

Dependent Origination

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular lectures during the monthly international retreats held at Suan Mokkh and then Suan Mokkh International Dharma Hermitage. Usually, Ajahn spoke in Thai and Santikaro Bhikkhu interpreted into English live. Audio recordings are now available from www.suanmokkh.org and www.bia.or.th. The following is a transcription generously made by a Dhamma volunteer. If you noticed possible improvements to the text and would like to contribute, please kindly contact the Buddhādāsa Indapañño Archives in Bangkok (suanmokkhbkk@gmail.com).

Today we will discuss *paṭiccasamuppāda* (dependent origination) as our last topic.

We began speaking about the six elements as the basic foundation of everything, and then how these elements compound together and there arise the *āyatanas* (media) through which there is communication, through which there is knowing, through which there is contact. And then through this activity of the *āyatanas*, there arise the *khandhas* – the five *khandhas* (aggregates) are conditioned or concocted. Which is basically our ordinary everyday life, the five *khandhas* are nothing but ordinary existence for us. And then, once there are the *khandhas*, there can arise the condition or the conditioning, that we call ‘dependent origination.’ Which is the dependent origination of *dukkha*, the way that pain arises based on, through a series of conditions. And it’s the *khandhas* which experience this *dukkha*, the *dukkha* happens to the *khandhas*. So, based on the six elements, we have the *āyatanas*. Based on those *āyatanas*, we have the *khandhas*, which are our ordinary life, and then based on these *khandhas* (aggregates) there appears the conditioning which we call dependent origination, in which *dukkha* occurs to life or happens to the five *khandhas*.

These things we are speaking about are described as *paramattha*, which means absolute and ultimate or even universal. What we are talking about as being absolute or ultimate is what we call a law or truth, so this level of speaking is that of ultimate truth, of the absolute law or universal truth, universal law. This in Thai is called *paramattha-thamma* or the Dhamma which is *paramattha*. *Paramattha* here means that which is very profound, which has a meaning which is extremely profound, and it also means ‘of great benefit.’ Something whose

benefit is most profound. This is the level that we are speaking on now.

Paramattha-dhamma (ultimate truth, the universal law) is the fundamental basis or foundation for morality, for ethics, for virtuous conduct. In turn morality or ethics is the basis for what we call religion. All religions then is the way of achieving peace in this world. All human beings desire peace, and religion is the means of achieving that peace. But this religion we must see as having its ultimate roots in universal truth, in ultimate truth. So this level of absolute truth is the underlying principle of religion. We must see how these are connected upon the foundation of ultimate truth. Therefore we set up morality, morality is derived from ultimate truth. And then the application or the practice of morality is religion. We should see how these are all connected in order to understand these things thoroughly.

Any system of morality, any aspect of morality, which is not directly based in ultimate truth will fail, that system of morality will fall apart, will not be able to last, if not firmly established in ultimate truth. In turn, any religion that is not based in genuine and correct morality will not last. A religion which isn't based in proper morality will fail, will decay and will eventually disappear. So then, for religion to survive, for it to succeed it must have its foundation directly in ultimate truth, otherwise it won't be able to last.

Paramattha-dhamma (absolute truth of nature) is the Dhamma or the knowledge, which when we know it, will enable us to extinguish dukkha. Ultimate truth then is the way the thing that helps us, enables us to extinguish all dukkha. This is the first benefit or purpose of ultimate truth. Further, ultimate truth is the foundation for morality. Morality means the actions and speech, the living together in this world which brings about peace, meaning that peace is not possible in this world without a morality that is properly grounded in ultimate truth. The second value or benefit of ultimate truth is that which enables humanity to live together in peace. So there are these two benefits of ultimate truth: one is personal, based on the individual life, in which the knowing of ultimate truth leads to the ending of all dukkha; and then the second is social, leads to the benefit of our being able to live together in peace. These are the benefits of ultimate truth.

Seeing that everything is merely made up of elements, that all things are just made up of elements. Or seeing the six āyatanas, and then the ten groups based on the foundation of the āyatanas. Seeing that all things are merely the sixty automatic mechanisms. And seeing that life is merely the five khandhas, seeing that it is just dependent origination, to see things, to see life on this level of ultimate truth has the great benefit of enabling us to realize the fact that all things are not-self. When we're able to see things as they are in terms of the elements, the senses, the aggregates, or as dependent origination, this enables us to see the reality of *anattā*, that everything is not-self, that all things are not-self. Though the purpose, the value of realizing the truth of not-self is that it enables us to let

go or to overcome selfishness, and then to protect against the arising of more selfishness, which is a benefit that is desperately needed in the modern world. In this present world, the thing we need most of all is to realize the truth of anattā which will enable us to drop or let go the foolishness of *attā*, of belief in self, of clinging to self. And then, realizing anattā will help enable us to prevent the arising of more self, which in turn eliminates selfishness, protects us, guards against the arising of selfishness. This is what is most needed in the present world.

Please take a good look at the most wicked and ugly thing that exists in the world, namely selfishness. Take a look at selfishness and see all the crisis, all the problems, all the destruction it brings about. The poor are selfish, the wealthy are selfish, capitalists are selfish, the workers are selfish, the employers are selfish, the employees are selfish, the great powers are selfish, the little countries are selfish, in short, the world is full up with selfishness. And this is why we have so many problems.

The environment is being destroyed more and more because of selfishness, pollution is increasing in the world due to selfishness. The disaster of drug addiction is due to selfishness. There are more and more people with mental diseases who are insane because of selfishness. Even the number of suicides is increasing due to selfishness. Look carefully and see that the roots of all these things are in selfishness, and because of this increasing selfishness in our world, the world is heading to destruction.

To look at in another way, because of material progress and development it is easier and easier for people to be selfish, because people are so infatuated with material goods, with consumer products, because people worship material and sensual pleasures, there is more and more selfishness. And there is more industry, growing industry, expanding industry, the primary purpose of which is to support our infatuation and worship of materialism. And so all this material development, all of our industry serves primarily to create more opportunity for selfishness. One should examine this carefully, we must be very careful about these things, otherwise they will destroy the world.

If the world is unable to control selfishness then the more material development and progress we have the more it will be fired and led by selfishness and the more problems we will have. Please, concern yourself with this fact and examine what we can do about it.

On the personal level, in individuals, we can see that there are tremendous problems created by selfishness. Because of selfishness people are unable to control themselves. And this results for example in more and more crime, more and more criminals, which makes it impossible for people to find any true happiness in life. Even husbands and wives are full of selfishness, and so they argue and can't even keep a happy home. This is how selfishness is ruining the

lives of individuals.

Take a look back at primordial times, or immemorial times, back then our distant ancestors realized the danger and disgustingness of selfishness. So they did what they could to create religions, to develop religions as tools to control selfishness. And so we can say that all religions originated with the sole purpose of controlling and eliminating selfishness. The different religions would go about this in different ways, which is natural because the religions have appeared and developed in different times, different places, different cultures, but all of them have always had the purpose of controlling and overcoming selfishness. This has been true since ancient times and continues to be true today.

Those people however, didn't realize where selfishness came from, because they didn't know where selfishness came from, they were not able to eliminate selfishness themselves. Instead they had to depend upon external things, in particular God. They thought that God would save them from selfishness. Whether this will work or not is an important question for everyone to consider. Selfishness comes from our own foolishness. This foolishness is inside us. Is it then possible to eliminate the problem by depending on something external? Can God save us from a problem within ourselves? This led to a second kind of religion, a religion that realized that selfishness comes from the illusion of self. And this illusion of self is due to our own ignorance. And so this second kind of religion saw that the way to eliminate selfishness is to eliminate the ignorant illusion of self. That means that there are two basic approaches. One is the approach that relies on something external, such as God. The second approach is to deal with the causes of selfishness directly within oneself, especially to overcome ignorance that is the basis of self and selfishness. Which of these approaches will work the best is something for each person to sort out for themselves. One should consider this carefully and choose what is proper for oneself.

It's not necessary, however to use the word 'God,' instead we can use the word 'the supreme thing' or 'the highest thing.' Then we can ask, can this supreme thing help us overcome selfishness? Can this supreme thing end selfishness? If we conceive of this supreme thing as being something personal, as having a self or being the ultimate self, then we have one kind of religion. But we can also understand that the supreme thing is not a person or a self or individual but the supreme thing is truth, is ultimate truth or the absolute universal law of nature. And, then we must ask, which kind of supreme thing is able to end selfishness? Buddhism is the kind of religion that takes ultimate truth as being the supreme thing. The ultimate law of nature such as dependent origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*) which we are about to talk about. Buddhism takes this as being the supreme thing seeing that this is the way to end selfishness. So one can take a God, in other words one can depend upon a God which is personal or

individual or one can depend on a God which is impersonal, which has no individuality, which is not-self, a God which is another name for the universal law of nature. One can choose between a personal God and an impersonal God in trying to overcome selfishness.

If anyone would like to say that Buddhism has a God, they can say so, if they understand that the God of Buddhism is impersonal, is a God which is not-self. Many Europeans claim that Buddhism has no God. They do so because they forget that there are two kinds of Gods; there is the personal, egotistic God and the impersonal God which is not-self. If one understands that there is also an impersonal God, then one can see that Buddhism has a God, but this God of Buddhism is the impersonal God. Or, in other words this impersonal God of Buddhism is the truth or law, the universal law of dependent origination, which we will be discussing.

So now we would like to examine this dependent origination, which is the law applying to all of nature. It is a truth which is universal, encompassing all of nature. We would like to examine this to see how it is that it can be such a universal law, and then how it is able to eliminate selfishness. Please listen very carefully in order to understand what dependent origination is about.

There are two kinds of dependent origination. There is the form of dependent origination which is easy to see in ordinary life, the kind of dependent origination that any intelligent human being can see ordinarily. And then there is the kind of dependent origination which is very difficult to see and understand. It requires special study and practice to understand all of its profundity. So there are two kinds of *paṭiccasamuppāda*, there is the easy kind which anyone can see and understand, and the difficult very profound kind which requires special study and exploration.

Both the easy kind and the difficult kind were taught by the Buddha himself. These aren't things which we have come up with later. They are not later inventions. Both forms of dependent origination, the difficult and the easy, were taught by the Buddha himself.

The easy form of dependent origination begins with the interaction of the *āyatana*s, the inner and outer *āyatana*s, so that consciousness, sense consciousness (*viññāṇa*) arises. For example, the eye which is inner and the form which is outer, these interact and then eye consciousness arises. This is something which each of you can see directly for yourself, without great difficulties.

Then these three meeting together, working together are contact – namely eye, form and eye consciousness.

These three together are called 'contact.' This is something that you can observe for yourself. Each of you can do this.

And what is quite easy to see further, is that because of contact there is feeling. This is very clear.

The difficult form of dependent origination begins like this, begins in a much more difficult to understand way. Because of ignorance, *saṅkhāra* (concocting) arises, because of *saṅkhāra*, consciousness arises, because of consciousness or with consciousness as a condition mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*) arises. Now this is very difficult to understand. Ignorance causes *saṅkhāra*, but we don't know what *saṅkhāra* is. And then *saṅkhāra* causes consciousness and you don't know what that means, and then how consciousness is the basis for mind-body. These are all very difficult to understand. To understand this beginning of dependent origination requires very special study and investigation. So, although you may know something about it, we should put it aside for a bit and first discuss the simple version which is much more obvious for ordinary people.

We have eyes, ears, nose, tongues, bodies and minds, and the nature outside us is full of forms, sounds, odors, flavors, touches and mental objects. When the two, the inner and outer interact, then there is sense consciousness, sense consciousness appears. This is something that is happening over and over again in our lives. But you haven't seen it, you haven't observed it. Because you don't pay attention, you're not aware that this is happening all the time. Ceaselessly there is interacting of the senses and arising of the sense consciousness is happening over and over again, continuously in our lives.

So, we have eyes, ears and etc., outside there is forms, sounds, odors etc., these interact and then sense consciousness arises. These three, sense organs, sense objects and sense consciousness, when they work together, when they function in cooperation, that is contact, contact appears. This is happening all day long. If not by the eyes, then the ears; if not by the ears, the nose; if not by the nose, the tongue; if not by the tongue, the body; and if not the body, the mind. If not one then another, all through the day. This is happening without let up, so we need to observe this, we must pay attention to this fact that contact (*phassa*) is going on all day long.

From contact there arises feeling* (*vedanā*, pleasant feelings, unpleasant feelings and feelings in the middle. These three kinds of feelings are always arising out of contact. There is the senses, sense consciousness and contact happening all the time. And so, feeling is arising all the time as well. We need to observe that there is always feeling; sometimes pleasant feeling, sometimes unpleasant feeling, sometimes middling feeling which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, this is happening throughout the day.

When there is feeling then there appears desire, wanting things through the power of stupidity. When there is some kind of feeling there will be some kind of desire. Depending on whether the feeling is satisfying or unsatisfying, desire will

flow according to the direction or influence of the feeling. If the feeling is pleasant, satisfying, then there is the desire to have, to get, to keep, to collect, to pile up. If the feeling is unpleasant, unsatisfying, then there is the desire to destroy, to kill, to obliterate. If the feeling is in the middle, neither pleasant nor unpleasant, then there is the desire to run in circles around that thing. One gets obsessed or hung up on the feeling without understanding it. There are these different kinds of desires arising from the different kinds of feelings. These desires are always, it should be understood, ignorant. There are these feelings and then due to the power of ignorance there are these desires, this kind of craving, that occurs. You must watch this for yourself and see how often this desire is happening. It's happening all the time. See how many times this stupid desire, how many kinds of desires are happening each day and observe those desires to see whether they are foolish or not. This is something for each person to study for themselves – all these desires happening throughout the day.

Now we come to the part that is a bit difficult to understand, but it's not beyond your ability. When there is desire there arises the concept of 'I' desire, 'I' the desirer – whether the desire is positive or negative. When there is some form of desire, there arises the concept of 'I' the desirer, the wanter, and so on. This is where the concept of self appears. We call this attachment or clinging, or grasping. It's where the illusion of *attā*, of *atman*, of self, of soul occurs. When through these natural mechanisms desire arises, and because of ignorance, because everything that's happening is not understood according to truth, then the mind conceives of the 'I' who desires, the desirer. This is where the self appears. This is somewhat difficult to understand, but it can be observed, each of us can pay attention to and observe this as it happens just about constantly throughout the day.

Once there is this attachment or grasping through the desire as 'I,' the desirer; once the self is conceived, then there is what we call 'existence' (*bhava*) – *bhava* (existence) meaning existence of the self. Once this 'I' concept has been conceived, then the self exists. This can be compared with pregnancy. First there is conception when the sperm fertilizes the egg and then the embryo grows and grows and grows, what we call pregnancy – the developing fetus. In the same way but within the mind, there is the conception of self through attachment, through desire and then that self exists, it develops further and further, this is called *bhava*, existence of the self.

Now one important thing that you must observe is that the desirer, the 'I' who desires, arises after desire. The one who desires is born after the desire. This sounds illogical to our normal way of thinking. We assume that for there to be something, some action or activity, there must be someone to do it first. So this can be difficult because it goes against our ordinary way of thinking. But look carefully that the desirer appears after the desire. Or we can say the actor appears

after the action. This sounds silly, so look at it carefully. There first must be the mental action, the desire for there to be the actor, this conception of self as 'I' desire or 'I' act. Children will shake their heads at this. It doesn't make any sense to them, but in fact, first there is desire which is a mental action and then the mind attaches to the desire as 'I' desire, 'I,' the actor. And this concept of self grows develops until it is complete and then there is birth. The ego is fully born, born as doing this, doing that, doing things according to the ways of ego. So it may sound a little funny but there is the doing before the doer. Doing comes before the doer, action comes before the actor. This may be very difficult to understand at first but it is something very important to observe.

This process reaches this state where ego is born, which is totally illusive or delusive concept, it's a total fallacy. Don't let your scientific beliefs or your so-called rational thinking prevent you from obscuring what's actually happening. Our rational habits of thought tell us that for there to be an action there must first be an actor. There has to be someone to do it first. But reality is not that way. And so we must be able to free ourselves of these limitations of our so-called logic and rationality in order to observe the important fact that there is doing before the doer, that the action comes first and only then the actor is born, this illusion of an actor, a doer, an owner which grows into ego, the fully born ego, this illusion comes later. One should be very careful to examine this, so that we can understand what is called *attā* (self). The only way to understand this is to see these things for ourselves.

Here we should understand that *jāti* (birth*) doesn't mean physical birth – child birth from the mother's womb is not meant here. What is meant is a mental birth, a birth within the mind. This happens like a lightning ball, it's so fast. It's happening hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of times each day. We should understand *jāti* in this way, as mental birth, or as birth in a spiritual way, a spiritual kind of birth, not as some kind of physical birth. This is how *jāti* or birth ought to be understood.

So we use the same words to describe very different things. We use the word 'birth' to describe on one hand physical from the mother, and on the other hand mental birth which is a whole different matter, which occurs in the mind through the power of ignorance, desire and attachment. Very different things but we use the same word 'birth.' It's important that we see this distinction, if we're going to understand what we call self (*attā*). It can only be understood if we examine such very subtle distinctions and meanings of things. Now, we're talking of a birth which is mental and once there is this birth then the self, the ego is complete, is born and has a kind of life of its own. And once this ego is born then there is a problem, there will be dukkha and suffering. Please take the time to put forth the effort to examine this.

So there is the one kind of birth, the physical birth where we say, this is the

father and this is the mother. But when it comes to mental birth, who is the father? Who is the mother? If you understand this, then you will see that in mental birth, desire is the mother, and ignorance is the father. When father-ignorance and mother-desire mate, then there is attachment to self. The self grows, there is the conception of self, the growth of self and then birth of the ego. So then we say, ‘you must kill your father and mother’ – people are startled by this. People aren’t listening carefully, they misunderstand when we say ‘kill your father and kill your mother.’ Your physical father and mother, the ones responsible for physical birth, they are to be respected, honored and cared for. But the mental parents, ignorance and desire, these ought to be killed. Rub them out so that there is no more birth of ego.

So ordinary birth produces an ordinary child, in the way that everybody knows and understands. But mental birth, ego birth, produces a child, a mental child of ego. The difference is very big. One kind of birth leads to a material child, the other kind of birth leads to a child which is an illusion, the delusive ignorant concept of self. The difference is that, there is the birth of a material, physical child, and there is the birth of an illusion, a delusive concept of self. It’s this latter birth which is the foundation of selfishness. Selfishness is rooted in the mental birth of this self illusion. Our problems, the destruction, the pain, the misery of selfishness are based on this illusion of self, which is a mental birth.

Now the problem doesn’t finish here, because there is still foolishness remaining. And so when ignorance is still there and the self is born then the mind goes and clings to things as being ‘mine,’ as belonging to self. Once there is the illusion of self, there arises further illusion of things belonging to self, of being of-self. In Pāli this self is called *attā*, and this of-self, this belonging to self, is called *attaniya*. So the ignorance goes even further than self it creates the illusion of self, all the things that are connected to self, involved with self, pertaining to self, concerning self. And so the problem expands much further, it’s not just the problem of self, it’s the problem of belonging to self, connected with self. It’s not just the problem of ‘me,’ it’s the problem of ‘mine.’ And so all kinds of things, everything, is grabbed onto as belonging to self, as related to self whether positive or negative things, they are grasped at, clung onto as belonging to self. And so the confusion, the turmoil, the chaos in the mind grows even further and the dukkha, the pain of it increases as well.

In Thai, this is very easy to talk about, because in Thai they have many first person pronouns. In English, we just have ‘I.’ But in Thai, they have many of these kinds of words on various levels. And there is a very crude one, *goo*, which is a very crude kind of egoistic I. So in Thai it is very easy to express with the term *goo*, which is ego or ‘Igo’ – it’s the ‘I’ that is a big, fat ego, crude and stupid. And then there is *konggoo* which is ‘of-self,’ but it’s not just ordinary self, it’s this stupid, crude self. And so there is ego and of-ego, or *goo*, *konggoo*. So, there

is not just the self, or the ego, but then possessions, home, clothing, car, money, wife, husband, children, friends, fame, status, power, sex, all these things are being grasped at, the whole world is clung to as being of-ego, of belonging to ego. Once there is ego then all these things are latched onto as of-ego, belonging to ego, *goo* and then there arises *konggoo*. And so in this way we fill up the world with problems, we fill up our lives with suffering. With all this grasping at the things of the ego, the things that belong to ego, then all these things become burdens, life becomes quite heavy.

Now you can observe then, how this self and of-self, *goo* and *konggoo* is the basis of selfishness. Selfishness can't occur without this self and of-self existing first, without that illusion. This is something that's happening over and over again in your own mind, and so you can start to observe it there in order to see that only because of self and of-self does selfishness occur. This is why Buddhism endeavors to eliminate the illusion of self and of-self. This is what Buddhism tries to destroy the ego and the things belonging to ego, because then there is no basis for selfishness. Selfishness won't be able to exist, if Buddhism can eliminate 'me and mine.'

Now we would like to speak about the form of dependent origination in which the Buddha spoke in detail and a subtlety that is very difficult to understand. The easy version which we have been talking about begins the *āyatana*s, with the senses. The difficult form of dependent origination, however, explains how the senses arise. The easy version starts with the senses which are easy to observe, but the full version, the more profound version shows where the senses come from. This difficult version begins with the word *avijjā-paccaya-saṅkhāra*. *Avijjā* is the state of not-knowing, it's the lack of knowledge, or ignorance. This is the condition for which arises the power of *saṅkhāra*. There is a power of conditioning, of concocting that occurs due to ignorance. Because there is this ignorance this lack of knowing, then there is this power of conditioning, of concocting, which will concoct up all kinds of things.

Then we must ask the question, this power of concocting concocts what? What is concocted or conditioned by this power? We say that the consciousness element, (*viññāṇa-dhātu*) which exists in nature, which is naturally existing already, this is concocted into consciousness of the eyes, ears, nose tongue, body and mind. So then this power of concocting concocts the consciousness element into active functioning consciousness of sense objects. So then, we could say, the mental element is concocted into this basic level of mind, that of sense consciousness. This is what is concocted by *saṅkhāra*.

Once consciousness is concocted then it searches for, it looks for a basis on which to be conscious. This is consciousness in order to know sense objects, sensory experience. And so it searches for something on which to base itself, something to set up on, it's looking for an office in which to work. And so in this

way, due to consciousness there arises mind-body (*nāma-rūpa*). The body and the mind then exist as the foundation through which consciousness will be able to know sensory experience. So then once consciousness is concocted then it finds a place, something on which to establish, and thus arises mind-body.

Once there is mind-body then there arises the six *āyatanas* (senses). The senses arise out of mind-body. Then from here onwards, it follows the same natural mechanism, as in the easy to see version. This difficult form of dependent origination points out how, through the power of ignorance, the senses arise. And then from there on the senses, contact, feeling happens in the same way as the easy to understand version.

So there is the kind of dependent origination that begins with the senses and then goes on from there. This is the easy to see version. We can observe it without much difficulty. Then there is the difficult version that starts on a much deeper and more subtle level which shows how the senses arise. And then from there on it's the same. So it's the same thing, we're talking about the same thing, it's just a degree of difficulty and subtlety and profundity. But it's still the same thing, matter or truth of dependent origination. This truth of dependent origination was called by the Buddha 'the beginning, the starting point of our study and practice.'

The advantage and benefit of understanding dependent origination is that we can stop this stream or flow of dependent origination. The reason to understand it is so we can stop it, so this stream doesn't flow on and create or manufacture dukkha. So what we need is the wisdom and mindfulness to stop this flow of dependent origination. If one practices *ānāpānasati* correctly and sufficiently, one will have well-trained mindfulness and will have developed the wisdom needed to stop this flow of dependent origination. And then one can keep it on just the level of natural mechanism, so that it doesn't develop dukkha.

At the center where you're training we study this dependent origination, we study it in order to understand why we must practice, what we must practice and how we must practice. So we study this law of dependent origination. And the more we study it, the more we understand how dukkha arises, the more we will see the need for mindfulness and wisdom. And so then we also practice *ānāpānasati*. We train ourselves with mindfulness with breathing so that we have the mindfulness (*sati*) and wisdom (*paññā*) needed to stop the flow of dependent origination. So it's necessary that we practice *ānāpānasati* and necessary that we study dependent origination. We need both this correct study and correct practice in order to solve the problems of our lives. Now, you may not be able to complete your study and practice in ten days. If such is the case, don't abandon it, don't throw it away, just because the ten days are over. But keep studying this, keep studying the truth of dependent origination, keep training yourself with *ānāpānasati*, so that as conditions develop you will have the ability to stop the flow of dependent origination and quench dukkha. So even if ten days is not

enough, don't give up, keep working on it until you meet with success.

Now you should understand that the school for learning this is not the center over there. The school for learning these things is life itself. The school is the body and the mind – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind sense. This is where to learn these things. So even once you leave this center, the school will always be with you. Wherever you go, the school will be there – the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. This is what we must study, everywhere we go, whenever, however. Study it according to the way we have been describing. Now this word 'study' here doesn't mean reading books. It doesn't mean thinking about it. Reading books and thinking about it is just to understand the method of study. So when we say study, that means to use the mind to go into the experience of these things, to directly experience these things and to observe that experience as deeply as one can. This is what we mean by study. We're not saying to just go around reading books and thinking a lot, but study these things in themselves, using the method we have explained. Wherever you go the school of life will be there. And so you can study this everywhere.

Don't just study this within your own body but take a little time to study this within your partner. As much as this dependent origination is happening within our own lives, it's going on just as much in the lives of our partner. So one should study this in oneself and in one's partner, so that the two of you are able to help each other to control this flow of dependent origination. If you understand it both inwardly and outwardly, and if all couples, all partners in the world were to develop this understanding, things would be totally different.

If we ask where and when, we must say everywhere, all the time. Wherever one goes, wherever one is, whatever time it is, the truth, the fact, the reality of dependent origination is right then and there. When it applies to inanimate things, things without consciousness, we call this law *idappaccayatā*, the law of conditionality. When we speak of conscious things that can experience pleasure and pain, then we call it dependent origination. It's the same law, it is the same fact. It's just when speaking of inanimate things without consciousness, we call it *idappaccayatā*. *Idappaccayatā*, the law of conditionality applies then to everything, all things, physical things and all mental things. Dependent origination is more specific, it applies just to beings who can feel pleasure and pain. But it is the same fact. And so, sometimes it's called altogether *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppādo*, the law of conditionality and dependent origination. This must be studied everywhere, all the time.

Seeing the *dhātus* (elements) completely is to see not-self. Seeing the senses (*āyatanas*) thoroughly is to see not-self. Seeing the five *khandhas* completely is to see not-self. Seeing and understanding dependent origination totally, thoroughly is to see not-self. When one sees not-self, then one sees what one needs to see, what one needs to know. Or if we speak on a more subtle level, one

sees *tathatā* (thusness). The things are thus, they are not-self, they are not of-self, they are not ‘me,’ they are not ‘mine,’ they are just thus. Seeing not-self, seeing thusness is the seeing, the understanding that will destroy selfishness.

Seeing *anattā* (not-self), seeing *tathatā* (thusness) is to have a mind above, beyond positive and negative. The mind that is untouched, unaffected, uninfluenced by positive and negative is the mind which is emancipated. This is the meaning of liberation, salvation – whatever we wish to call it. But now our minds are under the power of positive and negative. We worship the positive, we are afraid of the negative. We are servants, we are slaves of the positive and the negative. So our minds are not free, our lives are not emancipated. This is the importance of seeing *anattā*, seeing *tathatā*, in that the mind will be above all positive and negative. This is the highest realization, this is the highest purpose or duty of religion, a mind that is beyond positive and negative. Then there is no selfishness and there is no *dukkha*, both for others and for oneself. This is the highest that a human life can realize.

The Buddha once said,

“The one who sees the Dhamma sees me, the one who sees me sees the Dhamma.”

And then he said elsewhere that,

“The one who sees dependent origination sees the Dhamma, the one who sees the Dhamma sees dependent origination.”

Which means that the one who sees dependent origination sees the Buddha. So may you all see the Buddha. Although you may have come to Thailand as tourists may you leave as pilgrims, with your backpacks full of the best most valuable things that you can take. May you all see the Buddha and realize the highest success in your lives.

So thank you all for being good listeners, for listening now for more than two hours. We hope that you will be successful in your study and practice, that your lives will realize their purpose and meaning. So good practice to all of you, thank you and we will end today’s session at this time.

I thank you, you needn’t thank me. I thank you because you give me an opportunity to do something worthwhile. I thank you because this is my duty. So I thank you for giving me an opportunity to do my duty. That’s all for today.

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Transcribed by Anonymous (3308-a.drf). Reformatted in 2014
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