

In Praise of Dependent Arising

by Tsongkhapa (*rJe Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang grags-pa*)

translated by Alexander Berzin

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Homage to (my) Guru, Manjughosha.

(1) I bow to (you) the Triumphant (Buddha),
Who has seen and taught dependent arising,
Which, to see (implies) omniscience
And to speak of (implies) an unsurpassable teacher.

(2) Unawareness is the root of as much torment
As there is in the world.
Thus, you spoke of dependent arising
Which, if seen, reverses that.

(3) At that time, how could those with intelligence
Not have comprehended
The path of dependent arising
As being the essential point of your teachings?

(4) As that is so, how could anyone find
As a gateway for praising you, O Guardian,
Anything more wondrous than
Your statements about dependent arising?

(5) “Whatever depends on conditions
Is devoid of a self-establishing nature.”
What could be a more amazing, excellent
Manner of teaching than this statement?

(6) This real nature (voidness) which, if grasped at (as findable),
Makes infantile beings’ bondage to grasping for extremes more firm,
Is the gateway for the learned to cut all the webs
Of their mental fabrication, without any exception.

(7) As this teaching is not seen in others,
Then the title “Teacher” is really yours (alone);
It’s a sham word, however, if also (used)
for those with heterodox (views),
Like “lion” for the species “fox.”

(8) How wondrous – a Teacher! How wondrous – a Safe Direction!
How wondrous – a Supreme Speaker! How wondrous – a Guardian!
I prostrate to (you) that Teacher,
Who spoke excellently about dependent arising.

(9) You, the Benefactor, prescribed it
As a medicine for wandering beings,
(Since) it's the peerless line of reasoning
For ascertaining voidness, the heart of your teachings.

(10) How can those who see this manner (of reason)
Of dependent arising as contradicting
Or not proving (voidness)
Ever be able to comprehend your system?

(11) When you saw voidness as meaning dependent arising,
(You saw that) voidness of a self-establishing nature
And the enactment of actions are not contradictory,
But in fact reasonable (in terms of each other).

(12) But if one sees the reverse of that,
Then since actions would be inadmissible in terms of voidness,
And there could be no voidness in terms of actions,
One would be asserting a plunge into an abyss of despair.

(13) Because of that, excellent praise to the vision
Of dependent arising in your teachings!
For that, in fact, nullifies (both) total nonexistence
And existence by means of a self-establishing nature.

(14) Non-reliance is like a flower from empty space;
Therefore non-dependence does not exist.
If the existence (of things) were established by their essential natures,
Then the establishment of that would contradict their depending
on causes and conditions.

(15) Because of that, since there are no phenomena
Other than what dependently arises,
It is said that there are no phenomena
Other than what is devoid of a self-establishing nature.

(16) If phenomena had a certain self-establishing nature,
For the reason that the reverse of self-establishing natures doesn't exist,
Then one would need to say that nirvana's inadmissible,
And that a reverse from all mental fabrication doesn't exist.

(17) Because of that, in the crowd of learned ones,
You spoke excellently, again and again, with a lion's roar,
That everything is parted from self-establishing natures.
Who could get the better of this?

(18) There is no such thing as a self-establishing nature;
Also, the entire presentation is reasonable of “this” arising
from depending on “this.”
As these two (points) are non-contradictory,
Is there need to mention that they fit together?

(19) “Because of the line of reasoning, dependent arising,
One cannot depend on extreme views.”
This excellent statement (of yours) is the cause
For your being the Peerless Speaker, O Guardian.

(20) All these (things) are devoid (of being established) by an essential nature,
While from “this,” “this” arises as a result.
These two certainties, without hindering one another,
Serve as (mutual) helps.

(21) What could be more amazing than this?
What could be more marvelous than this?
There is no other way of praising
Than to praise you in this way.

(22) Enslaved by their muddle-headedness,
Some are hostile toward you.
Is it any wonder they cannot bear the sound
Of “no self-establishing nature?”

(23) But those who accept dependent arising,
The cherished treasure from among your statements,
And then cannot bear the roar of voidness –
It is they who amaze me.

(24) It is just these people who grasp at self-establishing natures
In the very name of dependent arising,
But which, (in fact,) is the unsurpassable gateway
Leading to there being no self-establishing natures.

(25) By what method could they be led
To this excellent pathway pleasing to you,
Which is a peerless fording passage
Well traveled by the Supreme Noble Aryas?

(26) How can having a self-establishing nature, being not unreal,
and non-reliant,
As well as being dependently arising, reliant, and unreal
Both be what are gathered together
With no contradiction on a single basis?

(27) Because of that, whatever dependently arises is, from the beginning,
Completely removed from having a self-establishing nature.
Yet, since (things) appear to be there,
You said that all of them are like illusions.

(28) It is by this very (reasoning) that one can well understand
The statement that even if opponents try to pick apart
How you have taught, they can never find
An occurrence (of fault) in the Dharma's consistency.

(29) "Why is this so?" It's because, by this explanation,
You've distanced afar any chances
For interpolation or repudiation
Regarding any phenomenon, seen or unseen.

(30) By this very path of dependent arising,
Which is the reason your speech is seen as peerless,
One can develop certainty that
Your other statements are valid as well.

(31) In training, in your footsteps, in what you have said so well,
After you saw in accord with fact,
One puts all one's troubles far away,
Because one turns back the root of all one's faults.

(32) (On the other hand,) those who face away from your teachings,
Even should they devote themselves wearily for a long time,
Are like inviting one mistake after the next,
Because of their firm view of identity-natures.

(33) How wondrous! How could any learned person,
When he has comprehended the difference between these two,
Not develop respect for you
From the depth of his heart?

(34) What need to mention many of your statements,
When finding merely a rough certainty
About even only the meaning of a single portion
Bestows supreme bliss.

(35) Alas! My mind is so overwhelmed with being muddled
That although I've long taken safe direction from (you,
Who are) a mass of excellent qualities like this,
I cannot show even a tiny speck of good qualities (in myself).

(36) But until the flow of my life-force toward the direction
Of the mouth of the Lord of Death comes to an end,
I shall consider myself fortunate even in just this:
The slight amount of confident belief (I've developed) in you.

(37) Like a commander of the triumphant in the worldly realms,
Your omniscient mind has no other (match) in its magnificence and excellence,
In that both, among teachers, you are a teacher of dependent arising,
And among discriminating awarenesses, you have an awareness of dependent arising.

(38) However much has been proclaimed by you
Has originated and proceeded from dependent arising itself.
And, moreover, it's been for the purpose of nirvana (a release from suffering).
You don't do anything that doesn't bring about (such) pacification.

(39) How wondrous! Because your teachings
Bring about a pacification (of suffering)
To all those in whose ears it passes,
Who could not respect upholding your teachings?

(40) My delight ever increases in this system (of yours),
Which defeats every kind of challenging opponent,
Is devoid of contradictions from top to bottom,
And bestows the two aims of the nine kinds of beings.

(41) It is for this purpose that you offered over and again,
Through countless eons, your body to some,
Your life to others, as well as your dear relations
And your stores of wealth.

(42) What poor fortune not to have heard
That Dharma (directly) from you,
To whose mind I am drawn, like a fish to a hook,
By seeing your good qualities.

(43) By the strength of that sadness,
My mind shall never give up (its regard for you),
Like the mind of a mother
Continually following after her beloved child.

(44) And so, for this, when I think of your statements,
I think of (you,) that Teacher, radiant with the glory
Of the physical signs and exemplary features,
Surrounded completely by an aura of light,

(45) And, in that manner, proclaiming these (teachings)
With your Brahma-like voice. The mere arising in my mind
Of the image of your physical form, O Sage,
Is a medicine like moonlight for the torment of my fever.

(46) Although this excellent system of yours
Is so wondrous, yet unlearned people
Have made contentions over so many points,
Like tangled vines.

(47) Seeing this manner (of theirs),
I have followed with a great deal of effort
(Only) the learned and thereby have
Repeatedly sought your intended meaning.

(48) At that time, when I studied the many various texts
Of the systems of our own and others' tenets,
My mind was completely tormented
By a web of one doubt after the next.

(49-51) But, my mind found relief from its exhaustion
When, through the kindness of my gurus, I beheld
The garden of moonflowers of the textual tradition of Nagarjuna –
Whom you prophesied would comment correctly
Upon the ways of your unsurpassable vehicle,
Getting rid of the extremes of existence and nonexistence –

(And beheld it) illumined by the array of white light
Of the excellent explanations of the Glorious Moon, Chandrakirti –
The full orb of whose stainless understanding passes without hindrance
Through the sky of the scriptural pronouncements,
Dispelling the darkness of the heart of grasping for extremes
And outshining the constellations of the speakers of distorted (views).

(52) Of all enlightening deeds,
The deeds of enlightening speech are supreme.
Because that indeed is (in reference to) this very (teaching),
Learned ones, be continually mindful of Buddha from this!

(53) In the footsteps of (you,) this Teacher, I became a monastic,
And my study of (your) statements, Triumphant One, has not been poor.
As a monk who makes effort in the actions of a yogi,
I pay respect like this to (you,) that Great Seer.

(54) To have met like this with the teachings of (you,)
The Unsurpassable Teacher, is due to the kindness of my gurus.
Thus, I dedicate this constructive force as a cause
For all wandering beings, barring none, to be upheld
by hallowed spiritual masters.

(55) May the teachings, as well, of (you,) that Benefactor,
Be never disturbed, till the end of existence, by the winds of misconceptions.
Having understood the ways of the teachings and thereby found confident belief
In (you,) their Teacher, may everyone continually be fulfilled.

(56) In all my lifetimes, may I uphold, even at the cost of my body or life,
This excellent system of (yours,) the Sage,
Which clarifies reality in terms of dependent arising,
And never let go of it, for even a mere instant.

(57) May I spend day and night in examination,
Thinking of methods by which I can further these (teachings),
Which (you,) that Supreme Guide, realized
By taking earnestly to heart immeasurable hardships.

(58) When I make efforts in that manner, with pure exceptional resolve,
May I always be assisted, without fail,
By worldly protectors, such as Brahma and Indra,
And guardians (of the Dharma), like Legden, Mahakala, and the rest.

This has been composed by the Buddhist monk Lozang-dragpa (Tsongkhapa).