

MEDITATION ON DEPENDENT ORIGINATION

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INTRODUCTION

In modern educational systems, physical sciences have a firm place of importance. Anatomy, for instance, is seen to be useful in teaching students how to understand and how to care for their bodies. Study towards an understanding of the mind, however, and how to care for it through mind-training, does not seem to have much priority. As a consequence, those Buddhist teachings on meditation, or mind-training, which concern the achievement of mental stability in the short-term, and mental transformation in the long-term are a neglected educational resource, even in Buddhist countries.

When considering education in modern Buddhist countries, and the potential use of Buddhist teachings in public education, one must approach the vast array of traditional Buddhist teaching resources carefully. Meditation, or mind-training, is a process of gaining familiarity with the mind. To offer training in developing meditation tools and techniques themselves, without recourse to the question of the meditational focus, or content, may work towards stability in the short-term, but for actual transformation to occur, there needs to be an appropriate focus for meditation.

If meditation is a process of familiarization, we have to ask ourselves what we truly need to become familiar with. In order to guide and mature our intelligent students, it is best to choose content that directly addresses the situation we find ourselves in, and to employ meditation for the purpose of making that situation, in all its correct structure and detail, familiar to the mind.

I believe that it is necessary to go beyond short-term stability, and to consider meditation as the most effective way of making the mind familiar with those information structures that are vital to our transformative potential as human beings on a spiritual path.

The meditation on dependent-arising is truly a template for understanding how our minds (and even our bodies) work, how we got into our present situation, and where we can go from here. A correct understanding of the processes which we undergo in our human

experience, is not only a pre-requisite to the most profound teachings, it is also very useful in itself!

Accordingly, I will present the dependent-arising teachings, and the two meditational structures related to it, as clearly as possible, as a recommendation to apply these excellent teachings within the sphere of modern education.

My paper concerns the forward-sequence and reverse-sequence meditation on the twelve links of dependent-arising, based on Gorampa Sonam Senge's (1429–1489) exposition of this topic. Although Gorampa included the full series of presentations for each of the four major Indian Buddhist Schools, namely the Vaibhāṣika, Sautrāntika, Yogācāra and Mādhyamaka, I will concentrate on the Mādhyamaka school's presentation as the basis for the aforementioned forward and reverse sequence meditations.

THE TWELVE LINKS OF DEPENDENT-ARISING

The Buddha has said

The skillful means by which one may scale the imprisoning walls of saṃsāra and ascend the highest reaches of the mountain of liberation, is none other than the realization of dependent-arising.¹

Māhāyana texts say that the root of saṃsāra is our ignorance concerning 'person', and that furthermore, at the root of this ignorance concerning 'person' is an ignorance of the ultimate mode of all things. These texts explain that the object, to which this ignorance clings, is 'the extremes'. After cutting off these extremes, through the realization of the view of emptiness, all mental afflictions and afflicted karma will cease.

Nāgārjuna said, in his *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*, "Since there are no phenomena which are not dependently arising, there are no phenomena which are not emptiness."²

He pays homage to the Buddha in his *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*

Salutations to the perfect Buddha, who is supreme among all speakers. He taught dependent-arising free from annihilation and eternalism; neither going, nor coming; neither separate nor identical; it is the peace which is free from every elaboration.³

1 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p.1b.

2 *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*, Chapter XXIV, verse 19.

3 *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*, two salutation verses.

Candrakīrti also says, in his *Madhyamikāvatāra*, “This logical reasoning of dependent-arising annihilates the entire web of evil views.”⁴

Having ascertained the sequential manifestation of dependent-arising, together with its sequential reversal, one’s meditation upon these processes of dependent-arising becomes the actual ladder by which one may ascend through the three states of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha and bodhisattva enlightenment.⁵

Gorampa explains the presentation of dependent origination known to all schools, by means of the individual natures of the twelve links, how they are related as causes and results, and within how many lifetimes these twelve links are fully manifest.

Those phenomena which are designated as ‘phenomena’ are the basis of dependent-arising because they appear in the subjective minds of people, but they are not established as phenomena from their own side.⁶

The meaning of emptiness and the meaning of dependent-arising are ultimately the same. This is because, although in mere conventional appearances, individual causes and results are fixed, things neither arise from no causes, nor from inappropriate causes.

When the reason for the arising of a result from a specific cause is analysed, one will find that, ultimately, results do not arise from causes, because they are free from ‘the four possibilities of arising’.⁷ This is dependent-arising.

The way of meditating on the defiled links of dependent-arising in a sequential way reflects the order in which those links appear in the practitioner’s mind. This way of meditating is consistent with the order of appearance of the defiled links and leads to realization that suffering is the final result of karma and defilement.

The twelve links of dependent-arising are:

1. ignorance
2. karmic formation
3. consciousness
4. name-and-form
5. the six sense perceptions
6. contact

4 Candrakīrti’s *Madhyamikāvatāra*, Chapter VI, verse 114, p.176.

5 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, pp.1b-2a.

6 *Ibid.*, p.11a.

7 Arising from the cause itself, arising from something other than the cause itself, arising from both, and arising from neither.

7. feeling
8. clinging
9. grasping
10. becoming
11. birth
12. aging/death

The definitions (*mtshan nyid*):

Ignorance is a delusory mental factor which has a way of grasping that is contrary to wisdom-awareness and which also has the ability to motivate defiled actions.

Karmic formation is a defiled action, motivated by ignorance, which has the power to impel consciousness into the next life.

Consciousness is the seed aspect of the ‘All-Base Consciousness’, which holds the latencies of action, if we consider it as the causal aspect of consciousness. When we consider it as the resultant aspect of consciousness, dependent upon one’s causal action, it is the very moment of conception in the mother’s womb.

Name-and-form is the formation of the five aggregates, from the moment after conception.

The six sense perceptions constitute the complete formation of all six of the sense perceptions, through the development of name-and-form.

Contact is a mental factor which discerns the changes taking place regarding the object after the object, sense faculties and consciousness come together. This all takes place after the six sense perceptions have met with the object.

Feeling is a mental factor which experiences pleasure, suffering and neutrality, as discerned by contact.

Clinging is a mental factor which attaches to feelings.

Grasping is a mental factor which attaches to the causes of feeling, such as body and wealth.

Becoming is an intention that accumulates new karma which impels new life. This is based on the ‘two-part cause and effect presentation’ of the 12 links. Based on the ‘one-part cause and effect presentation’ of the 12 links, becoming is a process which makes the potentiality of the karmic latencies powerful after nurturing the previous karmic formations by clinging and grasping.

Birth is the gradual process of formation of the five aggregates at the time of rebirth, due to the power of becoming.

Aging and death: The reason for counting aging and death as a single link is that it is possible to die without aging.

Aging is the transformation of one's physical life into a different form.

Death is the process of ceasing one's faculty of life, exclusively of a single lifetime.⁸

Once the process is set in motion, an inevitable series of transferences of momentum occurs, in one direction only. Each transference is motivated by the previous link in the sequence and each leads into the next link, in the following way:

Although ignorance has no beginning, nevertheless the current ignorance arises from the previous moment of ignorance.

Karmic formations arise due to the condition of ignorance, because, by the power of ignorance, the accumulation of new karma which impels new life, arises.

Due to karmic formations, consciousness arises. This is because, if we consider the causal aspect of consciousness, the later moments of consciousness, which have latencies arise from those previous karmic formations. If we consider the resultant aspect of consciousness, the impelling of consciousness into a birth arises, from previous karmic formations.

Name-and-form arise from consciousness. This is because the gradual increase of the latencies of name-and-form arise from consciousness, which has latencies, if we consider the causal aspect of consciousness. If we consider the resultant aspect of consciousness, the gradual development of name-and-form arises, from the moment after conception in the mother's womb.

The six sense perceptions arise due to the condition of name-and-form. This is because the gradual development of name-and-form leads to the complete formation of the six sense perceptions.

Contact arises due to the condition of the six sense perceptions. This is because, when the six sense perceptions meet with the object, the gathering together of the object, the sense faculties and the consciousness arises. Through this, discernment of changes regarding the object arises.

Feeling arises from contact because, as contact discerns, the experiences of feeling arise.

Clinging arises from feeling because, due to the power of feeling, attachment towards the adoption and rejection of pleasure and misery arises.

8 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, pp.12a-15a

Grasping arises from clinging because the clinging to feeling gives rise to an aspiration to search for the stimulus of the feeling.

Becoming arises from grasping because, due to the power of grasping, impelling karma which has become more powerful in its impelling capability, arises.

Birth arises from becoming because, due to the power of becoming, one is drawn into different migrations, and into different classes of beings.

Aging and death arise from birth because, due to the power of birth, transformation of one's physical life arises, and ceasing of one's life-force, arises.⁹

Since the twelve links have the nature of cause and result, one may wonder, which of the links are to be seen as essentially causal links, and which are to be seen as essentially resultant links.

Gorampa mentions that, according to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, these six: ignorance, karmic formations, consciousness, clinging, grasping and becoming, are essentially causal links. The remaining six are essentially resultant links. Further, according to Gorampa, Nāgārjuna maintains that consciousness is also an essentially resultant link. Therefore, for him there are seven essentially resultant links.¹⁰

The twelve links are also defiled in nature, in the following way:

Ignorance, clinging, and grasping are double-defilements, because they motivate the defilement of karma and they draw the defilement of birth. Karmic formations, consciousness, and becoming are the defilements of karma because they motivate the double-defilements and they draw the defilement of birth.

The remaining six links are the defilement of birth, because they are the ripened nature, which is the result of karma and defilement.¹¹ Nāgārjuna explains that consciousness is also the defilement of birth. "The first, the eighth, and the ninth are the double-defilements. The second and the tenth are the defilement of karma. The remaining seven are suffering."¹²

Vasubandhu in his *Abhidharmakośa*, Maitreya in the *Madhyāntavibhāṅgha* and Asaṅga in the *Yogacara-bhumau vastusamgraha* also explain the defiled nature of the twelve links in the same way that Nāgārjuna did.

9 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, pp.15a-16a

10 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p.16a.

11 Ibid.

12 Gorampa quotes Nāgārjuna in the *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p.16a

The Abhidharmakośa says, “Three links are defilement, two are karma, and seven are bases and also results.”¹³ In the above quotation, ‘defilement’ means double-defilement, ‘karma’ means defilement of karma, and ‘bases and result’ means defilement of birth.

The Madhyāntavibhāṅgha says, “Three and two are defilement and karma. And seven are impure concepts.”¹⁴ In the above quotation, ‘defilement’ means double-defilement, karma means the defilement of karma and ‘the impure concepts’ are the defilement of birth.

Asaṅga’s explanation is based on the given acceptance of the seed aspect of the all-base consciousness. However, the above quotations from Nāgārjuna and Vasubandhu are based on non-acceptance of the all-base consciousness, in reference to this particular presentation.

The Madhyāntavibhāṅgha’s explanation is based on the given acceptance of the ripened aspect of the all-base consciousness.

All of the twelve links of dependent-arising can be subsumed into four branches of impelling and accomplishing, as follows:

1. Ignorance, karmic formations and causal consciousness are the branches that impel.
2. Name-and-form, six sense perceptions, contact, and feeling are the branches of those which are impelled.
3. Clinging, grasping and becoming are the branches which accomplish.
4. Birth and aging are the branches which are accomplished.

If one accepts the idea that there is a cause for ignorance and that there is a result of aging and death, then the number of links must increase. On the other hand, if one accepts the idea that there is no cause for ignorance, and no result of aging and death, then saṃsāra would have an end, ignorance would not be temporary and all other links would be devoid of cause, because there is no cause for ignorance. Also, one would be liberated without effort, after completing one set of the twelve links, because there would be no result of aging and death.

Even though there is a cause for ignorance and there is a result of aging and death, there is still no fault to the ascertainment of the number of the links as being twelve, because that cause for ignorance, and that result of aging and death, belong to another set of dependent-arisings.

The Ratnāvalī says,

13 Abhidharmakośa, Chapter III, verse 26.

14 Madhyāntavibhāṅgha, Chapter I, verse 11.

With these three pathways, mutually causing each other,
 Without a beginning, middle or an end,
 This wheel of cyclic existence turns like a whirling firebrand.¹⁵

During birth, aging and death there is continuity of grasping to the aggregates as truly existent. This grasping is conceptualization, which is the obscuration of knowledge. Every moment of this conceptualization generates grasping to the person as truly existent. This grasping to the person is the ignorance of the twelve links of dependent-arising.

The Śūnyatāsaptati says, “The Buddha said, “The fact that things arising from causes and conditions are conceived as truly existent, is ignorance.” From this ignorance, the twelve links arise.”¹⁶ Thus the ignorance which grasps the aggregates as truly existent is said to be the cause for the twelve links.

Similarly, the Mūlamādhyaṃakakārikā says, “Karma and defilements arise from conceptual thought.”¹⁷

The Ratnāvalī says, “As long as one has grasping to the aggregates, so long will one have grasping to the self.”¹⁸

The Uttaratantraśāstra says, “Karma and defilements always abide in erroneous concept.”¹⁹ Grasping to the aggregates and grasping to erroneous concept is grasping to things as truly existent.

Until one realizes that the aggregates are not truly existent, one will always grasp to things as truly existent. Therefore, this grasping to things as truly existent is ignorance, which is the cause of the twelve links.

When one attains the Path of Seeing, by directly realizing that the aggregates are not truly existent, those śrāvakas who are in training, and those not in training, as well as bodhisattvas on the first seven bhūmis, attach to the aggregates as mere designation. This conceptualization is the obscuration of knowledge, which does not impel defiled karma.

In that way, until one realizes that the aggregates are not truly existent, during the experiencing of the twelve links one always has grasping to the aggregates as truly existent. As a result, one always has the ignorance of grasping to the person as truly existent.

15 Nāgārjuna’s Ratnāvalī, Chapter I, verse 36.

16 Nāgārjuna’s Śūnyatā saptati, pp.118-119, verse 64.

17 Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamādhyaṃakakārikā, Chapter XVIII, verse 5.

18 Nāgārjuna’s Ratnāvalī, Chapter I, verse 35.

19 Maitreya’s Uttaratantraśāstra, Chapter I, verse 56.

Āryadeva, in his Four Hundred Stanzas says, “Just as the sense faculty of the body pervades the entire body, likewise, ignorance exists everywhere. Therefore, when ignorance is destroyed, all the defilements are destroyed.”²⁰

In the instance of the very shortest duration, it is theoretically possible to complete one set of samsaric causal and resultant dependent-arising within two lifetimes, in the following way. Having accumulated impelling karma in the earlier portion of one’s previous life and having nurtured it by means of the accomplishing karma in the later portion of one’s previous life, then in one’s next life, impelled result and accomplished result arise.²¹

In the instance of the very longest duration, it is theoretically possible to complete one set of samsaric causal and resultant dependent-arising within three lifetimes in the following way. Having accumulated impelling karma in one’s previous life and having nurtured it by means of the accomplishing karma, impelled and accomplished results will arise in one’s next life.

The life which accumulates the karma and the life which nurtures the karma do not necessarily arise consecutively. This is because, when one accumulates impelling karma, it is possible that there could be many intervening lives before the arising of the life which nurtures the impelling karma.

The life which is nurtured by accomplishing karma, and the resultant accomplished life, certainly arise consecutively. This is because, when accomplishing karma nurtures impelling karma, the strength of the karma which accomplishes rebirth is made more powerful.²²

The whole of saṃsāra is comprised of nine grounds:

1. the ground of the desire realm
2. the first ground of the form realm
3. the second ground of the form realm
4. the third ground of the form realm
5. the fourth ground of the form realm
6. the first ground of the formless realm known as Limitless Space
7. the second ground of the formless realm known as Limitless Consciousness
8. the third ground of the formless realm known as Nothingness

20 Āryadeva’s The Four Hundred Stanzas, Chapter VI, verse 10.

21 Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p. 19a.

22 *Ibid.*, pp.19a-19b.

9. the fourth ground of the formless realm, known as The Peak of Cyclic Existence

Transmigration of sentient beings to these nine grounds can be subsumed into three categories:²³

1. transmigration to the same ground from which one has departed
2. transmigration to a higher ground from a lower ground
3. transmigration to a lower ground from a higher ground

If this categorization is elaborated, then there are eighty-one possibilities of transmigration. This is because, from the nine grounds, nine transmigrations are possible to the single ground of the desire realm. Likewise, from the nine grounds, nine transmigrations are possible to each of the four grounds of the form realm. Similarly, from the nine grounds, nine transmigrations are possible to each of the four grounds of the formless realm. Thus the total number of possibilities of transmigration is eighty-one.²⁴

From these twelve links, only the later eleven, excluding ignorance, are included in the ground where one is born. This is because the six links (or seven, when consciousness is counted as a ripening result) of the ripening result must be identified as the defiled aggregates of one's present life.

Furthermore, the impelling karma from one ground cannot impel a ripening result in another ground. Nor can the accomplishing karma belonging to one ground accomplish a ripening result in another ground. Ignorance belongs to the ground where one is to be reborn. For rebirth, there are nine possibilities.

One will be reborn in the desire realm from nine grounds. The reason is that, the ignorance belonging to the higher realm cannot motivate impelling karma to the desire realm. This is because, until one attains the actual mental state of a higher realm, the ignorance of the higher realm will not manifest.

Also, it is not possible to accumulate the karma to impel to the desire realm, once one has obtained the actual mental state of the higher realm, and maintains it undiminished, because the desire realm is seen to be inferior.

In brief, regarding ignorance, there are four possibilities:

²³ Ibid., p.23b.

²⁴ Gorampa Sonam Senge, *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p.23b.

1. Ignorance belonging to both the grounds of birth and death is exemplified by a person taking rebirth in the desire realm from the desire realm.
2. Ignorance belonging to the ground of birth but not to the ground of death is exemplified by a person taking rebirth in the desire realm from eight other grounds.
3. Ignorance belonging to the ground of death, but not belonging to the ground of birth, can be exemplified by persons taking rebirths to eight remaining grounds. These would be, for example, a person taking rebirth from the desire realm to the first dhyana of the form realm, and so on, up to 'the peak of cyclic existence' of the formless realm.
4. Ignorance that does not belong to either ground, is exemplified by all remaining permutations of the eighty-one possible rebirths.

These explanations are given, based on the ignorance of the mental consciousness which motivates. However, if it is the ignorance which is the follower of the defiled mind, it must belong to the body which has accumulated the karma. This is because the defiled mind focuses on the all-base consciousness and grasps it as self. This being so, it is not possible that the defiled mind grasps the all-base consciousness of another place as self.

Pure dependent-arising: in general, the later moments of the path to liberation arising from the earlier moments of the path to liberation and the truth of cessation arising in dependence on the truth of path, and so forth, are the pure dependent-arisings. This is because, these resultant pure dependent-arisings come into being from the pure causal dependent-arising. Both the cause and the result are pure.

With regard to these pure causes and results, the very cause does not transform into the nature of result and the result does not arise without depending on the cause. However, the certainty of the dependence of these results to these causes cannot bear examination with logical reasoning. However, on the conventional level, causes and results having a specific fixed relationship,²⁵ comprises the complete meaning of dependent-arising.

If we consider that pure dependent-arising manifests in the place where the defiled links of dependent-arising cease, then there are two possibilities of this manifestation:

25 Here the specific fixed relationship means, a barley sprout only growing from a barley seed. For instance, if lion cub were to be born from an elephant, it would be an unknown animal!

1. the stages of ceasing the links of dependent-arising of ordinary beings and the trainees of śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas.
2. the stages of cessation of the defiled links of dependent-arising of sravakas and pratyekabuddha arhats and noble bodhisattvas.

This first point is made clear by Nāgārjuna in his *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*, “With the cessation of ignorance, karmic formations will not arise. The cessation of ignorance occurs through meditation and knowledge of suchness.”²⁶

Thus, karmic formations will not arise because ignorance has ceased. Having identified the cause of ignorance in this way, then Nāgārjuna further said, “By the cessation of ‘such and such’ cause, ‘such and such’ result will not arise. This mere heap of suffering will thereby utterly cease.”²⁷

Thus it is taught that after the karmic formations cease, the later links will cease in forward sequence. According to this *Mādhyamaka* presentation, meditation on suchness is the cause for the cessation of ignorance. This is the meditation on the ultimate view of the realization of ‘selflessness of person’. In order to understand this, one must realize the ultimate non-existence of one’s aggregates. In this way, the ordinary beings and the trainees of śrāvakas, and pratyekabuddhas attain the ‘path of seeing’, and so on.

The second point, of the cessation of the dependent-arising of the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha arhats and noble Bodhisattvas is that, although they do not have the defiled twelve links, they have a similar twelve links arising from a latent propensity of ignorance and undefiled karma, which will not cease until the attainment of Buddhahood. This is because they have not eliminated the latent propensity of ignorance.

It is mentioned in the *Uttaratantra* that:

These individuals have the latent propensity of ignorance and undefiled karma from which the mental nature of birth and aging, of undefiled karmic formation, the illness of subtle latent propensities and inconceivable transforming death occur. Since the sublime Buddha has eliminated these four, he has attained eternity, nobility and so forth.²⁸

One may wonder about what the twelve links of these noble beings are and when they cease. Their ignorance is a latent propensity of ignorance, their karmic formations are undefiled karma, their virtue and

²⁶ *Mūlamādhyamakakārikā*, Chapter XXVI, verse 11.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, verse 12.

²⁸ Gorampa quoted the *Uttaratantraśāstra*, in the *Rten 'brel gyi rnam bzhag 'khor 'das rab gsal*, p.26b

accompanying afflictions of the wish to take rebirth for others' benefit are the three links: craving, grasping and existence. From these links, the other links: name-and-form, six sense perceptions, contact and feeling, which constitute mental nature, are born. That birth is the birth of mental nature. The momentary ceasing of the birth of mental nature, followed by a momentary arising of it, is karmic formation. The inconceivable transforming death of these noble beings is: birth, aging and death.

These twelve links will cease when the vajra-like samādhi at the end of the continuum destroys the two obscurations, along with the latent propensities. That latent propensity of ignorance having ceased, the later links all cease and the four perfected qualities of omniscience, eternity, double-purity, and complete bliss will be attained.

The reversal sequence comes from birth, in a reverse of the order by which karmic formations have manifest, ultimately from ignorance. This reverse-sequence way of meditating on the defiled dependent-arising reverses the order in which dependent-arising appears in the minds of practitioners. The purpose of this is to realize that ignorance is the final root of suffering.

Meditating on the cessation of ignorance, which arises from the cessation of karmic formations, and so on, up to the cessation of birth, aging and death, is forward-sequence meditation on the perfectly pure dependent-arising. This is because, the sequence of dependent-arising appearing in the minds of practitioners, and the manner in which the perfectly pure dependent-arising manifests, are consistent. The purpose of this meditation is to realize the truth of cessation, which is the final result of practicing the path.

Meditation on the cessation of birth, leading to the cessation of aging and death, and so on, up to the cessation of ignorance, leading to the cessation of karmic formation is the reverse-sequence meditation on the perfectly pure dependent-arising. This is because the order of perfectly pure dependent-arising appearing in the minds of practitioners and the manner in which the perfectly pure dependent-arising manifests are inconsistent. The purpose of this meditation is to realize the final root of nirvāṇa, the abandonment of saṃsāra which is the awareness-wisdom, the complete opposite of ignorance.

In brief, due to the condition of the seed, the sprout, and so on, arises. This is the external dependent-arising. Due to the condition of ignorance, karmic formations, and so forth arise. This is the internal dependent-arising. All these are on the conventional level. Even though one accepts cause and result, when these causes and results are analysed as being one or different, permanent or impermanent, entities

or non-entities and so forth, if any one of these extremes of analysis is accepted, then one becomes a proponent of the system of True Existence.

The Mādhyamaka School does not accept any of the extremes, it only accepts the way things appear due to causes and conditions. Defilements, karmas and ripened results are without beginning or end. If cyclic existence is well understood in this way, the wisdom which realizes that there is no arising and no cessation, cuts through it.

Everyone who is interested in meditation, should pay attention to Vasubandhu's statement: "Abide in sound moral conduct, endowed with much learning and contemplation. Then engage completely in meditation."²⁹

In particular, one should first meditate on the aforementioned twelve links of dependent-arising and focus on their forward-sequence of arising. Once one becomes familiar with the identities of each link and how each link arises due to causes and conditions, yet having no intrinsic nature, one will have a firm experience of how dependent-arising and emptiness are inseparable.

After this is established, one should meditate on the reverse-sequence of the twelve links of dependent-arising. In this meditation, with all the aforementioned prerequisites, one's focus should be on the reverse-sequence of cessations of each of the twelve links. Then one will have a good understanding of how we wander in saṃsāra, endlessly. Yet, intrinsically, saṃsāra neither arises nor disintegrates and this is the clear portrait of the non-differentiation of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa.

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