

In Praise of the Twelve Deeds

by Ārya Nāgārjuna

In the language of India: *Dvādaśakāra-nāma-stotra*

In the language of Tibet: *mdzad pa bcu gnyis kyi tshul la bstod pa*

Homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni!

You I shall praise, who first awakened the mind of enlightenment,
Then completed the accumulations of merit and wisdom,
And now in this age, through the vast sway of your actions,
Have become the lord and protector of living beings.

Homage to you who, having taught the gods,
Knew the time had come to tame the human world, and
Descending from the god realm like a great elephant,
Foresaw the family of your birth and entered the womb of Māyādevī.

Homage to you, prince of the Śākyas, born after ten months
In the auspicious Lumbinī grove, where
Brahmā and Indra revered you, your supreme marks
Proving you were destined to be enlightened.

Homage to you, lion among men, in all your youthful vigour,
Displaying your prowess in the games at Aṅga-Magadha,
Where you triumphed over the proud contestants,
So that not one could stand as your rival.

Homage to you, who, to comply with worldly convention,
And avoid all misdeeds, took on a queen and courtiers
And by acting with such skilful means,
So you ruled the kingdom.

Homage to you, who saw that saṃsāra is wholly futile,
Renounced the life of a householder,
And, travelling through the sky,
Ordained yourself before the Viśuddha Stūpa.

Homage to you, who, intent on persevering till enlightened,
For six years practised austerities on the banks of the Nairāñjanā,
And taking diligence to its ultimate perfection,
Attained the supreme samādhi.

Homage to you, who, seeking to make meaningful
All your efforts, made throughout beginningless time, sat
Unmoving in the vajra posture beneath the *bodhi* tree in Magadha
And awakened into true buddhahood, attaining perfect enlightenment.

Homage to you, who, in your compassion,
Gazed at once upon living beings, then
Turned the Wheel of Dharma in sacred places like Vārāṇasī,
And established disciples in the three vehicles.

Homage to you who destroyed evil-minded opponents,
By defeating the six teachers of the *tīrthikas*, Devadatta and the rest,
As well as the *māras* in Vārāṇasī;¹
You were the mighty sage, victorious in battle.

Homage to you, who performed great miracles in Śrāvastī,
Unmatched in their splendour in all the three realms,
And through the offerings made by gods, humans and other beings,
Caused the teachings to prosper and increase.

Homage to you, who, to spur the lazy on to the Dharma,
Left your body, though immortal and like a vajra,
And passed into parinirvāṇa
In the pure abode of Kuśinagara.

Homage to you, who, to show that you had not in reality perished,
And so that beings of the future could gain merit,
Emanated a wealth of relics, and caused
Your remains to be divided into eight portions.

Through the merit of briefly praising in this way,
The great acts of the lord who is master of the teachings,
May the actions of all living beings
Come to equal those of the Sugata himself.

*This concludes the praise of the twelve deeds composed by the great master Ārya
Nāgārjuna.*

| Translated by Patrick Gaffney and Adam Pearcey, 2016.

1. Tib. *‘khor mo jig*. According to Sakya Paṇḍita’s *Gateway to Learning (mkhas jug)*, this is an alternative name of Vārāṇasī. ↔



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