñā brightly shines.
This dispels all boundless darkness,
And thus is The Illuminating. [80]

It always gleams with light so pure
And is engulfed by wisdom’s shine,
With [all] bustle being fully dropped.
Hence, this bhūmi’s held to be The Radiant. [81]

It triumphs in science, sports, and arts and crafts,
The full variety of samādhi’s range,
And over afflictions very hard to master.
Thus, it is considered Difficult to Master. [82]

The three kinds of enlightenment,
The gathering of all that’s excellent,
Arising, ceasing too exhausted —
This bhūmi’s held to be The Facing. [83]

Since it’s ever playing with a web of light
That’s configured in a circle
And has crossed saṃsāra’s swampy pond,
This is labeled “Gone Afar.” [84]

Being cared for by the Buddhas,
Having entered into wisdom’s ocean,
Being without effort and spontaneous—
By the hordes of māras, it’s Immovable. [85]

Since those yogins have completed
Their discourses teaching dharma
In all awarenesses discriminating perfectly,
This bhūmi is considered Excellent Insight. [86]

The kāya with this wisdom’s nature,
Which is stainless, equal to the sky,
Holds [the dharma] of the Buddhas.

From it, the “Cloud of Dharma” forms. [87]

The abode of buddhadharmas
Fully bears the fruit of practice.
This fundamental change of state
Is called the “dharmakāya.” [88]

Free from latent tendencies, you’re inconceivable.
Saṃsāra’s latent tendencies, they can be conceived.
You’re completely inconceivable—
Through what could you be realized? [89]

Beyond the entire sphere of speech,
Outside the range of any senses,
To be realized by mental knowing—
I bow to and praise whatever’s suitable. [90]

In this manner of gradual engagement,
The highly renowned children of the Buddhas,
Through the wisdom of the cloud of dharma,
See phenomena’s empty nature. [91]

Once their minds are cleansed completely,
They have gone beyond saṃsāra’s depths.
They rest calmly on a throne,
Whose nature is a giant lotus. [92]

Everywhere they are surrounded
By lotuses that number billions,
In their many jeweled petals’ light,
And with anthers of enthralling beauty. [93]

They overflow with tenfold power,
Immersed within their fearlessness,
Never straying from the inconceivable
Buddhadharmas without reference point. [94]

Through all their actions of outstanding conduct,
Their merit and their wisdom are complete—
This full moon’s surrounded everywhere
By the stars that are its retinue. [95]

In the sun that is the Buddhas’ hands,
Stainless jewels shine their light.
Through empowering their eldest children,
They bestow empowerment on them. [96]

Abiding in this yoga that’s so great,
With divine eyes, they behold

Worldly beings debased by ignorance,
Distraught and terrified by suffering. [97]

From their bodies, without effort,
Light rays are beaming forth,
And open wide the gates for those
Who are engulfed in ignorance's gloom. [98]

It's held that those in the nirvāṇa with remainder
Into the nirvāṇa without remainder pass.
But here, the actual nirvāṇa
Is mind that's free from any stain. [99]

The nonbeing of all beings—
This nature is its sphere.
The mighty bodhicitta seeing it
Is fully stainless dharmakāya. [100]

In the stainless dharmakāya,
The sea of wisdom finds its place.
Like with variegated jewels,
Beings' welfare is fulfilled from it. [101]

*This completes In Praise of Dharmadhātu composed by the great Ācārya Nāgārjuna.
It was translated by the Indian Upādhyāya Kṛṣṇa Paṇḍita and the [Tibetan] translator
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