

Reason Sixty

Arya Nagarjuna

In Sanskrit, Yuktiṣaṣṭikākārikānāma

In Tibetan, Rigs pa drug cu ba tshigs le'ur byas

pa zhes bya ba

Reverence to the Insight Hero, Mañjushrī!

I bow to the Lord of Sages,

Who proclaimed relativity,

The way by which he abandoned

[Real] creation and destruction!

1. Those whose intellect transcends

Being and nothing, and does not dwell [between],

Realize the meaning of “the conditioned,”

Which is profound and nonperceived.

2. [You] who have eliminated nihilism,

The source of all ills,

Should attend to the reasons why

Absolutism must be rejected as well.

3. If things were [really] true,

As the naïve construe them,

Then why not accept

Their annihilation as liberation?

4. [You] cannot be liberated through absolutism,

Nor escape this existence through nihilism.

Great souls are liberated

By fully understanding being and nothing.

5. Those who do not see reality presume

The [duality of] life-cycle and nirvana;

Those who do see reality do not presume

Either a life-cycle or a nirvana.

6. Of the two, existence and nirvana,
Neither is known to exist [intrinsically];
The full understanding of existence
Is what is called “nirvana.”

7. [The naïve] imagine cessation
As the annihilation of an originated being;
While the wise understand it
As like the ceasing of a magical illusion.

8. If cessation happens through annihilation,
Not by fully understanding creations,
Who would be there to experience it?
How could a destroyed [subject] come to be?

9. [You claim:] “If the aggregates have not ceased,
Though addictions cease, there is no nirvana.”
When here [you] have [intrinsically] ceased,
Only then, [absurdly,] will [you] be freed.

10. When one discerns with precise intuition
What occurs conditioned by misknowledge,
One does not experience anything,
Whether created or ceased.

11. That is immediate nirvana,
And that very thing is “attaining the goal.”
If, after that insight into the truth,
One discovers any particular here,

12. Imagining any sort of creation,
In anything, however subtle,
Such an unwise individual
Does not see the meaning of “conditioned arisal.”

13. If the monk who exhausts his addictions
Completely eliminates cyclic life,
Then why do the perfect buddhas
Not teach the beginning of such [cyclic life]?

14. If [you claim] a beginning, then, definitely,
You are embracing a [deluded] view.
What beginning or end could there be
To that which arises interdependently?

15. How could something primordially created
Subsequently be eliminated?
Free from initial and terminal limits,
Beings appear like illusions.

16. When an illusion manifests
Or when it is dispelled,
One who knows the illusion is not confused;
One ignorant of the illusion is entranced by it.

17. One whose intellect sees existence
As similar to an illusion or mirage
Is not deceived by [extremist] views
Of an ultimate beginning or end.

18. Those who imagine that created things
Are [intrinsically] produced and destroyed
Utterly fail to understand
The turning of the wheel of relativity.

19. What arises, dependent upon this and that,
Is not intrinsically created;
How can you call the intrinsically
Uncreated “created”?

20. Peace through exhausting the cause
Manifests as so-called “termination”;
How can you call the intrinsically
Unterminated, “terminated”?

21. Thus, nothing whatsoever is created,
And nothing whatsoever will cease.
The path of creation and destruction
Was taught for a useful purpose:

22. By knowing creation, you know destruction;
By knowing destruction, you know impermanence.
Through knowing how to enter impermanence,
You eventually come to realize the truth.

23. Those who develop understanding
Of [profound] relativity,
Abandoning creation and destruction,
Cross the ocean of existence with its views.

24. Alienated beings, who hold self [as] real,
Mistake existence and nonexistence.
Thus flawed, they are driven by addictions
And [hence] are deceived by their own minds.

25. Those who are expert in things
See them as impermanent,
Deceptive in nature, hollow,
Empty, selfless, and vacant.

26. With no basis and no perceptual object,
With no root and no foundation,
Totally arisen from the cause —misknowledge —
Bereft of beginning, middle, and end,

27. Essenceless—like a plantain [tree]—
Resembling a fairy city,
And an unbearable city of confusion,
Life appears like an illusion.

28. What is proclaimed as the truth in this world
By Brahmā [the Creator] and the others
Was declared “false” for the noble ones.
What else remains that is otherwise?

29. How can the worldly, blinded by misknowledge,
Who follow the flow of their cravings,
And the virtuous, who are skilled and
Free of craving, be viewed as equal?

30. To seekers of reality, at first
You should declare, “Everything exists!”
Once they understand things and grow detached,
Then [you may teach] them freedom.

31. Ignorant of the meaning of freedom,
Just acting on what they have heard,
They neglect the exercise of virtue —
Such pitiful creatures are lost.

32. [Buddha] declared the effectiveness of actions
As well as the forms of life [they create];
[Then] taught his full understanding of their nature,
Including their uncreatedness.

33. Just as the victors say “I”
And “mine” for a useful purpose,
So they speak of “aggregates,” “media,”
And “elements” for a useful purpose.

34. [Things first] proclaimed, such as primary elements,
Then are incorporated into consciousness.
Since knowing that, you break free [of them],
Are they not unreal constructions?

35. “Nirvana is the sole truth,”
Is what the victors declared;
Then, what wise person would suppose,
“Everything else is not false”?

36. As long as the mind vacillates,
It remains under the dominion of Māra.
Such being the case, why not validate
That there is no fault in this?

37. “The world is conditioned by misknowledge!”
Thus spoke the perfect Buddha.
Hence, what’s invalid about saying that
“This world is [mere] construction”?

38. When misknowledge ceases,
Since those things misknowledge imagines
Will [also] come to cease,
Why wouldn't [the world] be cleared away?

39. Whatever originates having a cause
Does not endure without conditions,
And, without conditions, is destroyed.
How can you understand such things as "existent"?

40. When those who advocate [objective] existence
Still hold things as [intrinsically real]
And remain on that very same path,
It is not surprising in the least.

41. But for those who rely on the path of the Buddha
And advocate the impermanence of all things,
To persist in hanging on to [intrinsic] things
With arguments—they really are amazing!

42. When "this" or "that" [appears a fact],
Yet when analyzed is not perceived,
What wise person would advocate with arguments
That "this" or "that" is [really] true?

43. Those who insist on a nonrelative
"Self" or "world"—Alas!
They are deprived by views
Such as absolutism and nihilism.

44. Claiming that dependent things
Are established in reality,
How could they not develop flawed views,
Such as absolutism, about those [things]?

45. Those who accept dependent things
As being like the moon in water,
Neither [intrinsically] real nor unreal,
Are not deprived by addictive views.

46. Once they commit to [intrinsic] things,
They are trapped in painful malignant views,
Which produce attachment and aversion
And the disputes that spring from them.

47. That [reality-habit] is the cause of all views;
Without it, addictions do not develop.
So when its [falsity] is fully understood,
Views and addictions are fully cured.

48. One asks, “How can this be understood?”
[It is understood] by seeing relativity.
“The dependently created is uncreated!”
Thus spoke the supreme knower of reality.

49. [Those] overwhelmed by mistaken knowledge
Are trapped by attachment in a process
Of obsession and conflict,
Clutching to truth in the [intrinsically] untrue.

50. Great souls are beyond disputes,
[For] they assume no [fixated] position.
For those who have no position,
How can there be opposition?

51. If any sort of hold is found,
The cunning poisonous snake of addiction
Will seize it; but those whose minds
Have no [such] hold will not be seized.

52. How could the addictions not poison
Those whose minds keep the place for them?
Even when [ascetics] stay neutral,
The snake of addiction will seize them.

53. As a child with his notion of truth
Falls in love with a mirror image,
Worldly people, due to delusion,
Are trapped in a thicket of objects.

54. Seeing things to be like mirror images
 With their eye of intuitive wisdom,
 Great souls do not get stuck
 In the quicksand of “objects.”

55. The naïve are attached to forms;
 The mediocre are detached from them.
 Those with the highest intelligence understand
 The nature of forms and thus are freed.

56. Those who cherish beauty become attached;
 Those who turn away from it become detached.
 But those who see it as empty,
 Like an illusory person, reach nirvana.

57. Those disturbed by false knowledge
 Suffer all the faults of addiction;
 But those who come to know the [true] meaning
 Have no [false] constructs of being or nothingness.

58. When one has a place [for reified things],
 One experiences attachment and detachment;
 But the great soul s, having no [such] place,
 Are neither attached nor detached.

59. Whoever contemplates freedom,
 And is not moved by the wavering mind,
 Crosses the ocean of intolerable existence,
 Which seethes with the snakes of addiction.

60. By the virtue [of writing this,] may all beings
 Gather the stores of merit and wisdom
 And attain the two supreme [buddha bodies]
 Arisen from merit and wisdom!

*** So ends The Reason Sixty composed by the Master Ārya
 Nāgārjuna. This version was prepared by the Tibetan translator
 Patsap Nyimadrak under the direction of the Indian abbot
 Muditashrī.

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