

TRISVABHAVAKARIKA

trisvabhAvakArikA AcAryavasubandhukrtA
nevArAksaralikhita prAcInatApatrodgata
namo maNjuSriye kumArabhUtAya

KARIKAS ON THE THREE NATURES

The karikas on the three natures composed by Master Vasubandhu,
written in Newari characters, coming from an old manuscript.
Homage to the Virgin Youth Manjusri

1

kalpitaḥ paratantras ca pariniṣpanna eva ca /
trayaḥ svabhavaḥ dhīrānāṃ gambhīraṃ jñeyam isyate //1//

It is admitted that the three natures, the imaginary, the dependent and the absolute one, are the profound object of the wise men's knowledge.

The imagined, the other-dependent and
The consummate.
These are the three natures
Which should be deeply understood.

2

yat khyāti paratantrosau yathā khyāti sa kalpitaḥ /
pratyaḍhānavṛttitvāt kalpanāṃ atrabhāvataḥ //2//

What appears is the dependent (nature); as it appears is the imaginary (nature), (the first one being so called) because it exists subordinated to causes, (the second one being so called) because its existence is only a mental creation.

Arising through dependence on conditions and
Existing through being imagined,
It is therefore called other-dependent
And is said to be merely imaginary.

That which appears is the dependent, "how it appears" is the constructed. The former develops subject to conditions; the latter is construction-only.

That which appears is the other-dependent,
for it depends on causal conditions;
The form in which it appears is the imagined,
For it is merely an imagination. [K]

3

tasya khyAtur yathAkhyAnam yA sadAvidyamanatA /
jneyah sa parinispannah svabhAvo 'nanyathAtvatah //3//

The eternal non-existence as it appears of what appears must be known as the absolute nature,
because of its inalterability.

The external non-existence
Of what appears in the way it appears,
Since it is never otherwise,
Is known as the nature of the consummate.

The perfected is the constant absence of "how it appears" in that which appears.

The perpetual absence of the form
In which the other-dependent appears... [K]

4

tatra kim khyAty asatkalpah katham khyAti dvayAtmanA /
tasya kA nAstitA tens yA tatrAdvayadharmatA //4//

And what does appear? The unreal mental creation. How does it appear? With duality. What is the
non-existence with this (duality) of that (dependent nature)? It is the fact that the essence (of the
dependent nature) is the non-duality in it.

If anything appears, it is imagined.
The way it appears is as duality.
What is the consequence of its non-existence?
The fact of non-duality!

What appears? A construction of what was not. How does it appear? Through dualities. But
nonduality is the perfected.

What is it that appears?
It is the imagination of the non-existent.
How does it appear?
In the form of duality.
What will result from its non-existence?
There will be the state of non-duality. [K]

What is that which is presented in cognition? The nonexistent which is projected [or imagined].
How is that presented in cognition? In the form of twofold appearance [of the apprehender and the
apprehended].
What is it in cognition that does not exist? That by which the twofold appearance is affected. [P]

What appears there? The imagination of an unreal.
How does it appear? As the subject-object duality. ... [AW]

5

asatkalpo'tra kas cittam yatas tat kalpyate yathA /
yathA ca kalpayaty artham tathAtyantam na vidyate //5//

And what is the unreal mental creation? The mind, because as it is imagined and as it imagines its object, so it is not at all.

What is the imagination of the non-existent?
Since what is imagined absolutely never
Exists in the way it is imagined,
It is mind that constructs that illusion.

What is a construction of what was not? An awareness by which the dependent becomes constructed, in such a way that the object which it constructs cannot be completely found in that way.

What is the conception of that which is nonexistent?
[The answer is] 'mind' [mental projection]
For by it, the nonexistents are imagined;
and inasmuch as the mind imagines objects, the do not exist at all. [P]

6

tad dhetuphalabhavena cittam dvididham isyate /
yad AlayAkhyavijnAnam pravrttyAkhyam ca saptadhA //6//

It is admitted that mind is twofold, according to its being either cause or effect: the consciousness that is called 'Alaya' (receptacle) and the consciousness that is called 'pravrtti' (functioning) which (at its turn) is sevenfold.

Because it is a cause and an effect,
The mind has two aspects.
As the foundation consciousness it creates thought;
Known as the emerged consciousness it has seven aspects.

This awareness may be either the store consciousness or the functioning consciousness of seven kinds (i.e., the six sensory awareness and the mind or ego sense)

TSN 6 explains that the mental 'cause' (hetu) is the 'consciousness called the storehouse' (AlayAkhyavijNAnaM) and the 'result' (phala) is the 'sevenfold [consciousnesses] called active' (pravRttyAkhyaM ca saptadhA). [G]

7

samklesavAsanAbIjAis citatvAc cittam ucyate /
cittam Adyam dvitIyam to citrAkArapravrttitah //7//

The first mind is called 'citta' (mind), because it is cita (lit. accumulated = filled) by the seeds, i.e. the vAsanAs, of the impurities; and the second one (is called 'ctta', mind), because of its functioning under citra (diverse) forms.

The first, because it collects the seeds
Of suffering is called `mind'.
The second, because of the constant emergence
Of the various aspects of things is so called.

The store consciousness is called "citta" because it becomes accumulated (citatvAt); functioning consciousnesses are "citta" because they evolve various (citra) aspects.

8

samAsato'bhUtakalpah sa cAisa trividho matah /
vAipAkikas tathA nAimittiko'nyah prAtibhAsikah //8//

And this unreal mental creation, in a summary manner, is considered to be threefold: vaipAkika (produced by maturation), and also naimittika (produced by causes); the other one is prAtibhAsika (consisting of representations).

One should think of the illusory non-existent
As threefold:
Completely ripened, grasped as other,
And as appearance.

The construction of what was not is of three kinds: maturational, having signs, and flashing appearances.

9

prathamo mUlavijnAnam tad vipAkAtmakam yatah /
anyah pravrttivijnAnam drsyadrgvittivrttitah //9//

The first (mode or aspect) is the root-consciousness, because its essence is maturation; the other one is the functioning-consciousness, because it exists as object, subject and knowledge.

The first, because it itself ripens,
Is the root consciousness.
The others are emergent consciousness,
Having emerged from the conceptualization of seer and seen.

Maturational is the storehouse-consciousness: the others are the functioning consciousnesses, because they always function as cognitions of "seen" and "seeing" ("heard" and "hearing", etc.).

10

sadasattvAd dvayAikatvAt samklesavyavadAnayoh /
laksanAbhedatas cestA svabhAvAnAm gabhIratA //10//

It is admitted the profoundness of the (three) natures, because they are being and non-being, because they are duality and unity, and because of the identity of essence of the purity and the impurity.

Existence and non-existence, duality and unity;

Freedom from affliction and afflicted;
Through characteristics, and through distinctions,
These natures are known to be profound.

11

sattvena grhyate yasmAd atyantAbhAva eva ca /
svabhAvah kalpitas tens sadasallaksano matah //11//

Since the imaginary nature is grasped with existence, but it is only total non-existence, therefore it is considered as something whose characteristic ((laksana)) is being and non-being.

Since it appears as existent
Though it is non-existent,
The imagined nature
Is said to have the characteristics of existence and non-existence.

The constructed is perceived as existent, but it is nonbeing; thus it has both an existent and nonexistent character.

12

vidyate bhrAntibhAvena yathAkhyAnam na vidyate /
paratantra yatas tens sadasallaksano matah //12//

Since the dependent (nature) exists with the existence of an illusion, (but) does not exist as it appears, therefore it is considered as something whose characteristic is being and non-being.

Since it exists as an illusory entity
And is non-existent in the way it appears
The other-dependent nature
Is said to have the characteristics of existence and non-existence.

The dependent exists, but not as it appears, so it also has an existent and nonexistent character.

13

advayatvena yac cAsti dvayasyAbhAva eva ca /
svabhAvas tens nispannah sadasallaksano matah //13//

Since the absolute nature exists with non-duality, but it is only non-existence of duality, therefore it is considered as something whose characteristic is being and non-being.

Since it is the non-existence of duality
And exists as non-duality
The consummate nature
Is said to have the characteristics of existence and non-existence.

The perfected exists because of nonduality, and is only the nonbeing of "two", so it also has an existent and nonexistent character.

14

dvAividhyAt kalpitArthasya tadasattvAikabhAvatah /
svabhAvah kalpito bAlair dvayAikatvAtmako matah //14//

The nature imagined by ignorants is considered as something whose essence is duality and unity; (duality) because of the duality of the imagined object, (unity) because of its being one due to the non-existence of that (duality).

Moreover, since as imagined there are two aspects,
But existence and non-existence are unitary,
The nature imagined by the ignorant
Is said to be both dual and unitary.

Because the constructed always involves at least the duality of object apprehended and subject apprehender, and because this duality is nonexistent, the constructed consists of duality-and-unity.

15

prakhyAnAd dvayabhAvena bhrAntimAtrAikabhAvatah /
svabhAvah paratantrAkhyo dvayAikatvAtmako matah //15//

The nature that is called "dependent" is considered as something whose essence is duality and unity; (duality) because it appears with duality, (unity) because of its being one due to (duality being) a mere illusion.

Since as an object of thought it is dual,
But as a mere appearance it is unitary,
The other-dependent nature
Is said to be both dual and unitary.

Because the dependent appears with there being a duality, but this duality is only construction, the dependent also consists of duality and unity.

16

dvayabhAvasvabhAvatvad advayAikasvabhAvatah /
svabhAvah parinispanno dvayAikatvAtmako matah //16//

The absolute nature is considered as something whose essence is duality and unity; (duality) because it is nature (only) in relation to duality, (unity) because its only nature is non-duality.

Since it is the essence of dual entities
And is a unitary non-duality,
The consummate nature
Is said to be both dual and unitary.

Because the perfected is the essential nature of the two beings, and because it is the one essential nature of nonduality, the perfected also consists of duality-and-unity.

17

kalpitaḥ paratantraś ca jñeyam samklesalaksanam /
pariniṣpanna istas tu vyavahānasya laksanam //17//

It must be known that the imaginary (nature) and the dependent (nature) are the characteristic of impurity; it is admitted that the absolute (nature) is the characteristic of purity.

The imagined and the other-dependent
Are said to be characterized by misery (due to ignorant craving).
The consummate is free of
The characteristic of desire.

The afflictions-together are constructed and dependent. Purification is the perfected.

18

asaddvayasvabhāvatvāt tadabhāvasvabhāvatāḥ /
svabhāvāt kalpitā jñeyo niṣpanno'bhinnalaksanāḥ //18//

It must be known that the absolute (nature) is not different from the imaginary nature, because the nature (of the first one) is the inexistence of that (duality); because the nature (of the last one) is the in-existent duality.

Since the former has the nature of a false duality
And the latter is the non-existence of that nature,
The imagined and the consummate
Are said not to be different in characteristic.

Because the constructed is the essential nature of a nonexistent duality, and because the perfected is the essential nature of the nonbeing of that duality, the constructed and the perfected are indistinguishable.

19

advayatvasvabhāvatvād dvayabhāvasvabhāvatāḥ /
niṣpannāt kalpitāś cāiva vijñeyo'bhinnalaksanāḥ //19//

And it must be known that the imaginary (nature) is not different from the absolute (nature), because the nature (of the first one) is the inexistence of duality; because the nature (of the last one) is non-duality.

Since the former has the nature of non-duality,
And the latter has the nature of non-existent duality,
The consummate and the imagined
Are said not to be different in characteristic.

Because the perfected is the essential nature of nonduality, and because the constructed is the essential nature of the nonbeing of duality, the perfected and the constructed are indistinguishable.

20

yathAkhyAnam asadbhAvAt tathAsattvasvabhAvatah /
svabhAvAt paratantrAkhyAn nispanno'bhinnalaksanah //20//

The absolute (nature) is not different from the nature that is called "dependent", because the nature (of the first one) is not being so (as it manifests itself); because (of the last one) being non-existent as it appears.

Since the former is deceptive in the way it appears,
And the latter has the nature of its not being that way,
The other-dependent and the consummate
Are said not to be different in characteristic.

Because the dependent is nonexistent as it appears, and the perfected is the essential nature of this nonexistence, the perfected and the dependent are indistinguishable.

21

asaddvayasvabhAvatvAd yathAkhyAnAsvabhAvatah /
nispannAt paratanthro'pi vijneyo'bhinnalaksanah //21//

And it must be known that the dependent (nature) is not different from the absolute (nature), because the nature (of the first one) is not as it appears; because the nature (of the last one) is the inexistent duality.

Since the former has the nature of a non-existent duality,
And the latter is its non-existence in the way it appears,
The other-dependent and the consummate
Are said not to be different in characteristic.

Because the perfected is the essential nature of a nonexistent duality, and the dependent has not essential nature as it appears, the dependent and the perfected are indistinguishable.

22

kramabhedah svabhAvAnAm vyavahArAdhikAratah /
tatpravesAdhikArAc ca vyutpattiyartham vidhIyate //22//

The distinction, in (their) order, of the three natures is established from the point of view of the empirical reality and from the point of view of the penetration ((pravesa)) into them for the purpose of (the penetration into them) being produced.

But conventionally,
The natures are explained in order and
Based on that one enters them
In a particular order, it is said.

But there is a difference in the occurrence of their arising.

23

kalpito vyavahArAtmA vyavahartrAtmako 'parah /
vyavahArasamucchedah svabhAvas cAnyA isyate //23//

It is admitted that the imaginary (nature) is the empirical reality; the following one (the dependent nature) is the creator of the empirical (reality), and the other nature (the absolute) is the destruction of the empirical reality.

The imagined is entirely conventional.
The other-dependent is attached to convention.
The consummate, cutting convention,
Is said to be of a different nature.

The constructed constitutes practical affairs, and that which engages in practical affairs is the dependent. The perfected is the severance of the dependent from practical affairs.

24

dvayAbhAvAtmakah pUrvam paratantrah pravisyate /
tatah pravisyate tatra kalpamAtram asaddvayam //24//

At first, the dependent (nature), constituted by the non-existence of duality is penetrated; then what is only imagination, (which is found) there, (and which is) inexistent duality, is penetrated.

Having first entered into the non-existence of duality
Which is the dependent, one understands
The non-existent duality
Which is the imagined.

First there is the dependent, and only then can construction only, nonexistent duality, arise. Only after the processes of construction can their devolvement, i.e., the perfected, arise.

25

tato dvayAbhAvabhAvo nispanno'tra pravisyate /
tathA hy asAv eva tadA asti nAstIti cocyate //25//

The the absolute (nature), (which is found) there, and (which is) the existence of the inexistence of duality, is penetrated; and so therefore it is said that only it (the absolute nature), in that moment, "is and is not".

Then one enters the consummate.
Its nature is the non-existence of duality.
Therefore it is explained
To be both existent and non-existent.

Thus the perfected is said to both exist and not exist. (It exists inasmuch as it is the dependent without the constructed; it does not exist inasmuch as it is the nonbeing of any duality.)

26

trayo'py ete svabhAvA hi advayAlabhyalaksanAh /
abhAvAd atathAbhAvAt tadabhAvasvabhAvatah //26//

26. The three natures are also non dual and ungraspable, (the imaginary one), because of its inexistence; (the dependent one), because it does not exist as (it appears), (the absolute one), because its nature is the inexistence of that (duality).

These three natures
Have the characteristics of being non-cognizable and non-dual.
One is completely non-existent; the second is therefore non-existent.
The third has the nature of that non-existence.

These three essential natures are ungraspable, because of the constructed's simple nonbeing, the dependent's nonbeing in the manner in which it appears, and the perfected being the essential nature of that nonbeing.

27

mAyAkrtam mantravasAt khyAti hastyAtmanA yathA /
AkAramAtram tatrAsti hastI nAsti tu sarvathA //27//

In the same way as what is produced by magic, due to the mantras' power, appear as an elephant: there is only a form there, but a (real) elephant does not exist at all --

Like an elephant that appears
Through the power of a magician's mantra --
Only the percept appears,
The elephant is completely non-existent.

A magical creation produced by mantras may appear like an elephant, but this is only an appearance, and there is no elephant there at all.

Just as, by the magic power from mantras, an elephant is 'khyati-ed'
The 'elephant' does not exist; what exists is aakaara-maatra. [L]

It is just as something made by magic with the power of a spell appears as the self of an elephant (hastyAtmanA) where there is only an appearance, but the elephant does not exist at all. [G]

It is just as [something] made into a magical illusion with the power of an incantation (mantra) appears as the self of an elephant. A mere appearance (AkAramAtra) is there, but the elephant does not exist at all. [G2]

28

svabhAvah kalpito hastI paratantras tadAkrtih /
yas tatra hastyabhAvo'sAu parinispanna isyate //28//

The elephant is the imaginary nature, its form is the dependent (nature), and that elephant's inexistence, which is there, is considered as the absolute (nature) --

The imagined nature is the elephant;
The other-dependent nature is the visual percept;
The non-existence of the elephant therein
Is explained to be the consummate.

The constructed is like the elephant, the dependent is like its appearance, and the perfected is like the nonbeing of the elephant there.

The elephant signifies parikalpita-svabhaava; its aak.rti, that is paratantra.
And that which, when the elephant is absent (abhaava), remains, is parini.spanna. [L]

The constructed nature is the elephant; the dependent is its appearance (AkRti); and the non-existence of an elephant there is the perfected. [G2]

29

asatkalpas tathA khyAti mUlacittAd dvayAtmanA /
dvayam atyantato nAsti tatrAsty AkrtimAtrakam //29//

In the same way the unreal mental creation, due to the root-mind, appears with duality: duality does not exist in any way, there exists something that is only a form.

Through the root consciousness
The nonexistent duality appears.
But since the duality is completely non-existent,
There is only a percept.

The construction of what was not appears in the same way, because of duality. There is no duality there at all: there is only the appearance of duality there.

Just so, imagining the unreal (asat-kalpa), which is essentially dualist, khyaati-s from the root citta.
The duality does not exist; what exists is aak.rti-maatra (construction-only). [L]

In the same way, the construction of what does not exist appears as the self
of duality (dvayAtmanA) from the root mind where there is only an appearance,
but the duality does not exist at all. [G]

In the same way, the construction of what does not exist appears as the self of duality from the root
mind. The duality is utterly non-existent. A mere appearance (AkRtimAtraka) is there. [G2]

30

mantravan mUlavijnAnam kAsthavat tathatA matA /
hastyAkAravad estavyo vikalpo hastivad dvayam //30//

The root-consciousness is like the mantra; the reality is considered as the log; the mental creation is
to be considered as the elephant's form; the duality is like the elephant.

The root consciousness is like the mantra.
Reality can be compared to the wood.

Imagination is like the perception of the elephant.
Duality can be seen as the elephant.

The storehouse consciousness is like the mantra which sets the magical creation going, suchness is like the pieces of wood the magician has in front of him and which he makes appear like an elephant, construction is like the elephant's appearance, and duality is like the elephant itself.

muula-vijnana = mantra [note: mantra is, like khyaati, fundamentally a linguistic constructor]
tathataa = wood/kaa.stha (with which the illusion of an elephant is made)
vikalpa = elephant image (hasti-aakaara)
duality/dvaya = "elephant"

The root-consciousness is like the incantation. Suchness (tathata) is understood to be like the piece of wood. Discriminative construction (vikalpa) should be accepted to be like the appearance of the elephant. The duality is like the elephant. [G2]

31

arthatattvaprativedhe yugapal laksanakriyA /
parijnA ca prahAnam ca prAptis cestA yathAkramam //31//

When the (intellectual) penetration ((prativedha)) of the (true) reality of objects is produced, it is considered that (three) processes, corresponding to each nature, (take place), simultaneously, in their order: knowledge, elimination and obtention.

When one understands how things are,
Perfect knowledge, abandonment,
And accomplishment --
These three characteristics are simultaneously achieved.

(31-32). In a true penetration of this phenomenon, there is, simultaneously, the ascertainment of the constructed (which leads to its dissolving), the abandoning of the dependent as constructing, and the realization of the perfected. The ascertainment of the constructed is its nonapprehension, the abandonment of the dependent as constructing is its nonappearance, and the realization of the perfected is its signless apprehension.

When there is understanding of how things really are (arthatattva), then at the same time there is knowledge, abandonment, and obtaining, [which relate] in proper order to the three characteristics. [G2]

32

parijnAnupalambho'tra hAnir akhyAnam isyate /
upalambho'nimittas tu prAptih sAksAtkriyApi sA //32//

And it is admitted that knowledge is non-perception; elimination is non-manifestation and obtention is perception beyond causes, intuition.

Knowledge is non-perception;
Abandonment is non-appearance;
Attainment is accomplished through non-dual perception.

That is direct manifestation.

It is acknowledged that here knowledge is non-perception; abandonment is non-appearance; and obtaining is direct and full awareness, apprehension without cause. [G2]

33

dvayasyAnupalambhena dvayAkAro vigacchati /
vigamAt tasya nispanno dvayAbhavo'dhigamyate //33//

Through non-perception of duality, the form of duality disappears; with its disappearance the absolute inexistence of duality is obtained,

(34). In the same way through the non-perception of duality
There is the vanishing of duality.
When it vanishes completely,
Non-dual awareness arises.

With the nonapprehension of duality the appearance of duality vanishes, and with this disappearance the perfected is understood.

With the non-perception of duality, the dual appearance goes away; as a result of its removal one arrives at the perfected, which is the absence of duality. [G2]

34

hastino'nupalambha's ca vigamas ca tadAkrteh 79 /
upalambhas ca kAsthasya mAyAyAm yugapad yathA //34//

As, in the magical illusion, there are simultaneously the non-perception of the elephant, the disappearance of its form, and the log's perception.

(33). Through the non-perception of the elephant,
The vanishing of its percept occurs;
And so does the perception of the piece of wood.
This is how it is in the magic show.

It's just as when the apprehension of the elephant, its appearances disappearance, and the apprehension of the wood take place simultaneously.

So also in the case of the magical illusion: simultaneously there is the non-perception of the elephant, the removal of its (the elephant's) appearance, and the apprehension of the piece of wood. [G2]

35

viruddhadhIkAranatvad buddher vAiyarthyadarsanAt /
jnAnatrayAnuvrttes ca moksApatter ayatnatah //35//

(35-36). Through the perception of "only-mind" -- because (mind) is the cause of the intellect's vision of unrealities, because of the conformity with the three knowledge, and because of the

production, without effort, of liberation -- there is the non-perception of the knowable object; through the non-perception of the knowable object, there is the non-perception of mind ((buddhi, in the text synonym of citta)).

Through perceiving correctly,
Through seeing the non-referentiality of mental states,
Through following the three wisdoms,
One will effortlessly attain liberation.

Because there are contradictory views in relation to the same moment, because of the intellect's seeing without a true object, because of the different development of the three kinds of knowledge (constructed, dependent, and perfected, cf. 22-25), and because, without all this, the attainment of liberation would come without effort,

36

cittamAtropalambhena jneyArthAnupalambhatA /
jneyArthAnupalambhena syAc cittAnupalambhatA //36//

Through the perception of mind-only
One achieves the non-perception of objects;
Through the non-perception of objects
There is also the non-perception of mind.

there is the nonapprehension of the knowable, because it is awareness-only, and through this nonapprehension of a knowable object there is the nonapprehension of awareness itself. (Without the apprehension of a knowable object there is no awareness either.)

As a result of perception of only mind, there is no perception of knowable things.
As a result of no perception of knowable things, there can be no perception of mind. [G]

37

dvayor anupalambhena dharmadhAtUpalambhatA /
dharmadhAtUpalambhena syAd vibhutvopalambhatA //37//

Through the non-perception of both, there is the perception of the dharmas' fundament; through the perception of the dharmas' fundament, there is the obtention of sovereignty.

Through the non-duality of perception,
Arises the perception of the fundamental nature of reality.
Through the perception of the fundamental nature of reality
Arises the perception of the radiant.

Through the nonapprehension of any duality, there is the apprehension of the dharmadhAtu, and through this, the apprehension of psychic mastery.

As a result of no perception of both, there is perception of the dharma realm.
As a result of perception of the dharma realm, there can be the perception of liberation. [G]

upalabdhavibhutvas ca svaparArthaprasiddhitah /
prApnoty anuttarAm bodhim dhImAn kAyatrayAtmikam //38//

And who has obtained the sovereignty, through the realization of his own good and the other's good, reaches, wise, the supreme enlightenment, whose essence is the three bodies.

Through the perception of the radiant,
And through achieving the three supreme Buddha-bodies,
And through possessing bodhi:
Having achieved this, the sage will benefit him/herself and others.

With psychic mastery attained, and through perfecting both one's own and others' aims, the enlightenment which has no higher is attained.

iti trisvabhAvah samAptah krtir AcAryavasubandhupAdAnAm iti
End of the TrisvabhAva, work of the venerable Master Vasubandhu
