

The Essence of Eloquent Speech

Tsongkhapa · Tsong Khapa

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The Essence of Eloquent Speech,
or Praise to the Buddha for Teaching Profound Dependent-Arising
or Praise of Buddha Shakyamuni for his Teaching of Relativity
by Tsong Khapa

\ Reverence to the Guru Manjughosha!
\ Homage to that perfect Buddha,
\ The Supreme Philosopher,
\ Who taught us relativity
\ Free of destruction and creation,
\ Without annihilation and permanence,
\ With no coming and no going,
\ Neither unity nor plurality;
\ The quieting of fabrications,
\ The ultimate beatitude!

\ Homage to Him whose vision and speech
\ Made Him unexcelled as Sage and Teacher,
\ The Victor, who saw the relativity (himself)
\ And then taught it (to us all)!

\ Misknowledge (i.e. ignorance) is the very root
\ Of all the troubles in the world;
\ Who saw that and got rid of it
\ Proclaimed universal relativity.

\ Thereupon, how could it be possible
\ That the Bodhisattvas would not understand
\ The path of relativity

\ As the very pith of Your Teaching?

\ This being so, whoever could find
\ Anything even more wonderful,
\ To praise You with, O Protector,
\ Than the proclamation of relativity?

\ "Whatever depends on conditions,
\ That is empty of intrinsic reality!"

\ What method of good instructions is there,
\ More marvelous than this discovery?

\ Of course the naive can seize upon it
\ As just confirming their extremist chains,
\ But the wise find that very (relativity)
\ The way to cut the whole net of fabrications.

\ This Teaching is not seen elsewhere,
\ So You alone may be entitled "Teacher",
\ Merely a word of flattery for Fundamentalists,
\ As when you call a fox "a lion"!
\ Marvelous Teacher! Marvelous Refuge!
\ Marvelous Philosopher Supreme!
\ Marvelous Protector!
\ I pay full homage to that Teacher
\ Who proclaimed universal relativity!
\ O Benefactor, to heal living beings
\ You proclaimed (this relativity),
\ The peerless reason to ascertain
\ Emptiness, the essence of the Teaching!

\ How can such a one who sees
\ The process of relativity
\ As contradictory, or unestablished,
\ Even understand Your method?

\ Your position is that when one sees
\ Emptiness as the import of relativity,
\ Emptiness of intrinsic reality does not rule out
\ The viability of purposeful activity;

\ Whereas when you see the opposite,
\ Activity becomes impossible in emptiness,

\ Emptiness cannot be during activity
\ And one falls into the abyss of anxiety!
\ Therefore, the experience of relativity
\ Is highly recommended in Your Teaching,
\ And not as utter non-existence,
\ Nor as existence through intrinsic reality.

\ The non-relative is like a sky-flower,
\ So there is nothing non-dependent.
\ And things' existence with objective status
\ Precludes dependence on cause and condition.
\ Therefore You proclaimed that just because
\ Nothing at all exists outside of relativity,
\ So nothing at all exists outside of
\ Emptiness of intrinsic reality.

\ And You proclaimed that if it were so

\ That things each had some intrinsic reality,
\ Since that intrinsic reality could never disappear,
\ Nirvana would become impossible,
\ Since fabrications could not disappear.

\ Thus You dauntlessly proclaimed
\ Again and again in the assemblies of the wise,
\ The lion's roar, "Freedom from identity!"
\ Who is there able to rival this feat?

\ All systems are completely viable
\ When the two facts are not contradictory,
\ Absence of intrinsic reality, and relativity,
\ What need to mention their complementarity?

\ "By the reason of relativistic origination,
\ Extremist views lack confirmation!"
\ This excellent statement is the reason You, Protector,
\ Are the unexcelled Philosopher!

\ All this is objectively empty,
\ And this effect occurs from this cause;
\ These two certainties are mutually non-obstructive,
\ They actually complement each other.

\ What is there more marvelous than this?
\ What is there more miraculous than this?
\ If you are praised for this method,
\ It serves as praise, and otherwise not.

\ Those held in the thrall of delusions
\ React angrily to challenge you;
\ Is it any wonder they should find unbearable
\ Your word on lack of intrinsic identity?

\ But those who formally accept relativity,
\ The precious treasury of Your speech,
\ When they cannot bear the roar of emptiness,
\ That really does amaze me!

\ The unexcelled relativity,
\ Doorway to identitylessness,
\ They hold it as a nominal identity;
\ How they fool themselves!

\ These should be led by whatever method
\ Into that good path which pleases You,
\ The matchless haven well-frequented
\ By all the supreme Holy Ones.

\ Intrinsic reality is uncreated and non-relative,
\ Relativities are created and relational;
\ How can these two facts come together

\ In a single instance without contradiction?
\ Thus, what is relatively occurrent
\ Has ever been free of intrinsic reality,
\ Yet it still appears to have such (reality);
\ So You said all this is like illusion!

\ From this very fact, one deeply understands
\ (Nagarjuna's) statement that the way You taught
\ Those who would challenge Your Teaching
\ Rationally can find no weakness there.

\ Why? Because Your exposition of relativity
\ Makes extremely remote any tendencies
\ Of reification and repudiation
\ Concerning visible and invisible things.

\ This very path of relativity,
\ The proof that Your speech is matchless,
\ Also generates complete certitude
\ Of the validity of Your other statements.

\ You speak well from experience of reality,
\ And those who train themselves under You
\ Go far beyond every kind of trouble,
\ Having abandoned the root of all evil.

\ But those who turn their backs on Your Teaching,
\ Though they have struggles for a long time,
\ Decry many faults once outside again,
\ Because of a firm conviction about the self.

\ O wonder! The wise one understands the difference
\ Between following and not following Your Teaching.
\ Then how could he fail to feel most deeply
\ Great respect for You (and Your Teaching)?

\ What need is there to mention Your many Teachings?
\ To find even a rough, general certainty
\ About the precise meaning of even a small part
\ Confers, even that, the supreme happiness!

\ Alas, my mind is conquered by delusions,
\ Though I came from far to refuge
\ In Your mass of such good qualities,
\ And I found not even a fraction of such excellence.

\ Yet when I confront the Lord of Death,
\ And the stream of life has not quite ceased.
\ I will consider myself most highly fortunate
\ To have even the slightest faith in You!

\ Among teachers, the Teacher of relativity,
\ Among wisdoms, the wisdom of relativity;

\ There are like Imperial Victors in the world,
\ Making Your World Champion of Wisdom, over all.

\ Whatever You ever taught
\ Is penetrated through relativity,
\ And since that leads into Nirvana,
\ No deeds of Yours does not bring peace.

\ Yea! Whoever hears Your Doctrine
\ Everything becomes peaceful for them;
\ So who is there who does not respect
\ The upholders of Your Doctrine?

\ My enthusiasm ever grows for this system,
\ Which overcomes all sorts of opposition,
\ Is free from any internal contradictions,
\ And brings fulfillment of humanity's two goals.

\ For the sake of this, You gave away
\ Again and again during innumerable aeons,
\ Sometimes body, other times life,
\ Loved ones, and great wealth of possessions.

\ When I see such excellence of Yours,
\ I see that Your great heart brings forth the Teaching,
\ Just like the fishhook drags out the fish;
\ What a sorry fate not to hear it from You!

\ But even with the force of that sorrow,
\ I will not let my mind waver (from the Teaching),
\ As the mind of the mother
\ Always goes after her beloved child.

\ And even what I think upon Your speech,
\ Thinking "That Teacher, surrounded completely
\ With nets of light-rays, blazing with the glory
\ Of the auspicious signs and marks,

\ Spoke in this way with his Brahma-voice!"
\ Then the image of great Shakyamuni
\ Just dawning in mind, heals me well,
\ As moon-rays heal the pains of fever.

\ Though that good system is thus marvelous,
\ Inexpert persons get totally confused
\ In every respect, as if they were
\ Tangled up in jungle grasses.

\ Seeing this method, I myself
\ Followed after the sages
\ With repeated efforts,
\ Seeking Your intent again and again.

\ And I studied numerous treatises

\ Both Buddhist and non-Buddhist,
\ But, still outside, my mind
\ Agonized in the trap of doubts.

\ So I went to the night-lily garden
\ Of the treatises of Nagarjuna,
\ Prophesied to elucidate correctly
\ The method of Your Unexcelled Vehicle,
\ Free of the extremes of being and nothingness.

\ And there I saw, by the kindness of the Guru,
\ Everything illumined by the garland of white light

\ Of the eloquent explanation of the glorious Moon (Chandrakirti),
\ Whose expanding orb of taintless wisdom
\ Courses unobstructed in the sky of Scripture,

\ Dispelling the darkness of the extremist heart,
\ Eclipsing the constellations of false teachings;
\ And then and there,
\ My mind attained relief at last!

\ Of all deeds, speech is supreme.
\ And for this very reason, experts
\ Commemorate the Buddhas
\ For this (highest Teaching).

\ I renounced the world on the example of that Teacher,
\ My study of the Victor's speech is not inferior,
\ I am a Buddhist monk, energetic in yoga-practice;
\ And such is my respect for that great Seer!

\ By the Guru's kindness, I was able thus to meet
\ The Teaching of the Unexcelled Teacher.
\ And I dedicate this virtue as a cause of all beings'
\ Being looked after by the holy spiritual teachers.

\ May the Teaching of that Benefactor, till world's end,
\ Be undisturbed by the winds of wrong prejudices,
\ And, finding faith in the Teacher by understanding
\ The natural way of the Teaching, may it ever increase!

\ May I uphold the good system of the Muni
\ That illumines the real fact of relativity
\ Through all my lives, though I give up body and even life!
\ And may I never let go of it even for an instant!

\ May I spend all day and night reflecting
\ On the methods to propagate this (Teaching),
\ Achieved by that best Leader through boundless hardships,
\ By making strenuous efforts the essence (of His lives!)

\ As I strive in this way with pure high resolve,
\ May Brahma, Indra, and the World-protectors,

\ And Mahakala and the other Dharma-protectors,
\ Always befriend me without fail!

This "Essence of Eloquent Teaching", a praise of the Unexcelled Teacher Lord Buddha, the unsolicited best friend of all peoples, from the perspective of His teaching of profound relativity, was composed by the learned monk, Losang Dragpai Pal, at the royal mountain retreat of Tibet, the heavenly retreat of O-de-gung-gyal, otherwise known as Victory Monastery. The scribe was Namkha Pal.

The translation is done by Professor Robert Thurman and the staffs of the Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala.

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