

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