Master Vasubandhu

The Thirty Verses

A new English translation by Khenpo David Karma Choephel
The Thirty Verses

Master Vasubandhu

Translated by Khenpo David Karma Choephel
I prostrate to youthful Manjushri.

That which occurs in various ways
That are labeled “self” or “phenomenon”
Is change in consciousness.
This change is of three types,
Which are called ripening, egoism,
And awareness of an object.
Of them, the consciousness called ground,
With all the seeds, is ripening.

It is unrecognized awareness
Of grasping and place, and is always
Associated with contact, attention,
Feeling, conception, and volition.

Within it, there is neutral feeling,
And it is also unobscured neutral.*
Contact and so forth are the same.
It functions like a river’s current.

* Neutral means neither virtuous nor unvirtuous. Unobscured means that it does not prevent the attainment of liberation.
It ceases upon arhatship.
That which arises based on it
And focuses on it is called
Egoism, a consciousness
With egoism as its nature.

It’s always associated with
Four obscured but neutral afflictions:
The view of self, delusion of self,
Pride of self, and ego-clinging.

Of that where they arise, and contact
And so forth, too. On arhatship,
Absorption of cessation, and paths
Transcending the world, there is none.
That is the second type of change. The third one is the focuses On the six types of objects. They’re virtue or nonvirtue or neither.

The mental factors concurrent with them Are the universals, determining, Virtuous factors, the afflictions, Near afflictions, and the three feelings.

The first is contact and so forth. Wishing, decision, mindfulness, Samadhi, and prajna are determining. Faith, conscience, propriety, nongreed,
Nonhatred, nondelusion, diligence,
Pliancy, carefulness with those,
And non-hostility are virtue.
The afflictions are greed, anger,

Delusion, pride, the views, and doubt.
Aggression, holding a grudge, concealment,
Contentiousness, jealousy,
Stinginess, the deceit with those,

Guile, vanity, hostility,
A lack of conscience, shamelessness,
Agitation, torpor, lack of faith,
Carelessness, unmindfulness,
Distraction, nonawareness, regret,
Sleep, considering, and examining
Are near afflictions. Two pairs are twofold.

Arising from the root consciousness
In accordance with conditions,
The five consciousnesses may be
Together or not, like waves in water.

The mental consciousness arises
Always except in Conception Free,†
The two absorptions, mind-free sleep,
And falling into unconsciousness.

† An area of the fourth level of the Form Realm where non-Buddhist meditators who have attained the conception-free absorption (a state of deep meditative absorption in which the movement of mind and mental factors ceases entirely) are reborn.
(17) རོམ་པར་ཤིེས་པར་གྱུར་པ་འིདི། རོམ་རྟོག་ཡིིན་ཏེ་དེ་ཡིས་གང་།
རོམ་བོོརྟགས་དེ་མེད་དེས་ན་འིདི། ཐམས་ཅད་རོམ་པར་རིག་པ་ཙམ།

This change in consciousness is thought,  
And what it thinks of does not exist.  
Thus it is all awareness only.

(18) རོམ་ཤིིས་ས་བོོན་ཐམས་ཅིད་པ། རོིན་ཚུན་དག་གི་དབོང་གིས་ན།
དེ་ལྟ་དེ་ལྟར་འིགྱུར་བོར་འིགྲོ། དེས་ན་རོམ་རྟོག་དེ་དེ་སྐྱེེ།

Because of mutual influence,  
The consciousness with all the seeds  
Changes in such and such a way,  
So such and such a thought arises.

(19) ལེས་ཀྱི་བོག་ཆོགས་འིཛིིན་གཉེིས་ཀྱི། བོས་ཆོགས་བོཅས་པས་སྔ་མ་ཡིས།
རོམ་པར་སིིན་པ་ཟད་ནས་གཞོན། རོམ་སིིན་སྐྱེེད་པ་དེ་ཡིན་ནོ།

When the prior ripening is exhausted,  
The karmic imprints together with  
The imprints of dual grasping produce  
Another ripening, which is that.
(20) རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ་གང་གང་གིས། | དངོས་པོ་གང་གང་རྣམ་བོརྟགས་པ། |
དེ་ཉིད་ཀུན་ཏུ་བོརྟགས་པ་ཡི། | ངོ་བོོ་ཉིད་མེད་དེ་མེད་དོ། |

Any thing thought of by any thought
Is itself the imaginary
Nature, but it does not exist.

(21) གཞོན་གྱིི་དབོང་གི་ངོ་བོོ་ཉིད། | དེ་ཉིད་གཞོན་དབོང་ལེས། |
གྲུབོ་ནི་དེ་ལེ་སྔ་མ་པོ། | ཟག་ཏུ་མེད་པར་གྱུར་པ་གང་། |

The nature of the dependent is
Thought that arises from conditions.
The absolute is when that is free
Of the previous forever.

(22) དེ་ཕྱིར་དེ་ ཉིད་གཞོན་དབོང་ལེས། | གཞོན་མིན་གཞོན་མ་ཡིན་པའིང་མིན། |
མི་རྟག་པ་སོགས་བོཞོིན་དུ་བོརྗེོད། | དེ་མ་མཐོང་བོར་དེ་མི་མཐོང་། |

Thus it is neither different
Nor not different from the dependent,
As taught with impermanence and such.
Unless it’s seen, that is not seen.

* In the Tibetan root text, this word is negated — it would read, “There is no imaginary nature.” However, the Sanskrit is not in the negative here, and Sthiramati’s commentary also phrases it in the affirmative. Thus the translation of this line follows the Sanskrit and Sthiramati’s commentary.
With the three types of lack of nature
Of the three types of nature in mind,
It’s taught all phenomena lack nature.

The first one lacks a nature by
Its characteristics, while the next
Does not exist on its own, and thus
It is another lack of nature.

So is the ultimate meaning of dharmas,
For it is also suchness,
Since at all times, it is just so.
It is itself just mere awareness.
As long as consciousness does not
Remain within just mere awareness,
Until that time, the latencies
Of twofold grasping will not cease.

When you place before yourself
The thought that “All of these indeed
Are mere awareness!” as your focus,
You are not resting in just that.

When consciousness no longer observes
A focus, it dwells in mere awareness.
Since there is nothing to apprehend,
There’s nothing apprehending it.
It is mind-free; it has no focus.
It’s wisdom that transcends the world
And transformation of the basis
By removing the two negativities.

Just that is undefiled, the element,
Inconceivable, virtuous, stable,
Bliss, and the body of liberation.
It’s called the dharma of the Great Sage.

This completes the *Thirty Verses* by Master Vasubandhu.

Translated into English by David Karma Choephel according to the commentaries of Sthiramati and Vinitadeva from the Sanskrit and the Tibetan translation by Jinamitra, Śilendrabodhi, and Bande Yeshe De.