



Complete Buddhist Path of Enlightenment  
The Twelve Dependent Origination Link



# What are we covering on “The twelve Dependent-related links”:-



- 1. General explanation on concept of dependent origination*
- 2. General explanation on the working of the Twelve dependent origination links*
- 3. Scripture presentation on The twelve dependent-related links*
- 4. Experimental presentation on The twelve dependent-related links*
- 5. Actual meditation on the twelve dependent-related links*
- 6. Additional notes on “Dependent-related links”*



# 1 General concept on the principle of Dependent Origination

## 1.1 General Explanation - Principle



**The principle of Dependent Origination is the central teaching of the Buddha. Through the understanding of Dependent Origination, the Buddha attained Enlightenment.**

*He said, "Deep indeed is Dependent Origination. It is by not realizing this principle that all men have become entangled like a ball of thread, unable to stop suffering and rebirth".*

*Forward note from Buddha*

***Two illustrations to explain Dependent Origination – Oil lamp and sprouting of seed***

## 1.2 General Explanation - Principle



### Principle of dependent origination



**The flame in an oil lamp burns dependent upon the oil and the wick. When the oil and wick are present, the flame in an oil lamp burns. If either of these is absent, the flame will cease to burn.**

**Example used by Buddha himself.**

## 1.2.1 General Explanation - Principle



### Principle of dependent origination



**Dependent upon the seed, earth, water, air and sunlight, the sunflower seed sprouts and grows**

## 1.3 General Explanation – 12 links



- 1. Particularly, we are interested in the principle of dependent origination as it applies to the problem of suffering and rebirth.**
- 2. Dependent origination is essentially and primarily a teaching that has to do with the problem of suffering and, how to free ourselves from suffering.**
- 3. Dependent origination is not a description of the evolution of the universe.**
- 4. The twelve dependent-related links make up the dependent origination**

## 1.4 General Explanation – 4 Noble Truths



The principle that both have in common is the principle of causality – the law of cause and effect, of action and consequence.

Four Noble Truths	Dependent Origination
First Noble Truth (Suffering)	Suffering is the <u>effect</u> of the cause of suffering
Second Noble Truth (Cause of Suffering)	
Third Noble Truth (End of Suffering)	End of suffering is the <u>effect</u> of the path to the end of suffering
Fourth Noble Truth (Path to end of suffering)	

## 1.5 General Explanation



**Definition of dependent related phenomenon is**

*“A phenomenon that exists (or established) in dependence upon its parts”.*

*Because there is no phenomenon  
That is not a dependent arising,  
There is no phenomenon that is not empty*

*(Nagarjuna – “In Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle way”)*

## 1.6 General Explanation



**There are three levels of dependent relationship:  
“Gross; Subtle and Very Subtle”**

**Every functioning thing that we perceive directly is  
gross dependent-related. For example:**

<b>Gross Dependent-Related</b>	<b>" A Rose" arising from its causes</b>
<b>Subtle Dependent-Related</b>	<b>"A Rose" existing in dependence upon its parts</b>
<b>Very Subtle Dependent-Related</b>	<b>"A Rose" existing as a mere imputation by conceptual thought</b>

## 1.7 General Explanation



***Since the twelve dependent-related links are principally related as cause and effect, they are presented as examples of “Gross dependent-related phenomena”***

***The twelve dependent-related are called “links” because they interrelate without any break, like a circular chain of twelve links that binds us within samsara.***

***They are sometimes called “Limbs” because samsara is like a body that has twelve interdependent parts.***

## 1.8 General Explanation



***If we see dependent relationship  
No ignorance will arise  
Therefore, with a great deal of effort  
We should try to realize dependent relationship***

***(Aryadeva – “In Treatise of Four Hundred Verses”)***



## **2 General Explanation of the working of the Twelve Dependent Origination Links**

## **2.1 General Explanation on dependent-related links**



- 1. To practice Dharma is not merely to carry the name of being a Buddhist. Nor is it to make certain superficial alterations in our lifestyle.**
- 2. Dharma practice means the total integration of our minds and the Dharma.**
- 3. For this to become possible, cultivate spiritual stability – a sense of pure renunciation**
- 4. Once we recognized the true nature of samsara and become disillusioned with it, generate spontaneous aspiration to attain liberation from it.**

## 2.2 General Explanation on dependent- related links



**Two ways to develop renounced mind:-**

- ✓ ***Involves meditation on the two aspects of samsara (nature and causes of samsaric suffering).  
This is via Four Noble Truths***
- ✓ ***Thru' meditation on the twelve dependent-related links (See 2.3)***  
  
***(The discussion which follows discuss on 2<sup>nd</sup> method:  
Thru' meditation on the twelve dependent-related links)***

## 2.3 General Explanation on dependent- related links



### Two ways of explaining the twelve links:-

#### 1. A scriptural presentation

*“Which explains the twelve as a general mode of the nature of samsaric evolution” (See 3)*

#### 2. An experimental presentation

*“which speaks of the twelve links in terms of how they are experienced by an individual over a continuum of lifetimes. (See 4)*

*The order of the links differs slightly between the two systems.*



### 3 Scriptural presentation

“Explains the twelve as a general mode of the nature of samsaric evolution”

### 3.1 General Explanation



*How is twelve dependent-related links are:-*

1	Dependent-related ignorance
2	Dependent-related volitional actions
3	Dependent-related consciousness
4	Dependent-related name and form
5	Dependent-related six sources
6	Dependent-related contact
7	Dependent-related feeling
8	Dependent-related craving
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming
11	Dependent-related birth
12	Dependent-related ageing and death

## 3.2 Dependent-related Ignorance



- 1. Dependent-related ignorance is a desire realm ignorance that grasps persons and phenomena to be inherently existence and that induces the development of throwing karma.**
- 2. When we can clearly identify this first link, dependent-related ignorance, we are approaching a realization of selflessness.**
- 3. To identify in our own experience this ignorance and its conceived object, we need to engage in repeated contemplation and meditation.**

### 3.2.1 Dependent-related Ignorance



- 4 To identify in our own experience this ignorance and its conceived object, we need to engage in repeated contemplation and meditation.**

*For example, while we are meditating, we can deliberately arouse strong self-grasping by imaging that we are in great danger.*

*We can imagine the floor of our meditation room is caving in, a fire broke out in our room or a bomb is about to explode. This imagination hopefully develop fear and a strong sense of “I”.*

### 3.2.2 Dependent-related Ignorance



- 5. When this sense of “I” has arisen in our mind, we have a great opportunity to identify our dependent-related ignorance grasping at “I”.**
- 6. If we analyze skillfully, we also be able to identify the conceived object of this ignorance.**

### 3.3 Dependent-related Volitional / compositional actions



- 1. Volitional / Compositional actions are throwing actions that are rooted in ignorance and cause us to take rebirth in samsara.**
- 2. Two types: Virtuous and Non-virtuous**

## 3.4 Dependent-related Consciousness



- 1. As soon as any volitional action is completed, it leaves a potentiality within our consciousness.**
- 2. The function of this link is to hold the potentiality of a compositional action until it ripens as an effect.**

## 3.5 Dependent-related Name and Form



- 1. Dependent-related Name and Form refers only to the aggregates of a person immediately at the moment of conception.**
- 2. Dependent-related Form is the form aggregate, and dependent-related Name refers to the remaining aggregates of feeling, perception, volitional action and consciousness.**
- 3. Dependent-related name is so called because it refers to the aggregates that are the basis for imputing or naming a person.**

## 3.6 Dependent-related six sources



- 1. Dependent-related six sources refers to the five sense powers and mental power before the six consciousnesses have begun to function.**
- 2. At the moment of conception, the body sense power and mental power are present, but need to developed gradually in womb.**
- 3. When all six powers are generated, they are called “dependent-related six sources” because they are sources of six consciousnesses.**

### 3.6.1 Dependent-related six sources

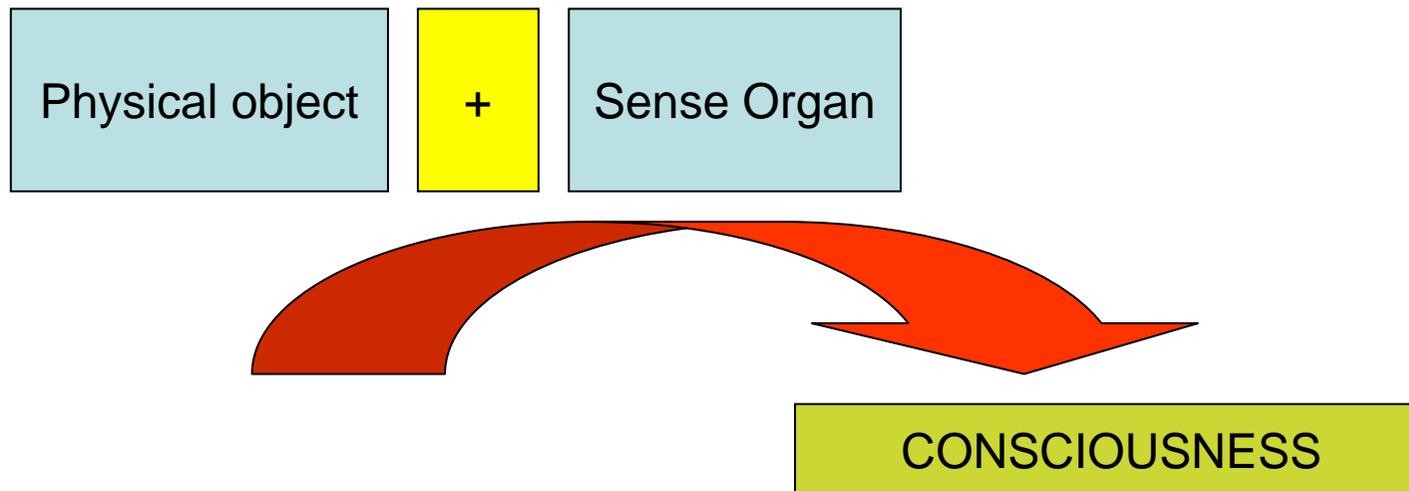


- 4. At this stage, the six consciousnesses are not yet awakened.**
- 5. This six sources are said to be like empty rooms in a house waiting to be occupied by the six consciousnesses.**

## 3.7 Dependent-related Contact



- 1. In dependence upon the complete evolution of the sense organs of the foetus, the six powers are developed; and when these meet their objects, the six consciousnesses are generated.**



## 3.8 Dependent-related feeling



- 1. Dependent-related feeling is a mental factor that arises in dependence upon dependent-related contact.**
- 2. Dependent-related contact – knows its object as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral**
- 3. Dependent-related feeling – actually experiences the object as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.**

## 3.9 Dependent-related Craving



1. In general, craving is a mind of attachment that develops in dependence upon feeling.

2. Experience pleasant feeling – ***attachment***

Experience unpleasant feeling – ***aversion***

Experience neutral feeling – ***crave continuity***

3. Dependent-related craving is a specific type of craving that arises at the time of death

*e.g. craving not to be separated from body, Environment, possession on death.*

## 3.10 Dependent-related Grasping



- 1. In general, grasping is an intensified form of craving.**
- 2. Initial moments of attachment are craving, and increase of attachment is grasping**
- 3. Dependent-related grasping is a specific type of grasping that arises at the time of death.**
- 4. Together, dependent-related craving and grasping activate the potentialities created in the mind by volitional actions i.e., they activate the karma that throws us into our next samsaric rebirth.**

## 3.11 Dependent-related existence



1. Dependent-related existence is a mental action or intention that has the power immediately to produce the next rebirth.
2. Dependent-related existence can be either virtuous or non-virtuous, even though it is always induced by the delusions of craving and grasping.

*For example: if after generating grasping, a dying person performs a virtuous mental action such as going for refuge to Buddha, this ensure virtuous potentialities are activated. And when this happens, dying person will take the higher rebirth / realms.*

## 3.12 Dependent-related birth



- 1. The first moment of any samsaric rebirth, when the consciousness has entered the new form, the moment of conception, is dependent-related birth.**
- 2. Dependent-related birth and dependent-related name & form, occur simultaneously**

### 3.13 Dependent-related ageing and death



- 1. Dependent-related ageing begins in the second moment after birth and continues until the moment of death.**
- 2. Ageing is the momentary transformation of our physical condition.**
- 3. Dependent-related death is the final cessation of the relationship between the mind and the body, and occurs at the precise moment when consciousness leaves the body**

## 3.14 Causes and Effects of links



1	Dependent-related ignorance	Distant or Projecting <b>Cause</b>
2	Dependent-related volitional actions	
3	Dependent-related consciousness	
4	Dependent-related name and form	Projected <b>Effects</b>
5	Dependent-related six sources	
6	Dependent-related contact	
7	Dependent-related feeling	
8	Dependent-related craving	Close or establishing <b>causes</b> (certain to bring their effects)
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment	
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming	
11	Dependent-related birth	Achieved / established <b>effects</b>
12	Dependent-related ageing and death	



#### 4 Experimental presentation

“speaks of the twelve links in terms of how they are experienced by an individual over a continuum of lifetimes [one, two or 3 lifetimes]”



## ***4.1 Explanation of dependent-related links over one lifetime***

## 4.1.1 Explanation on dependent-related links over one lifetime



### Dependent-related link in one lifetime

Causes		
	Dependent-related linkage	Example of growing of seed
1	Dependent-related ignorance	Like a seed
2	Dependent-related volitional actions	Sowing the seed in the field
3	Dependent-related consciousness	Field
8	Dependent-related craving	Water and manure / fertiliser that nourish the seed
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment	
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming	Like the seed at the time when it has received full nourishment and is ready to sprout

## 4.1.2 Explanation on dependent-related links over one lifetime



### Dependent-related link in one lifetime

Effects		
	Dependent-related linkage	Example of growing of seed
11	Dependent-related birth	Sprouting of the seed
4	Dependent-related name and form	
5	Dependent-related six sources	Stages of growth of the crop
6	Dependent-related contact	
7	Dependent-related feeling	
12	Dependent-related ageing and death	Ageing is like ripening of crop Death is like the reaping of crop



## ***4.2 Explanation of dependent-related links over two lifetimes***

## 4.2.1 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in two lifetimes



		Lifetime	
		1st	2nd
Dependent-related ignorance	Distant or Projecting <b>Cause</b>	1	
Dependent-related volitional actions		2	
Dependent-related consciousness		3	
Dependent-related name and form	Projected <b>Effects</b>		8
Dependent-related six sources			9
Dependent-related contact			10
Dependent-related feeling			11
Dependent-related craving	Close or establishing <b>causes</b> (certain to bring their effects)	4	
Dependent-related grasping / attachment		5	
Dependent-related existence / becoming		6	
Dependent-related birth	Achieved / established <b>effects</b>		7
Dependent-related ageing and death			12

## 4.2.2 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in two lifetimes



Causes		
	Dependent-related linkage	Explanation
1	Dependent-related ignorance	Due to ignorance, we do not understand Samsaric sufferings
2	Dependent-related volitional actions	We create a virtuous throwing action (taking refuge in triple gems) in this lifetime
3	Dependent-related consciousness	Virtuous action left potentiality within our mind / consciousness. The first three links are complete.
8	Dependent-related craving	If when we die, we develop craving and grasping and a virtuous mind (taking and going for refuge with the wish to gain human rebirth in our next life).
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment	This virtuous mind will act as the existence link and thus ensure that our virtuous potentiality is activated.
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming	At this point, the six causes are complete

### 4.2.3 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in two lifetimes



		Effects	
		Dependent-related linkage	Explanation
11	Dependent-related birth	Dependent-related name and form	After death, when our consciousness has entered our mother's womb, we shall develop the dependent-related name and form of a human being. This and dependent-related birth occur simultaneously.
4	Dependent-related name and form		
5	Dependent-related six sources	Dependent-related contact	The second moment after dependent-related birth, dependent-related ageing begins. Gradually, dependent-related six sources, contact and feeling develop throughout the human life.
6	Dependent-related contact		
7	Dependent-related feeling		
12	Dependent-related ageing and death		Finally, dependent-related death is experienced, completing one round of twelve dependent-related links within two lifetimes



### ***4.3 Explanation of dependent-related links over three lifetimes***

## 4.3.1 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in three lifetimes



Dependent Origination in three or more lifetimes			
	Dependent-related linkage	Explanation	
1	Dependent-related ignorance	Due to ignorance of self, we create a virtuous action (donating monies to temple) hoping to be born as a rich man next life	1st life / poor man
2	Dependent-related volitional actions	This virtuous throwing action (dana) is what we termed as Karma	1st life / poor man
3	Dependent-related consciousness	Virtuous action left potentiality within our mind / consciousness (stream of consciousness). The first three links are complete.	1st life / poor man
8	Dependent-related craving	If at time of death, in dependence upon craving and grasping, we develop a non-virtuous state of mind such as hatred towards our relatives, this will activate non-virtuous potentialities (e.g., hatred) carried within our mind and prevent the virtuous ones (e.g., donating monies to temple) from ripening at that moment of death.	1st life / poor man
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment		

## 4.3.2 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in three lifetimes



Dependent Origination in three or more lifetimes		
Dependent-related linkage	Explanation	
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming	At this point, the six causes are complete The special mental state of mind at the end of our life which immediately directs us towards our future existence is termed "becoming". In this case, dependent-related existence will be non-virtuous and we shall be thrown into rebirth in the lower realm (say a dog)
11	Dependent-related birth	After death, when our consciousness has entered our mother's womb (dog), we shall develop the dependent-related name and form of a dog.
4	Dependent-related name and form	This and dependent-related birth occur simultaneously.
5	Dependent-related six sources	The second moment after dependent-related birth, dependent-related ageing begins.
6	Dependent-related contact	Gradually, dependent-related six sources, contact and feeling develop throughout the dog life.
7	Dependent-related feeling	
		2nd life / dog
		2nd life / dog

### 4.3.3 One round of twelve dependent-related link completed in three lifetimes



<b>Dependent Origination in three or more lifetimes</b>			
	<b>Dependent-related linkage</b>	<b>Explanation</b>	
<b>12</b>	<b>Dependent-related ageing and death</b>	Finally, dependent-related death of the dog is experienced.	<b>End of 2nd life as dog</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Dependent-related craving</b>	If at time of the dog's death, in dependence upon craving and grasping, we develop a virtuous state of mind and thus activate the previous virtuous potentiality (donating monies to temple - Dana) for higher rebirth that we have carried within our mind.	<b>3rd life / rich man</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Dependent-related grasping / attachment</b>		
<b>10</b>	<b>Dependent-related existence / becoming</b>	In this case, dependent-related existence will be virtuous and we shall be thrown into rebirth in the a higher rebirth say as a rich man.	<b>3rd life / rich man</b>



## ***5 Actual meditation on the twelve dependent-related links***

## 5.1 Actual Meditation On The Twelve Dependent- Related Links

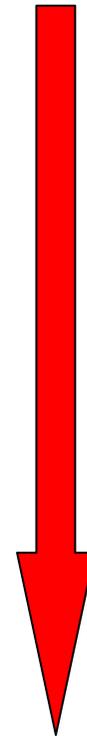


- ✓ Meditation in **serial order** on the dependent relationship of the **side of delusion**
- ✓ Meditation in **reverse order** on the dependent relationship of the **side of delusion**
- ✓ Meditation in **serial order** on the dependent relationship of the perfectly **purified side**
- ✓ Meditation in **reverse order** on the dependent relationship of the perfectly **purified side**

## 5.2 Actual Meditation On The Twelve Dependent- Related Links



1	Dependent-related ignorance
2	Dependent-related volitional actions
3	Dependent-related consciousness
4	Dependent-related name and form
5	Dependent-related six sources
6	Dependent-related contact
7	Dependent-related feeling
8	Dependent-related craving
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming
11	Dependent-related birth
12	Dependent-related ageing and death

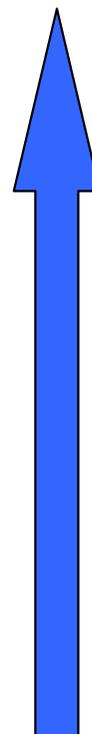


The first two ways of meditation are said to be “of the side of delusion” because they reveal the step-by-step development of samsara from its root cause, ignorance.

## 5.3 Actual Meditation On The Twelve Dependent- Related Links



1	Dependent-related ignorance
2	Dependent-related volitional actions
3	Dependent-related consciousness
4	Dependent-related name and form
5	Dependent-related six sources
6	Dependent-related contact
7	Dependent-related feeling
8	Dependent-related craving
9	Dependent-related grasping / attachment
10	Dependent-related existence / becoming
11	Dependent-related birth
12	Dependent-related ageing and death



The second two ways of meditation are said to be “of the perfectly purified side” because they reveal the step-by-step cessation of the twelve dependent-related links and the attainment of liberation.

## 5.4 Meditation in serial order On The Dependent relationship of the side of delusion



1. **Meditate on each link separately, considering how each one causes the next**

*(How ignorance causes volitional actions and so forth until dependent-related ageing and death)*

2. **We are doing meditation in serial order on the dependent relationship of the side of delusion**
3. **This meditation reveals how over and over again, true sufferings arise from true origins (ignorance)**

## 5.5 Meditation in reverse order on the dependent relationship of the side of delusion



1. **If we first meditate on the sufferings of this life such as sickness, ageing and death, and then meditate on each link in reverse order**

*(How all sufferings of this life, implied in the link of dependent-related ageing and death does come from dependent-related existence and so forth back to dependent-related ignorance)*

2. **We are doing meditation in reverse order on the dependent relationship of the side of delusion**
3. **This meditation makes us develop a strong determination to eliminate ignorance by contemplating and meditating on emptiness**

## 5.6 Meditation in serial order On The Dependent relationship of the perfectly purified side



### 1. If we meditate on the cessation of dependent-related ignorance

*(How cessation of ignorance brings about the cessation of dependent-related volitional actions, and if we continue to meditate this way on the cessation of each link and,*

*how it comes about in dependence upon the cessation of its previous link....)*

### 2. We are doing meditation in serial order on the dependent relationship of the perfectly purified side

## **5.7 Meditation in reverse order on the dependent relationship of the perfectly purified side**



- 1. If we first meditate on the cessation of sufferings of this life, that is, on the cessation of dependent-related ageing and death**
- 2. And, how this cessation comes about by means of the cessation of dependent-related birth and so forth to the cessation of dependent-related ignorance,**
- 3. We are doing meditation in reverse order on the dependent relationship of the perfectly purified side**

## 5.8 Meditation on the twelve links



**If we practice these four ways of meditating on the twelve links, continually and without distraction, this becomes a powerful method to increase our wisdom and our concentration.**



## 6 Additional Notes

(Cyclical interpretation of twelve dependent origination)

## 6 Dependent origination into group



Cyclical interpretation but does not depend upon a distribution of the twelve links amongst three lifetimes but into three groups

Three period		Twelve dependent links		Groups of		
				Defilements	Kamma (actions)	(Sufferings)
Past Period	1	Ignorance		1		
	2	Volitional formations			2	
Present Period	3	Consciousness				3
	4	Name and form				4
	5	Six sense bases				5
	6	Contact				6
	7	Feeling				7
	8	Craving		8		
	9	Clinging / grasping		9		
	10	Karmic existence / Becoming			10 (part)	10 (part)
Future Period	11	Birth				11
	12	Ageing and death				12



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