

In Praise of Dependent Origination

Je Tsongkhapa

With Outlines by Purbuchok Jampa Gyatso

1 *The offering of praise (1)*

- 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 *The actual explanation (2-53)*

2A *Reason for praising Buddha's teaching of dependent-arising (2-4)*

- 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?

2B *Actual praise of the teachings on dependent-arising (5-52)*

2B1 *Brief presentation (5-8)*

2B1A *Expressing amazement at the teaching that phenomena are non-inherently existent because they rely upon causes and conditions (5)*

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

2B1B *Expressing amazement that the reasoning unwise people use to confirm the conception of inherent existence is a perfect reason for the wise to ascertain non-inherent existence* (6)

- 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.

2B1C *Expressing amazement that no other teacher teaches these facts* (7-8)

- 7 Since this teaching is not seen elsewhere,
 You alone are the “Teacher;”
 Like calling a 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.

2B2 *Elaborate presentation* (9-52)

2B2A *Praising through believing faith* (9-40)

2B2A-1 *The means of generating belief in the faultless doctrine* (9-30)

2B2A-1A *Detailed explanation of the two praises presented [in the outlines 2B1A & 2B1B]* (9-27)

2B2A-1A1 *Praising the teaching that phenomena are non-inherently existent because they rely on causes and conditions* (9-21)

2B2A-1A1A *Recognizing the final view of the teacher* (9-13)

- 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.

2B2A-1A1B *Presenting perfect logic to ascertain the Buddha's final view (14-15)*

- 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.

2B2A-1A1C *Presenting mistaken views of inherent existence, which are opposite to the view established by this logic (16-19)*

- 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.

2B2A-1A1D *Praising the Buddha by admiring the established fact that all things are valid within the one class of emptiness (20-21)*

- 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 marvelous than this?
 If one praises you in this manner,
 This is real praise, otherwise not.

2B2A-1A2 *Praising by explaining how the unwise use the reasoning "phenomena are non-inherently existent because of relying on causes and conditions" as a support for their extreme views, while the wise use it as a door to close off their mental elaborations (22-27)*

- 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 traveled 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.

2B2A-1B *Appreciating the importance of scripture, and the declaration of the four types of fearlessness by understanding the meaning of that which is praised (28-30)*

- 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.

2B2A-2 *The means of generating belief in the faultless teacher by depending upon belief in the faultless doctrine (31-36)*

- 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.

2B2A-3 *Joyfully preserving the doctrine after gaining conviction in it (37-40)*

2B2A-3A *Joyfully preserving the supreme path of dependent-arising and emptiness of inherent existence, which is difficult to realize (37)*

- 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.

2B2A-3B *Joyfully preserving the Teacher's supreme action of speech (38)*

- 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.

2B2A-3C *Joyfully taming the minds of sentient beings, which are difficult to tame (39)*

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

2B2A-3D *Joyfully preserving the verbal doctrine, which has three attributes (40)*

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

2B2B *Praising by remembering the Buddha's kindness (41-45)*

2B2B-1 *Remembering the Buddha's kindness (41)*

- 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.

2B2B-2 *Lamenting at not having directly heard the Buddha's teachings (42-43)*

- 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.

2B2B-3 *Delight upon imagining Buddha teaching the Prajnaparamita (44-45)*

- 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.

2B2C *How Lama Tsongkhapa generated faith and respect in the Buddha (46-52)*

2B2C-1 *The basis for generating belief (46)*

- 46 This excellent system, most marvelous,
 Some individuals who are not so learned
 Have entangled it in utter confusion,
 Just like the tangled *balbaza* grass.

2B2C-2 *Lama Tsongkhapa's effort in generating belief (47-48)*

- 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.

2B2C-3 *The texts he relied upon to generate belief (49-52)*

- 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 Chandra's well-uttered insights –
Chandra, 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].

2C *Qualifications of the one who has given praise (53)*

- 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!

3 *The conclusion and Lama Tsongkhapa's dedication (54-58)*

- 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.

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Purbuchok Jampa Gyatso's outlines taken from a commentary on Lama Tsongkhapa's text given by Geshe Jampa Tegchok, published by Nalanda Monastery, France.

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