

Fifty Verses on the Nature of Consciousness by Thich Nhat Hanh

Store Consciousness

One

Mind is a field
In which every kind of seed is sown.
This mind-field can also be called
"All the seeds".

Two

In us are infinite varieties of seeds -
Seeds of samsara, nirvana, delusion, and enlightenment,
Seeds of suffering and happiness,
Seeds of perceptions, names, and words.

Three

Seeds that manifest as body and mind,
As realms of being, stages, and worlds,
Are all stored in our consciousness.
That is why it is called "store".

Four

Some seeds are innate,
Handed down by our ancestors.
Some were sown while we were still in the womb,
Others were sown when we were children.

Five

Whether transmitted by family, friends,
Society, or education
All our seeds are, by nature,
Both individual and collective.

Six

The quality of our life
Depends on the quality
Of the seeds
That lie deep in our consciousness.

Seven

The function of store consciousness

Is to receive and maintain
Seeds and their habit energies,
So they can manifest in the world, or remain dormant.

Eight

Manifestations from store consciousness
Can be perceived directly in the mode of things-in-themselves,
As representations, or as mere images.
All are included in the eighteen elements of being.

Nine

All manifestations bear the marks
Of both the individual and the collective.
The maturation of store consciousness functions in the same way
In its participation in the different stages and realms of being.

Ten

Unobstructed and indeterminate,
Store consciousness is continuously flowing and changing.
At the same time, it is endowed
With all five universal mental formations.

Eleven

Although impermanent and without a separate self,
Store consciousness contains all phenomena in the cosmos,
Both conditioned and unconditioned,
In the form of seeds.

Twelve

Seeds can produce seeds.
Seeds can produce formations.
Formations can produce seeds.
Formations can produce formations.

Thirteen

Seeds and formations
Both have the nature of interbeing and interpenetration.
The one is produced by the all.
The all is dependent on the one.

Fourteen

Store consciousness is neither the same nor different,
Individual nor collective.
Same and different inter-are.
Collective and individual give rise to each other.

Fifteen

When delusion is overcome, understanding is there,
And store consciousness is no longer subject to afflictions.
Store consciousness becomes Great Mirror Wisdom,
Reflecting the cosmos in all directions. Its name is now Pure Consciousness.

Manas

Sixteen

Seeds of delusion give rise
To the internal formations of craving and afflictions.
These forces animate our consciousness
As mind and body manifest themselves.

Seventeen

With store consciousness as its support,
Manas arises.
Its function is mentation,
Grasping the seeds it considers to be a "self"

Eighteen

The object of means is the mark of a self
Found in the field of representations
At the point where manas
And store consciousness touch.

Nineteen

As the ground of wholesome and unwholesome
Of the other six manifesting consciousness,
Manas continues discriminating.
Its nature is both indeterminate and obscured.

Twenty

Manas goes with the five universals,
With mati of the five particulars
And with the four major and eight secondary afflictions.
All are indeterminate and obscured.

Twenty-One

As shadow follows form,
Manas always follows store.
It is a misguided attempt to survive,
Craving for continuation and blind satisfaction.

Twenty-Two

When the first stage of the bodhisattva path is attained,
The obstacles of knowledge and afflictions are transformed.
At the tenth stage, the yogi transforms the belief in a separate self,
And store consciousness is released from manas.

Mind Consciousness

Twenty-Three

With manas as its base
And phenomena as its objects,
Mind consciousness manifests itself.

Its sphere of cognition is the broadest.

Twenty-Four

Mind consciousness has three modes of perception.

It has access to the three fields of perception and is capable of having three natures.

All mental formations manifest in it -

Universal, particular, wholesome, unwholesome, and indeterminate.

Twenty-Five

Mind consciousness is the root of all actions of body and speech.

Its natures are to manifest mental formations, but its existence is not continuous.

Mind consciousness gives rise to actions that lead to ripening.

It plays the role of the gardener, sowing all the seeds.

Twenty-Six

Mind consciousness is always functioning

Except in states of non-perception,

The two attainments,

Deep sleep, and fainting or coma.

Twenty-Seven

Mind consciousness operates in five ways -

In cooperation with the five sense consciousnesses

And independent of them,

Dispersed, concentrated, or unstably.

Sense Consciousnesses

Twenty-Eight

Based on mind consciousness,

The five sense consciousnesses,

Separately or together with mind consciousness,

Manifest like waves on water.

Twenty-Nine

Their field of perception is things-in-themselves.

Their mode of perception is direct.

Their nature can be wholesome, unwholesome, or neutral.

They operate on the sense organs and the sensation center of the brain.

Thirty

They arise with the

Universal, particular, and wholesome,

The basic and secondary unwholesome,

And the indeterminate mental formations.

The Nature of Reality

Thirty-One

Consciousness always includes

Subject and object.

Self and other, inside and outside

Are all creations of the conceptual mind.

Thirty-Two

Consciousness has three parts -
Perceiver, perceived, and wholeness.
All seeds and mental formations
Are the same.

Thirty-Three

Birth and death depend on conditions.
Consciousness is by nature a discriminatory manifestation.
Perceiver and perceived depend on each other
As subject and object of perception.

Thirty-Four

In individual and collective manifestation,
Self and nonself are not two.
The cycle of birth and death is achieved in every moment.
Consciousness evolves in the ocean of birth and death.

Thirty-Five

Space, time, and the four great elements
Are all manifestations of consciousness.
In the process of interbeing and interpenetration,
Our store consciousness ripens in every moment.

Thirty-Six

Beings manifest when conditions are sufficient.
When conditions lack, they no longer appear.
Still, there is no coming, no going,
No being, and no nonbeing.

Thirty-Seven

When a seed gives rise to a formation,
It is the primary cause.
The subject of perception depends on the object of perception.
This is an object as cause.

Thirty-Eight

Conditions that are favorable or non-obstructing
Are supporting causes.
The fourth type of condition
Is the immediacy of continuity.

Thirty-Nine

Interdependent manifestation has two aspects -
Deluded mind and true mind.
Deluded mind is imaginary construction.
True mind is fulfilled nature.

Forty

Construction impregnates the mind with seeds of delusion,

Bringing about the misery of samsara.
The fulfilled opens the door of wisdom
To the realm of suchness.

The Path of Practice

Forty-One

Meditating on the nature of interdependence
Can transform delusion into enlightenment.
Samsara and suchness are not two.
They are one and the same.

Forty-Two

Even while blooming, the flower is already in the flower.
And the compost is already in the flower.
Flower and compost are not two.
Delusion and enlightenment inter-are.

Forty-Three

Don't run away from birth and death.
Just look deeply into your mental formations.
When the true nature of interdependence is seen,
The truth of interbeing is realized.

Forty-Four

Practice conscious breathing
To water the seeds of awakening.
Right View is a flower
Blooming in the field of mind consciousness.

Forty-Five

When sunlight shines,
It helps all vegetation grow.
When mindfulness shines,
It transforms all mental formations.

Forty-Six

We recognize internal knots and latent tendencies
So we can transform them.
When our habit energies dissipate,
Transformation at the base is there.

Forty-Seven

The present moment
Contains past and future.
The secret of transformation
Is in the way we handle this very moment.

Forty-Eight

Transformation takes place
In our daily life.
To make the work of transformation easy,

Practice with a Sangha.

Forty-Nine

Nothing is born, nothing dies.
Nothing to hold on to, nothing to release.
Samsara is nirvana.
There is nothing to attain.

Fifty

When we realize that afflictions are no other than enlightenment,
We can ride the waves of birth and death in peace,
Traveling in the boat of compassion on the ocean of delusion,
Smiling the smile of non-fear.