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LETTER TO A FRIEND by NAGARJUNA

Author: Nagarjuna

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Introduce on Translation

This new English translation is the integration of two English edition, and The source of Chinese Edition.

One of the former is translated by Padmakara Translation Group and another, translator is anonymous posts by Sakya Centre.

As these English translation might be from Tibetan, many mismatched according to the sequence in Chinese, this new English edition has been either rearranged or retranslated, where appear this kind of mess which will be hard to understand and must rely on a qualified Dharma teacher.

The later 'source' means the tiny revised where made is based upon the Chinese translation that is guided by the understanding from the essence level.

The words in this article is a book written to the ChenTu King in the South India performed as a poem of genre by the ancient Bodhisattva teacher, as well as master, NAGARJUNA. The previous translation in Tibetan had been rarely to spread. Thus has made the sparkling words of the book is obscure to know clearly in right. This revision had been worked down so that would not stagnate the distribution. Sramana YiJing translate in Tamra Lipti eastern Indian.

Ignorance overrides the nature mind of the sentiments.



Arisen compassion to awake those beings.
For the King Sâtavâhana, The bodhisattva master Nagarjuna
Posted the letter to learn and practice great virtue.

(This line is marked later by the learner to indicate the origination of this book.)

This lines in paragraph is exclusive in Chinese Translation. DharmaInterconnected gives its translation kindly in this new English edition for the foreign followers who are engaged Dharma lineage.

Main Text

Homage to the Gentle and Glorious Youth
(Mañjushri-kumārabhuta)

The custom praise to initiate the main text in Tibetan translation.

Listen now to these few lines of noble song
That I've composed for those with many virtues, fit for good,
To help them yearn for merit springing from
The sacred words of He Who's Gone to Bliss.
01

The wise will always honor and bow down
To buddha status, though they're made of wood;
So too, although these lines of mine be poor,
Do not feel scorn, they teach the Holy Way.
02



While you have surely learned and understood
The Mighty Buddha's many lovely words,
Is it not so that something made of chalk
By moonlight lit shines gleaming whiter still.
03

Six things there are the Buddhas have explained,
And all their virtues you must keep in mind:
The Buddha, Dharma, Sangha, bounteous acts,
And moral laws and gods—each one recall.
04

With body, speech, and mind always rely
On wholesome deeds, the tenfold virtuous path.
Avoiding liquor at all cost, thus find
True joy to lead a life of virtuous deeds.
05

Recognizing wealth to be ephemeral and insubstantial,
Practice right giving toward monks,
Brahmans, the poor, and spiritual friends.
In the next lifetime there is no better friend than giving. /
06

Rely on morality which is
Undiminished, undeclined, unmixed, and unstained.
Morality is the foundation for all virtues,
As is the earth for all things animate and inanimate.
07

Generosity and discipline, patience, diligence, Concentration,



And likewise wisdom; develop these immeasurable paramitas
And having crossed the ocean of existence,
Become the Lord of Victors.

08

Any family venerating father and mother
Will be attended by Brahmans and teachers.
They will accumulate repute for this virtue.
In future they'll enter the higher realms.

09

Abandon the various forms of Harm, thievery, sex, falsehood, liquor
Abstain from drink, untimely greed for food,
Desire for untimely food, high beds,
Delight in song, dance, and all adornments.

10

For men and women who keep this eights-branched vow
And emulate the vows the Arhats took,
Their wish to nurture and to cleanse will grant
Them handsome bodies as celestial gods.

11

Stinginess and cunning , greed deceit, and sloth
Arrogance, lust, hatred, and pride



Conceit of caste, physical appearance, learning, youth, and great authority

Such trains are viewed as enemies.

12

The Buddha taught, Mindfulness the way of immortality,
And heedlessness the way of death.

Thus constantly and respectfully be mindful, virtuous deeds may grow

Your need to be Be careful, cantingly and with respect.

13

Those formerly heedless, Who later became mindful.

Are as beautiful as the moon freed of clouds,

Like Nanda, Angulimala,

Darshala, Adayana. Transformed all evil to kind.

14

There is no austerity like patience.

So never allow yourself a moment's rage.

By overcoming anger, the Buddha promised

One will attain the irreversible stage.

15

“This person insulted me, struck me,
Overwhelmed me, or stole my wealth.”



Harbour such resentment leads to strife;
One who abandons resentment sleeps well.
16

Understand your thoughts to be like figures drawn
On water, sandy soil, or carved in stone.
Of these for tainted thoughts the first's the best,
While when you long for Dharma, it's the last.
17

Three kinds of speech are used by humankind,
And these the Victor variously described:
Like honey, sweet; like flower, true; like filth,
Improper speech—— abandon the last of these.
18

Some there are who go from light to light,
And some whose end from dark is darkness still,
While some from light to dark, or dark to light,
End up, thus four, of these be as the first.
19

Unripe which appear ripe, Ripe which appear unripe;
Unripe which appear unripe, and ripe which appear ripe.
This differences exists in mango's.
View people like mango fruit.



20

Do not gaze on other's wives,
But if do, regard them as your mother, child, or sib,
Depending on the age.
If lust arises, thoroughly contemplate impurity.

21

Guard this picks mind as you would do
Your leaning, children, treasure, or your life,
Renounce all sensual pleasure as if it were
A viper, poison, weapon, foe, or fire.

22

The pleasure we desire will bring us ruin,
They're like the kind fruit, the Buddha said.
Eschew them, it's their chains that tightly bind.
The worldly in samsara's prison-house.

23

Of the whose fickle senses are controlled—
These six that never cease to dart at things—
And he who's fought and conquered many foes,
The first is truly brave, the wise have said.

24



Regard a young girl's body on its own,
It smell so foul, its opening nine — a pot
Of filth, insatiable, and clothed with skin.
Regard too her adornments on their own.
25

Tormented by maggots,
Relies on fire to be sooth. But still find no relief.
so know the same is true
Understand the desire for sense objects
Is like a leper's craving for comfort.
26

In order to see the ultimate truth,
Familiarize the mind with right involvement toward phenomena.
No other dharma practice is there such as this
Possessed of special virtues such as these.
27

To those possessed of breeding, learning, handsome looks,
Yet wisdom undeveloped, lacking discipline and morality is not
worthy of respect, you need not to bow.
But those who do have these two qualities.
Though lacking other virtues, you should revere.
28



You who know the world, take gain and loss,
Or bliss and pain, or kind words and abuse,
Or praise and blame— these eight mundane concerns—
Make them the same, and don't disturb your mind.
29

Perform no evil, even for the sake
Of brahmins, bhikshus, gods or honored guests,
Your father, mother, queen, or for your court,
The ripened fruit in hell's for you alone.
30

Although performing wrong and evil deeds
Dose not at once, like swords, create a gash,
When death arrives, those evil acts will show,
Their karmic fruit will clearly revealed.
31

Faith and ethics, learning, bounteousness,
A flawless sense of shame and decency,
And wisdom are seven riches Buddha taught.
Know, other common riches have no worth.
32



Gambling, public spectacles and shows,
And indolence, relying on evil company, liquor,
And nightly prowls — these six will lead to lower realms
Abandon these six which cause loss of reputation.

33

Of all great wealth, contentment is supreme,
Said he who taught and guided gods and men.
So always be content; if you know this
Yet have no wealth, true riches you'll have found.

34

Kind Sir, to own a lot brings so much misery,
There's no such grief for those with few desires.
The more the naga lords possess of head,
The more their headaches, the more have of cares.

35

A murderess who sides with enemies,
A queen who holds her husbands in contempt,
A thieving wife who steals the smallest thing—
Must avoid these three types of wife.

36



A wife who like a sister to follow you,
Affectionate like a true and loving friend,
Supportive like a mother, obedient like a maid—
She must be honored like a family god.
37

Take food properly like medicine
Without desire or hatred.
Not for pride, robustness, or beauty,
But only to sustain the body.
38

Occupy yourself with the essence of knowledge during the whole day,
And in the first and last watch of the night.
Then in between these two sleep in mindfully
So that your slumbers are not spent in vain.
39

Constantly meditate upon loving-kindness
Compassion, joy, and equanimity.
Even though the highest goal may not be reached,
The happiness of the Brahma Realm will be attained.
40

The four samadhis, thoroughly renouncing



Sensory pleasure, joy, happiness, and suffering,
Is equal to the attainment of
Brahma, Clear Light, Pervading Virtue, and Great Result.
41

Constancy, clinging, lack of remedy,
Base of kindness, and base of good qualities.
Great virtue and non-virtue arise from five above
Thus strive to perform virtue.
42

A pinch of salt can give its salty taste
To a little water, but not to the Ganges stream.
So know that likewise, minor evil deeds
Can never change a mighty source of good.
43

Wildness and remorse, and hateful thoughts,
And dullness-somnolence, and yearning lust,
And doubt are hindrances— please know these five
Are thieves that steal the gem of virtuous deeds.
44

Earnestly perform the five excellent Dharmas:
With faith and diligence and mindfulness,



Faith, vigor, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom.
Exert oneself in these,
Which are also strengths, powers, and summits.
45

Repeatedly contemplate that
As one is unable to escape sickness, aging, and death,
Likewise, one's karma is one's own action.
Conceit will not arise through this antidote.
46

If higher birth and freedom is your quest,
Thoroughly meditate the right view.
Those who practice good with inverse views
Will yet experience terrible results.
47

Know that humans are in reality not pleasurable,
Impermanent, devoid of self, impure.
Those who do not mindfully contemplate this
Are ruined through the four opposite views.
48

Form is not the self, the Buddha taught,
And self does not have form, now dwell in form,



While form dwells not is self. Thus you must see
The four remaining aggregates are empty too.
49

The aggregates are not a simple whim,
From neither time nor nature do that come,
Nor by themselves, from God, or without cause;
Their source, you ought to know, is ignorance, from karmic deeds and
craving have they come.
50

Clinging to discipline and behavior as supreme,
Viewing one's body with the opposite views,
And doubt are the three complete bonds.
Know that they block the gate to the city of liberation.
51

Liberation depends upon oneself.
In this, no assistance can be given by others.
Through study, morality and discipline, concentration
Exert yourself in the four truths.
52

Train always in exalted morality,
Exalted wisdom, and exalted mind.



More than one hundred and five precepts
Are completely included within these three.
53

Noble One, the Sugata taught mindful analysis of the body
As the single path to travel.
Very attentively guard this.
Loss of mindfulness destroys all Dharma.
54

Life is full of harm.
It is more impermanent than a wind-blown bubble.
How marvelous to breathe in and out again.
To fall asleep and then awake refreshed.
55

This body ends as ash, dry dust, or slime,
rotten, impure, and insubstantial.
Consumed, evaporated, rotted down—
Thus know its nature: to disintegrate.
56

The earth, Meru, the oceans, and all beings;
Will be consumed by the seven blazing suns.
Of things with form no ashes will be left,



No need to speak of puny, frail human body.
57

Thus all is impermanent, selfless,
Refugeless, protectorless, and without place.
Drag your mind away, O King,
Renounce insubstantial samsara like a plantain tree.
58

It is even more difficult for a turtle
To intersect with the hole of a yoke in the ocean
Than to obtain a human birth from an animal birth.
Through practice of the holy Dharma, make it fruitful.
59

One who use a jewel-encrusted golden dish to clean excrement
No more stupid yet than this,
Is he who, having been born a human,
Performs evil deeds.
60

Dwelling in a favorable place, relying on holy ones,
Being of virtuous aspiration,
And having previously performed merit,
One possesses the four great wheels.



61

The Muni declared that through reliance on a spiritual teacher,
Pure action is accomplished.

Hence, rely upon the holy ones.

By relying on the Buddha, many attained peace.

62

To be reborn with false beliefs, or yet

As animals, or pretax, or in hell,

Deprived of Buddha's words, barbarians

In border land, or reborn dull and dumb.

63

Or a long-lived god. Any of these eight

Are defects of opportunity.

Freed of these, having found opportunity,

Exert yourself to reverse the process of birth.

64

Gentle One! Desire is the source of many sufferings,

Like destitution, death, illness, and old age.

Develop disgust for samsara.

Harken to a few of its faults.

65



Mother becomes wife,
Father becomes son,
Enemy becomes friend, And vice versa.
Therefore, Nothing at all is certain in samsara.
66

Each person has drunk more milk
Than the four oceans, yet still cycles.
As an ordinary being in samsara.
Much more than that is still to be drunk.
67

Each person's own heap of bones
Equals or surpasses Mount Meru.
The earth's soil is not enough to count the number of mothers
With pellets of soil the size of juniper berries.
68

Having been Indra, worthy of the world's veneration,
One falls again to earth by the force of karma.
Having been a universal monarch,
One becomes a servant's servant in samsara.
69

Having long tasted the happiness
Of feeling the breasts and hips of heavenly maidens,



Again, from the crushing, cutting, and piercing devices in the hells,
One must endure unbearable feelings.

70

Having had the pleasant experience
Of walking on the soft slope of Meru for a long time,
Again, traversing smoldering embers and cesspools,
One must experience unbearable suffering.

71

Having enjoyed being surrounded by heavenly goddesses
And played in the delightfully beautiful garden,
Again in the realm of the garden of swordlike leaves,
One's arms, legs, ears, and nose will be slashed.

72

Having entered Gentle Current with golden lotuses
And beautiful heavenly goddesses,
Again, in hell's River without Ford,
One must enter unbearably hot, salty water.

73

Having attained the extremely great joy of heaven
And Brahma's bliss of non-attachment,
One must endure unceasing suffering.



Again becoming kindling for the fire of no greater torture.
74

Having attained the state of the sun and moon,
And illuminated the whole world with one's body,
Again in dense black darkness,
One will be unable to see one's outstretched hand.
75

Because of such ruination,
Take only the lamp of the three virtuous merits.
One must enter endless darkness,
Without the light of sun or moon.
76

Beings suffer Black Line, Intense Heat,
There's constant pain in these and other hells.
Reviving hells, such Torment Unsurpassed.
Crushing, Screaming who indulge evil deeds, No Greater Torture.
77

Some are pressed like sesame seed,
Others are ground to dust like fine flour.
Some are cut by saws, and
Others are split by unbearably sharp-bladed axes.



78

Likewise others are incinerated by
Flaming liquid of molten iron.
Some are completely impaled by
Flaming, barbed iron spears.

79

With rip to shreds, in dread throw up their hands,
Some, ripped by fierce dogs with iron fangs,
And others, powerless, are pecked by cows
With sharpened beaks of steel and razor claws.

80

worms and beetles
Tens of thousands of black flesh flies,
Some writhe screaming are eaten,
The touch of which cause unbearable sores.

81

Some, with mouths agape,
Are incessantly burned in a heap of blazing coals.
Others are cooked head first
In a huge iron pot like rice dumplings.

82 (Not appear in Chinese Translation by Yi Jing)



Such evildoers have a diamond-hard nature.
Being kept from the hells only until the breath's ceasing,
They are not frightened in a thousand ways
After hearing the hells' immeasurable suffering.
83

If even seeing drawings or statues,
Recalling, reading, or hearing of the hells engenders fear,
What need to speak of experiencing
This dreadful maturation.
84

Just as the extinction of craving
Is supreme happiness,
So too, is the suffering of Avici Hell
The most horrible of all sufferings.
85

For one whole day on earth three hundred darts
Might strike you hard and cause you grievous pain,
But that could never illustrate or match
A fraction of the smallest pain in hell.
86

Even though such very unbearable suffering



Is experienced for a billion years,
One will never be freed from that life
As long as the non-virtue is not exhausted.
87

The seeds of the fruits of non-virtue
Are wrongdoing of body, speech, and mind.
Exert every strength to prevent by every means
Even their smallest occurrence.
88

The dreadful existence of an animal
Has multiple sufferings of being killed,
Bound, beaten, and eating each other,
For those who have abandoned virtue, which brings peace.
89

Some die for the sake
Of pearls or wool, bones, flesh, or skin.
Others, helpless, are exploited
With steel beneath their hoofs and paws, whips, hooks, and prods.
90

Among the pretas there is constant suffering
Caused by desire,



They undergo unbearable misery of
Fear, anguish, hunger, thirst, cold, and heat.
91

Some, with needle-eye mouths
And stomachs the size of mountains,
Are tortured by hunger, but unable to eat,
Even the smallest quantity of discarded filth.
92

Some are naked, a mere skin and bones,
Like the dried top of a palm tree.
Others have mouths which blaze at night.
For food they eat sand which falls into their mouths.
93

Several lowly classes cannot find,
Even such filth as pus, excrement, blood, or the like.
They attach one another,
Eating pus from festered goiters growing in the throat.
94

In summer even the moon feels hot to them.
In winter, the sun feels cold.
At a mere glance, trees become fruitless and,



Rivers run dry.

95

Experiencing unhindered suffering, and
Five or even ten thousand years.

Some do not die for

Tightly bound by the karmic fetters of misdeeds.

96

The cause of each single taste
Of pretas' multitude of sufferings is
Beings' delight in stinginess.
The Buddha declared miserliness to be ignoble.

97

Greater than celestial beings' pleasures
Having considered that,
Is their suffering when passing away.
The righteous do not crave for transitory celestial realms.

98

They feel dislike for their seats.
The body's complexion turns unattractive.
And the body is soiled as never before.
Garlands wilt, clothing assumes an odor.

99



These are the five premonitory signs,
Attending death in the celestial realms.
They arise for gods in a manner similar to,
The signs of death attending humans on earth who are about to die.
100

After passing away from the celestial realms,
If there is no remaining virtue,
One will helplessly enter the state of
An animal, preta, or hell being.
101

The asuras begrudges the gods their splendor,
Though clever, their inbred loathing thus torments their minds,
Due to the obscuration of their state of being.
They cannot see the truth
102

Samara is like this, Thus where reborn the beings.
Birth as a god, human, animal, denizens in hell,
That birth's not good, a pot of many suffering.
Birth should be know. as ghosts or animals.
103



Even if one's head or clothing suddenly catches fire,
Forego extinguishing it.
Rather exert oneself in putting an end to rebirth.
No aim is more excellent than this.

104

Through morality, wisdom, and meditation one must achieve nirvana;
The immaculate state of peace and power;
Ageless, deathless, eternal, and
Free of earth, water, fire, air, sun, and moon.

105

Recollection, the discernment of dharmas,
Effort, joy, extreme agility, meditation, and equanimity:
These seven are the limbs of enlightenment,
The collection of virtues bringing about the attainment of nirvana.

106

There is no samadhi without wisdom;
There is no wisdom without samadhi.
Those who have both should view the ocean of existence
As the size of an ox's hoofprint.

107

While silence on the fourteen worldly points.
What the Kinsman of the Sun declared to be.



One should not contemplate,
For the mind will not be pacified through them.
108

The Muni declared that from ignorance arises karma,
From that consciousness,
And from that name and form.
From that arises the six sense faculties, and from them contact.
109

From contact arises feeling, Based on feeling comes craving.
From craving arises grasping, from that arises existence,
And from existence comes birth.
110

Where there is birth
Arise grief, sickness, aging, destitution, fear of death,
And so on – a huge mass of suffering.
All these will cease by putting an end to birth.
111

This interdependent origination is
The most profound and cherished treasure of the Dharma words.
Whoever is able to see this perfectly sees the Buddha;
Supreme knower of reality.



112

Right view, livelihood, effort, recollection,
Meditation, speech, activity, and right thought
Are the eight limbs of the path.
Meditate on them in order to attain peace.

113

Birth is said to be suffering and craving, and
The source of their origin is vast.
Cessation of birth is liberation and the path.
Attaining this is the Eightfold Noble Path.

114

That being so, strive always
To see the four noble truths.
Through knowledge, even householders in whose laps rest great
worldly riches
Can cross the river of the mental afflictions.

115

Further, those who gained realization of Dharma
Did not fall from the sky, or sprout from the ground like crops.
They were previously just ordinary persons,
Subject to the mental afflictions.



116

Fearless One, what need to preach much?
Subdue your mind.
This is the most useful and essential of instructions.
The Bhagwan said mind is the root of Dharma.

117

To accomplish all this teaching given you
Would be difficult even for a monk.
Make your life meaningful,
By developing the good qualities of these instructions.

118

Rejoice at the virtue of all beings
And dedicate our own threefold good deeds
To the attainment of Buddhahood.
Then, with this heap of virtue,

119

Become a master of yogas in all the worlds of gods and humans
For an immeasurable number of births,
And protect many helpless beings
With activities like those of Arya Avalokitesvara.

120



Having taken birth, dispel sickness, aging, desire, and hatred.
Then, in a Buddha field, become the guardian of the world,
With a life span of infinite length,
As did Lord Amitabha.
121

Having achieved the stage of victory, which pacifies
Humans and celestial youths delighting in sense pleasures,
And extinguishes fear, birth, and death
For multitudes of helpless afflicted beings,
122

Spread the fame of immaculate wisdom, morality, and generosity
Throughout the celestial realms, space, and upon the earth.
Finally, attain the transcendent state of name only,
Peaceful, fearless, undefiled, and perfect.
123

A holy Composed to friends by Nagarjuna
龙树菩萨劝诫王颂