

IN PRAISE OF DEPENDENT ORIGINATION
Je Tsongkhapa

1
He who speaks on the basis of seeing,
This makes him a knower and teacher unexcelled,
I bow to you, O Conqueror, you who saw
Dependent origination and taught it.

2
Whatever degenerations there are in the world,
The root of all these is ignorance;
You taught that it is dependent origination,
The seeing of which will undo this ignorance.

3
So how can an intelligent person
Not comprehend that this path
Of dependent origination is
The essential point of your teaching?

4
This being so, who will find, O Savior,
A more wonderful way to praise you
Than [to praise you] for having taught
This origination through dependence?

5
“Whatsoever depends on conditions,
That is devoid of intrinsic existence.”
What excellent instruction can there be
More amazing than this proclamation?

6
By grasping at it the childish
Strengthen bondage to extreme views;
For the wise this very fact is the doorway
To cut free from the net of elaborations.

7
Since this teaching is not seen elsewhere,
You alone are the Teacher;
Like calling fox a lion, for a Tirthika
It would be a word of flattery.

8
Wondrous teacher! Wondrous refuge!
Wondrous speaker! Wondrous savior!
I pay homage to that teacher
Who taught well dependent origination.

9
To help heal sentient beings,
O Benefactor, you have taught
The peerless reason to ascertain
Emptiness, the heart of the teaching.

10
This way of dependent origination,
Those who perceive it
As contradictory or as unestablished,
How can they comprehend your system?

11
For you, when one sees emptiness
In terms of the meaning of dependent origination,
Then being devoid of intrinsic existence and
Possessing valid functions do not contradict.

12
Whereas when one sees the opposite,
Since there can be no function in emptiness
Nor emptiness in what has functions,
One falls into a dreadful abyss, you maintain.

13
Therefore in your teaching
Seeing dependent origination is hailed;
That too not as an utter non-existence
Nor as an intrinsic existence.

14
The non-contingent is like a sky flower,

Hence there is nothing that is not dependent.
If things exist through their essence, their dependence on
Causes and conditions for their existence is a contradiction.

15
“Therefore since no phenomena exist
Other than origination through dependence,
No phenomena exist other than
Being devoid of intrinsic existence,” you taught.

16
“Because intrinsic nature cannot be negated,
If phenomena possess some intrinsic nature,
Nirvana would become impossible
And elaborations could not be ceased,” you taught.

17
Therefore who could challenge you?
You who proclaim with lion’s roar
In the assembly of learned ones repeatedly
That everything is utterly free of intrinsic nature?

18
That there is no intrinsic existence at all
And that all functions as “this arising
In dependence on that,” what need is there to say
That these two converge without conflict?

19
“It is through the reason of dependent origination
That one does not lean towards an extreme;”
That you’ve declared this excellently is the reason,

O Savior, of your being an unexcelled speaker.

20

“All of this is devoid of essence,”
And “From this arises that effect” –
These two certainties complement
Each other with no contradiction at all.

21

What is more amazing than this?
What is more marvellous than this?
If one praises you in this manner,
This is real praise, otherwise not.

22

Being enslaved by ignorance
Those who fiercely oppose you,
What is so astonishing about their being
Unable to bear the sound of no intrinsic existence?

23

But having accepted dependent origination,
The precious treasure of your speech,
Then not tolerating the roar of emptiness –
This I find amazing indeed!

24

The door that leads to no intrinsic existence,
This unexcelled [door of] dependent origination,
Through its name alone, if one grasps
At intrinsic existence, now this person

25

Who lacks the unrivalled entrance,
Well travelled by the Noble Ones,
By what means should one guide him
To the excellent path that pleases you?

26

Intrinsic nature, uncreated and non-contingent,
Dependent origination, contingent and created –
How can these two converge
Upon a single basis without contradiction?

27

Therefore whatever originates dependently,
Though primordially free of intrinsic existence,
Appears as if it does [possess intrinsic existence];
So you taught all this to be illusion-like.

28

Through this very fact I understand well
The statement that, to what you have taught,
Those opponents who challenge you
Cannot find faults that accord with reason.

29

Why is this so? Because by declaring these
Chances for reification and denigration
Towards things seen and unseen
Are made most remote.

30

Through this very path of dependent origination,

The rationale for your speech being peerless,
Convictions arise in me [also]
That your other words are valid too.

31
You who speak excellently by seeing as it is,
For those who train in your footsteps,
All degenerations will become remote;
For the root of all faults will be undone.

32
But those who turn away from your teaching,
Though they may struggle with hardship for a long time,
Faults increase ever more as if being called forth;
For they make firm the view of self.

33
Aha! When the wise comprehend
The differences between these two,
Why would they not at that point
Revere you from the depths of their being?

34
Let alone your numerous teachings,
Even in the meaning of a small part,
Those who find ascertainment in a cursory way,
This brings supreme bliss to them as well.

35
Alas! My mind was defeated by ignorance;
Though I've sought refuge for a long time,
In such an embodiment of excellence,

I possess not a fraction of his qualities.

36
Nonetheless, before the stream of this life
Flowing towards death has come to cease
That I have found slight faith in you –
Even this I think is fortunate.

37
Among teachers, the teacher of dependent origination,
Amongst wisdoms, the knowledge of dependent origination –
You, who're most excellent like the kings in the worlds,
Know this perfectly well, not others.

38
All that you have taught
Proceeds by way of dependent origination;
That too is done for the sake of nirvana;
You have no deeds that do not bring peace.

39
Alas! Your teaching is such,
In whosoever's ears it falls,
They all attain peace; so who would not be
Honoured to uphold your teaching?

40
It overcomes all opposing challenges;
It's free from contradictions between earlier and latter parts;
It grants fulfilment of beings' two aims –
For this system my joy increases ever more.

41
For its sake you have given away,
Again and again over countless eons,
Sometimes your body, at others your life,
As well as your loving kin and resources of wealth.

42
Seeing the qualities of this teaching
Pulls [hard] from your heart,
Just like what a hook does to a fish;
Sad it is not to have heard it from you.

43
The intensity of that sorrow
Does not let go of my mind,
Just like the mind of a mother
[Constantly] goes after her dear child.

44-45
Here too, as I reflect on your words, I think,
“Blazing with the glory of noble marks
And hallowed in a net of light rays,
This teacher, in a voice of pristine melody,
Spoke thus in such a way.”
The instant such a reflection of the Sage’s form
Appears in my mind it soothes me,
Just as the moon-rays heal fever’s pains.

46
This excellent system, most marvellous,
Some individuals who are not so learned
Have entangled it in utter confusion,

Just like the tangled *balbaza* grass.

47
Seeing this situation, I strove
With a multitude of efforts
To follow after the learned ones
And sought your intention again and again.

48
At such times as I studied the numerous works
Of both our own [Middle Way] and other schools,
My mind became tormented ever more
Constantly by a network of doubts.

49
The night-lily grove of Nagarjuna’s treatises –
Nagarjuna whom you prophesized
Would unravel your unexcelled vehicle as it is,
Shunning extremes of existence and non-existence –

50
Illuminated by the garland of white lights
Of Candra’s well-uttered insights –
Candra, whose stainless wisdom orb is full,
Who glides freely across scriptures’ space,

51
Who dispels the darkness of extremist hearts
And outshines the constellations of false speakers –
When, through my teacher’s kindness, I saw this
My mind found a rest at last.

52
Of all your deeds, your speech is supreme;
Within that too it is this very speech;
So the wise should remember the Buddha
Through this [teaching of dependent origination].

53
Following such a teacher and having become a renunciate,
Having studied the Conqueror's words not too poorly,
This monk who strives in the yogic practices,
Such is [the depth of] his reverence to the great Seer!

54
Since it is due to my teacher's kindness
I have met with the teaching of the unexcelled teacher,
I dedicate this virtue too towards the cause
For all beings to be sustained by sublime spiritual mentors.

55
May the teaching of this Beneficent One till world's end
Be unshaken by the winds of evil thoughts;

May it always be filled with those who find conviction
In the teacher by understanding the teaching's true nature.

56
May I never falter even for an instant
To uphold the excellent way of the Sage,
Which illuminates the principle of dependent origination,
Through all my births even giving away my body and life.

57
May I spend day and night carefully reflecting,
"By what means can I enhance
This teaching achieved by the supreme savior
Through strenuous efforts over countless eons?"

58
As I strive in this with pure intention,
May Brahma, Indra and the world's guardians
And protectors such as Mahakala
Unswervingly, always assist me.

This hymn entitled "Essence of Well-Uttered Insights," praising the unexcelled Teacher – the great friend to the entire world [even] to the unfamiliar – for teaching the profound dependent origination, was composed by the well-read monk Lobsang Drakpai Pal. It was written at the heavenly retreat of Lhading on the towering mountain of Odé Gungyal, otherwise known as [Ganden] Nampar Gyalwai Ling. The scribe was Namkha Pal.

Translated from the Tibetan by Geshe Thupten Jinpa. © Geshe Thupten Jinpa