

In Praise of Dependent Origination by Je Tsong Khapa

Dependent Arising: A Praise of the Buddha

Homage to my guru, the youthful Manjushri!
Seeing and speaking of dependent arising,
He was wisdom supreme, teacher supreme.
I bow to him who knew and taught
the all-conquering dependent arising.

Of the suffering existing in the world,
its root is none other than ignorance.
The understanding to kill this root
you said is none other than dependent arising.

How could those of intelligence not see
dependent arising as the heart of your doctrine.
Where is greater praise of you, therefore,
than in praise of dependent arising?

“Whatever depends on circumstance is empty of nature.”
What greater teaching is there than this!
The foolish, however, seize on it
and only tighten chains of extreme views,
while for the wise it cuts entangled nets of fabrication.

This teaching is not seen in the works of others,
the title of Teacher, therefore, is yours alone.
Given to others it is but the hollow flattery
of a fox being hailed a lion.

Greatest of teachers! Greatest protector!
Speaker supreme! Guide supreme!
I bow to the teacher of dependent arising!

Benevolent teacher, you taught to help all living beings.
Emptiness is the essence of those teachings,
its highest proof dependent arising.

Those claiming it proves the opposite,
those denying its very existence,
how will they grasp your teachings?

For you, emptiness seen as dependent arising
does not render as contradictory
emptiness of self-nature and ability to function.

To hold to the opposite, however—
that with emptiness there can be no function
and with function, no emptiness—
is to fall into a dangerous trap.

In your teachings, therefore,
knowledge of dependent arising is highly praised,
but it will not be known
to views of self or nonexistence.

Nondependence, you have said, is like the sky flower.
Nondependence, therefore, does not exist.
Anything existent by its own nature
contradicts existence by cause and circumstance.

Nothing is not dependently arising;
nothing, therefore, is not empty of self-nature.

Self-nature, you said, cannot be destroyed.
Phenomena, therefore, possessed of nature,
would render nirvana impossible.
Samsara likewise would have no end.

You spoke, therefore, with the roar of a lion
again and again on this absence of nature,
and amid the assemblies of the wise,
who dared to challenge you?

The absence of self-nature anywhere,
this arising because of that,
both presentations are true,
and what need to say that both come together
without contradiction.

Moreover, by reason of dependent arising,
one will not depend on extreme views.
This is the excellent teaching, my protector,
that renders you orator supreme.

All this by nature is empty, and this arises from that.
Such realizations do not hinder but mutually complement.
What is more wonderful, more astonishing than that?
Praising you this way is praise indeed;
all other praise is lesser.

That some, hostile to you,
held as the slaves of ignorance,
are unable to bear the sounds of no self-nature
comes as no surprise.

That others, accepting dependent arising,
the crown jewel of your teaching,
are unable to tolerate the roar of emptiness
does surprise me.

If by the very name of dependent arising,
gateway supreme to no self-nature,
self-nature is asserted, how will they be led
to that noble path that pleases you,
that incomparable highway well-traveled by exalted beings?

Self-nature—real and nondependent;
dependent arising—unreal and of dependent nature;
how, without contradiction, could these two ever
come together?

Consequently, that which dependently arises
has forever been empty and void of nature.
Things, however, do not appear that way.
All this, you have said, is therefore like an illusion.

“Others may attack your teaching
but they will never be any match.”
Such claims are validated by dependent arising.
How? Because its explanation casts away all possibility
of flawed assertion and faulty denial
of all phenomena evident or hidden.

This very path of dependent arising,
the reason for seeing your words as unparalleled,
generates conviction in the validity of other teachings.

Having seen the truth, you taught it.
Those following you will leave all troubles far behind,
for they will cut to the root of every fault.

Those, however, outside your teachings,
though they practice long and hard,
are those who beckon back faults,
for they are welded to views of self.

Ah! When the wise see the difference,
how could they not revere you
from the very depths of their hearts!

What need to talk of many teachings!
The simplest conviction in just a single part
brings on the greatest of joy!

Alas! My mind is ruined by ignorance!
For so long have I gone for refuge
to this great store of meritorious qualities,
yet not a single one do I possess.

As yet, however, my life has not slipped
between the jaws of the Lord of Death
and, having a modicum of faith in you,
I do consider myself fortunate.

Among teachers, the teacher of dependent arising,
among knowledge, knowledge of dependent arising.
These two, like a mighty conqueror in the world,
you know to be supreme, where others do not.

All that you have taught
proceeds from dependent arising;
its purpose, the transcending of suffering.

Nothing you do, therefore, is not for peace.

Ah! Your teachings!
Those whose ears they fall upon will all find peace.
Who, therefore, would not hold them dear?

Across their breadth, no contradiction;
opponents' arguments all destroyed-
fulfilling the two aims of living beings.
My joy in these teachings grows and grows.

For this knowledge you gave away-
over countless eons again and again-
your loved ones, your possessions,
sometimes your body, other times your life.

Seeing such qualities
I am drawn by your mind
like a fish on the hook.
Not hearing your Dharma from you in person,
such misfortune!

By the pain of such sorrow,
my mind will never give you up,
like the mind of a mother for her precious child.

And yet as I think on your words,
hearing you talk of this and that,
teacher with a voice melodic as Brahma,
resplendent with features of perfection
encircled by garlands of light,
your enlightened form reflects in my mind,
like the cool light of the moon,
medicine for my feverish torment.

Those unwise in this wonderful doctrine
were confused and entangled like plaited grass.
Seeing this, I followed with diligence the great scholars,
seeking again and again your thoughts,
poring over many works of our and others' tradition,
yet still my mind was torn by doubts.

When, with the kindness of my lamas, I saw
this unsurpassed vehicle of yours leaving behind
extremes of existence and nonexistence,
elucidated by the prophesied Nagarjuna,
his lotus grove illuminated by the moonlight
of the glorious Chandrakirti's teachings,
whose globe of stainless wisdom moved
freely through the sky of your words,
dispelling the darkness that holds to extremes,
outshining the stars of false speakers-
it was then that my mind found its peace.

Of all Buddha's deeds his words were the greatest,
and they were words of dependent arising.
Let the wise, therefore, remember him this way.

Becoming ordained into the way of the Buddha
by not being lax in study of his words,
and by yoga practice of great resolve,
this monk devotes himself to that great purveyor of truth.

Due to the kindness of my lamas,
I have met the teachings of the greatest of teachers.
I dedicate this virtue, therefore, for every living being
to be nourished by true spiritual friends.

I pray that the teachings of he who is solely benevolent
remain unscattered by the winds of false views until the end of time,
and with faith in the Buddha gained from understanding
their essential nature, may they pervade forever.

In all my births, even at the cost of my life,
may I never falter nor shrink from working
for the wonderful doctrine of the mighty Buddha,
who showed clearly the nature of dependent arising.

I pray that I pass my days and nights
in thinking how I might spread this Dharma,
born from the heroic perseverance
in the face of countless hardships

of this supreme guide.

When I pursue these endeavors wholeheartedly and sincerely,
may I be supported constantly by Brahma, Indra, Mahakala,
the four guardians of the world, and all other protectors.

Colophon: Composed by Je Tsongkhapa
Translated by Gavin Kilty