

Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness - (Sunyatasaptati)

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Prostration is made to the Youthful Manjushri.

[1]

Though the Buddhas have spoken of duration, origination, destruction,
being, non-being, low, moderate, and excellent
by force of worldly convention,
[they] have not done [so] in an absolute sense. (CL)

[2]

Designations are without significance,
for self, non-self, and self-non-self do not exist.
[For] like nirvana,
all expressible things are empty of own-being. (CL)

[3]

Since all things altogether lack substance
either in causes or conditions,
[in their] totality, or separately
they are empty. (CL)

[4]

Being does not arise, since it exists.
Non-being does not arise, since it does not exist.
Being and non-being [together] do not arise, due to [their] heterogeneity.
Consequently, they do not endure or vanish. (CL)

[5]

That which has been born cannot be born,
nor can that which is unborn be born.
What is being born now, being [partly] born, [partly] unborn,
cannot be born either. (CL)

[6]

A cause has an effect when there is an effect,
but when there is no [effect] the [cause] amounts to no cause.
It is inconsistent that [the effect] neither exists nor does not exist.
It is illogical that [the cause is active] in the three times. (CL)

[7]

Without one, there are not many.
Without many, one is not possible.
Whatever arises dependently
is indeterminable. (CL)

[8]

The twelve dependently arising members,
which result in suffering, are unborn.
They are possible neither in one mind
nor in many. (CL)

[9]

Permanent is not, impermanent is not,
not-self is not, self is not, impure is not, pure is not,
pleasure is not, and suffering is not.
Therefore, the perverted views do not exist. (CL)

[10]

Without these, ignorance based on the four bad views is not possible.
Without this [ignorance], the formative forces do not arise.
The same [is true] for the [ten]
remaining [dependently arising members]. (CL)

[11]

Ignorance does not occur without the formative forces
[and] without it the formative forces do not arise.
Caused by one another,
they are not established by own-being. (CL)

[12]

How can that which is not established
by own-being create others?
Conditions established by others
cannot create others. (CL)

[13]

A father is not a son, a son is not a father.
Neither exists except in correlation with the other.
Nor are they simultaneous.
Likewise for the twelve members. (CL)

[14]

Just as pleasure and pain depending on an object
in a dream do not have [a real] object,
so neither that which arises dependently
nor that which it arises in dependence on exists. (CL)

[15]

Opponent: If things do not exist by own-being,
then low, moderate, and excellent
and the manifold world are not established
and cannot be established, even through a cause. (CL)

[16]

Reply: If own-being were established,
dependently arising things would not occur.
If [they were] unconditioned, how could own-being be lacking?
True being also does not vanish. (CL)

[17]

How can the non-existing have own-being,
other-being, or non-being?
Consequently, own-being, other-being, and non-being
[result from] perverted views. (CL)

[18]

Opponent: If things were empty,
origination and cessation would not occur.
That which is empty of own-being:
How does it arise and how does it cease? (CL)

[19]

Reply: Being and non-being are not simultaneous.
Without non-being, no being.
Being and non-being would always be.
There is no being independent of non-being. (CL)

[20]

Without being there is no non-being.
[Being] neither arises from itself nor from [something] else.
This being so, this [being] does not exist:
So there is no being, and [therefore] no non-being. (CL)

[21]

If there is being there is permanence;
if there is non-being there is necessarily annihilation.
When there is being, these two [dogmas] occur.
Therefore [one should] not accept being. (CL)

[22]

Opponent: These [dogmas] do not occur due to continuity:
Things cease after having caused [an effect].
Reply: As before [see v. 19], this [continuity] is unestablished.
It also follows that the continuity would be interrupted. (CL)

[23]

Opponent: [No!] The Buddha's teaching of the path
aims at showing origination and cessation, not sunyata!
Reply: To experience the two
as mutually exclusive is a mistake. (CL)

[24] Opponent: If there is no origination and cessation,
then to the cessation of what is nirvana due?

Reply: Is not liberation this:
that by nature nothing arises and ceases? (CL)

[25]. If nirvana [resulted] from cessation,
[then there would be] destruction.

If the contrary, [there would be] permanence.

Therefore it is not logical that nirvana is being or non-being. (CL)

[26]

If a definite cessation did abide,
it would be independent of being.
It does not exist without being,
nor does it exist without non-being. (CL)

[27]

The marked is established through a mark different from the marked;
it is not established by itself.
Nor are the [two] established by each other,
[since what is] not established cannot establish the not-established. (CL)

[28]

In this [way], cause, effect,
feeling, feeler, and so forth,
the seer, the visible, and so forth
whatever may be all are explained, without exception. (CL)

[29]

The three times do not exist (substantially)
since they are unfixed and are mutually established,
since they change [and] are not self-established,
[and] since there is no being. They are merely discriminations. (CL)

[30]

Since the three marks of the conditioned
– origination, duration, and cessation – do not exist,
there is not the slightest conditioned
or unconditioned [phenomenon]. (CL)

[31]

The non-destroyed does not cease,
nor does the destroyed.
The abiding does not abide, nor does the non-abiding.
The born is not born, nor is the unborn. (CL)

[32]

Composite and non-composite are not many [and] not one;
are not being [and] are not non-being;
are not being-non-being.
All [possibilities] are comprised within these limits. (CL)

[33]

Opponent: The Bhagavat, the Teacher, has spoken of karma's duration,
of karma's nature, and of karma's result,
and also of the personal karma of living beings
and of the non-destruction of karma. (CL)

[34]

Reply: Karma is said to lack own-being.
[Karma] that is not born is not destroyed.
From that again I-making is born.
But the belief that creates it is due to discrimination. (CL)

[35]

If karma had own-being
the body created by it would be permanent.
So karma would not result in suffering
and would therefore be substantial. (CL)

[36]

Karma is not born from conditions
and by no means from non-conditions,
for karma-formations are like an illusion,
a city of gandharvas, and a mirage. (CL)

[37]. Karma has klesas as its cause.

[Being] klesas, the karma-formations are of impassioned nature (klesatmaka).

A body has karma as its cause.

So [all] three are empty of own-being. (CL)

[38] Without karma, no agent.

Without these two, no result.

Without these, no enjoyer.

Therefore things are void. (CL)

[39]

When because the truth is seen
one correctly understands that karma is empty, karma does not arise.
When [karma] is no more,
what arises from karma arises no more. (CL)

[40]

Just as when the Lord Tathagata
magically projects an apparition
and this apparition again projects
another apparition- (CL)

[41]

In that case the Tathagata's apparition is empty
(not to mention the apparition [created] by the apparition!).
Both of them are but names,
merely insignificant discriminations. (CL)

[42]

Just so, the agent is like the apparition,
and karma is like the apparition [created] by the apparition.
By nature [they are] without significance:
mere discriminations. (CL)

[43]

If karma possessed own-being,
there would be no nirvana nor deeds [of an] agent.
If [karma] does not exist,
the pleasant or unpleasant result created by karma does not exist. (CL)

[44]

'Is' and 'is not'
and also 'is-is not' have been stated
by the Buddhas for a purpose.
It is not easy to understand! (CL)

[45]

If form is material (bhautika) in itself,
it does not arise from the elements (bhuta).
It is not derived from itself – it does not exist, does it? – nor from anything else.
Therefore it does not exist [at all]. (CL)

[46]

The four [great elements] are not [found] in one [element],
nor is one of them [found] in [any of] the four.
How can form be established
with the four great elements as [its] cause? (CL)

[47]

Since it is not conceived directly, [it seems form does] not exist.
But if [you maintain it to be conceived] through a mark,
that mark, born from causes and conditions, does not exist.
And it would be illogical [if form could exist] without a mark. (CL)

[48]

If mind could grasp form,
it would grasp its own-being.
How could a [mind] that does not exist (since it is born from conditions)
really conceive absence of form? (CL)

[49]

Since one moment of mind cannot within [the very same] moment
grasp a form born (as explained),
how could it understand
a past and a future form? (CL)

[50]

Since color and shape
never exist apart,
they cannot be conceived apart.
Is form not acknowledged to be one? (CL)

[51] The sense of sight is not inside the eye,
not inside form, and not in between.
[Therefore] an image depending upon
form and eye is false. (CL)

[52]

If the eye does not see itself,
how can it see form?

Therefore eye and form are without self.

The same [is true for the] remaining sense-fields. (CL)

[53]

Eye is empty of its own self
[and] of another's self.

Form is also empty.

Likewise [for the] remaining sense-fields. (CL)

[54]

When one [sense-field] occurs simultaneously with contact,
the others are empty.

Empty does not depend upon nonempty,
nor does non-empty depend upon empty. (CL)

[55]

Having no [independent] fixed nature,
the three [namely, indriya, visaya, and vijnana] cannot come into contact.

Since there is no contact having this nature,
feeling does not exist. (CL)

[56]

Consciousness occurs in dependence on
the internal and external sense-fields.

Therefore consciousness is empty,
like mirages and illusions. (CL)

[57]

Since consciousness arises in dependence on a discernible object,
the discernible does not exist [in itself].

Since [the conscious subject] does not exist without the discernible and consciousness,
the conscious subject does not exist [by itself]. (CL)

[58]

[In a relative sense] everything is impermanent,
but [in the absolute sense] nothing is permanent or impermanent.
[If there] were things, they would be either permanent or impermanent.

But how is that [possible]? (CL)

[59]

Since the entities 'desire', 'hatred', and 'delusion' arise
through perverted views about pleasant and unpleasant,
desire, hatred, and delusion
do not exist by own-being. (CL)

[60]

Since one [may] desire, hate, and be deluded
regarding the very same [thing],

[the passions] are created by discrimination.

And that discrimination is nothing real. (CL)

[61]

That which is imagined does not exist.

Without an imagined object, how can there be imagination?

Since the imagined and the imagination are born from conditions,
[they are] sunyata. (CL)

[62]

Through understanding the truth, ignorance,
which arises from the four perverted views, does not exist.

When this is no more, the karma-formations do not arise.

The remaining [ten members vanish] likewise. (CL)

[63] The thing that arises in dependence upon
this or that does not arise when that is absent.

Being and non-being, composite and non-composite are at peace.

This is nirvana. (CL)

[64] To imagine that things born
through causes and conditions are real
the teacher calls ignorance.

From that the twelve members arise. (CL)

[65]

But when one has understood
by seeing fully that things are empty,
one is no longer deluded. Ignorance ceases,
and the twelve spokes [of the wheel] come to a halt. (CL)

[66]

Karma-formations are like the city of gandharvas,
illusions, mirages, nets of hair,
foam, bubbles, phantoms, dreams,
and wheels made with a firebrand. (CL)

[67]

Nothing exists by virtue of own-being,
nor is there any non-being here.
Being and non-being,
born through causes and conditions, are empty. (CL)

[68]

Since all things are empty of own-being,
the incomparable Tathagata
teaches dependent co-origination
regarding things. (CL)

[69]

The ultimate meaning consists in that!
The perfect Buddhas, the Bhagavats,
have [only] conceived the entire multiplicity
in reliance upon worldly convention. (CL)

[70]

The worldly norms [dharmas] are not violated.
In reality [the Tathagata] has not taught the Dharma.
Not understanding the Tathagata's words,
[fools] fear this spotless discourse. (CL)

[71]

The worldly principle, "This arises depending on that,"
is not violated.
But since what is dependent lacks own-being,
how can it exist? That is certain! (CL)

[72]

One with faith who tries to seek the truth,
one who considers this principle logically
[and] relies [upon] the Dharma that is lacking all supports
leaves behind existence and non-existence [and abides in] peace. (CL)

[73]

When one understands that "This is a result of that,"
the nets of bad views all vanish.
Undeiled, one abandons desire, delusion, and hatred
and gains nirvana. (CL)