

Dependent Origination: The Heart of Buddhism

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[Note: for further reading on this theme, see the book *Under the Bodhi Tree : Buddha's Original Vision of Dependent Co-arising*, Wisdom, Boston, 2017]

In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhādāsa gave regular talks 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 verbatim 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 *paṭicca-samuppāda* or ‘dependent origination,’ in so far as it is Buddhism itself. Or we could say it is the heart of Buddhism.

Regarding this there are some Pāli words which need to be remembered. In Thai we call this simply *patitchasamupabat*, or in Pāli, *paṭiccasamuppāda*. In Thai we don’t feel it necessary to translate this word, we just take the original *paṭiccasamuppāda* and pronounce it in an easy Thai way. So this is one word that needs to be remembered.

Paṭicca means ‘interdependently,’ or dependently, happening interdependently. And *uppāda* means ‘to arise,’ to originate, to happen. So a common translation of the term is ‘dependent origination,’ or ‘to arise interdependently.’

So just like the word ‘Dhamma’ we prefer not to translate the term *paṭiccasamuppāda*. We think it’s better and more convenient to keep the original term from the original language in order to introduce it into all the other languages of the world. We think this is more beneficial.

However in the words of the Buddha as recorded in the Pāli scriptures, he mentions this thing with an even longer name, it's called *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppāda*. It's now much longer *idappaccayatā-paṭiccasamuppāda*. But here we prefer to just refer to it with the shorter name *paṭiccasamuppāda*, but the meaning remains the same. And then now when we're too lazy to mention the full name we can just say *paṭicca* although meaning the full meaning.

Yesterday, in our first talk we discussed the word 'Dhamma' and certain wonderful qualities it has. First of all, this word 'Dhamma' cannot be translated into other languages. There's no word, one single word in any other language that can be used to translate the word 'Dhamma.' Second, Dhamma means everything, Dhamma covers everything without any exception. And third, Dhamma is the answer to all questions, any question you might have, Dhamma will be the answer. These are certain special qualities to bout the word 'Dhamma.'

Today what we'll investigate is how the thing called 'Dhamma' is connected to or related to the thing called *paṭiccasamuppāda*. The Buddha once said that "Whoever sees the Dhamma, sees *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Whoever sees *paṭiccasamuppāda*, sees the Dhamma." Therefore they turn out to be one and the same thing.

Further, he elsewhere said that, "Whoever sees the Dhamma sees me." So what it means is, the one who sees *paṭiccasamuppāda* sees the Dhamma and sees the Buddha. To see the Buddha one must see *paṭiccasamuppāda*. The Buddha reveals to us how *dukkha* arises. The Buddha shows us the reality of *dukkha* and how it happens. The characteristics, symptoms, or modes of how *dukkha* happens is called 'dependent origination' or *paṭiccasamuppāda*. And so showing how *dukkha* dependently arises, that is *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This is the fullest meaning of the Buddha. The one who shows us the dependent origination of *dukkha*, is the Buddha.

Further, we should notice that everything in this universe without exception is demonstrating and revealing *paṭiccasamuppāda*. All things in this universe are showing dependent origination. When we say 'everything in the universe,' we mean all the things that can be seen, heard, smelled, touched, all the things that we can make contact with are what we mean by 'the universe.' In Thai we would call all these things *prakotkan*, which is pretty much the same as the English word 'phenomena,' or 'phenomenon.' So all the phenomena in the universe that we can

see here and make contact with, all of these are revealing and demonstrating paṭiccasamuppāda all the time.

And here we will suggest, we will guesstimate that there is something else which is the opposite of all phenomena. And we'll suppose to call this 'the noumenon.' It is a singular word 'noumenon.' Now when we use the word 'noumenon' we give it simply the meaning, that which is opposed, that which is the opposite of all phenomena. That which is not under the power of the law of dependent origination. That which is too profound to be affected by the law of paṭiccasamuppāda. You may have heard other meanings for the word 'noumenon,' but this is the meaning we give it.

So this is something else to consider at this point, that there ought to be something else which is distinct from all phenomena. Nonetheless, we ought to know that both the phenomena and the noumenon are this thing called 'Dhamma.' Both those things which are phenomena, and that which is noumenon are still all merely Dhamma.

But if we understand these things and we look at them as deeply as possible, we'll see that the ending of paṭiccasamuppāda, the non-existence of paṭiccasamuppāda is the meaning of the noumenon. The noumenon is the ending, the not-being-affected by dependent origination. So when we look at it this way we see that even the noumenon is not unrelated to dependent origination, although its relation is that of being the opposite or being the negation of it. But from this perspective we can see how the two are related.

Sometimes we use simpler terminology. We use the terms 'conditioned thing,' and 'non-conditioned thing.' Conditioned phenomena are conditioned things which have causes and conditions. And the noumenon is the unconditioned things, sometimes we call them 'concocted things' and 'un-concocted things' which has the same meaning. Or even easier in more simple people language, we call them 'compounded things' and 'un-compounded things.' The equivalent Pāli terms are *saṅkhata* for the conditioned, concocted, compounded things, and *asaṅkhata* for the un-conditioned, un-concocted, un-compounded things. Sometimes the Pāli terms are a little different: *saṅkhāra* for the concocted things, and *visaṅkhāra* for the un-concocted things. If we know both of these then we'll know all *dhammas*. If we

know both the conditioned and the un-conditioned then we will know everything that there is.

The conditioned things are the aspect of things that are happening, that are arising, that are originating, being born. And the un-concocted thing is that which isn't born, which doesn't arise. Together both those things that are born and that which isn't born make up all of Dhamma.

Ordinarily, people like us only know about the conditioned, concocted things. We don't know, we haven't seen, we're unaware of the un-conditioned noumenon. Our minds are very much caught up in the things that are happening, that are being born, and we aren't aware of that which isn't born, can't be born. But if we study dependent origination, if we examine it carefully until we see it fully then we can see also that which is the absence, the end of dependent origination.

So please get yourselves ready to take a good deep look at dependent origination so that we can see for ourselves both the concocted, compounded side of things, and the un-concocted, un-conditioned as well. We can give a quite large example of this. The example is evolution. Evolution happens only because of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. Without *paṭiccasamuppāda* there could be no evolution. In fact, they're one and the same thing. Evolution *is* dependent origination.

Paṭiccasamuppāda is both the law that governs evolution as well as the power which fuels it. Dependent origination is both the law, and the strength or power of evolution. Please try to understand this, although it is quite difficult to see. If there wasn't any *paṭiccasamuppāda* there would be no evolution. Only because there *is* *paṭiccasamuppāda* is there evolution. How many millions or billions of years that evolution has taken place, and for how many millions, billions, trillions of years that evolution will continue? All of that is merely the flow of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

When modern scientists call it 'evolution,' we simply call it *paṭiccasamuppāda*. This thing called 'evolution' or called *paṭiccasamuppāda*, happens on a very large scale, it happens on a medium scale, and it happens on a very small scale. It happens in ways that are easy to see and in ways that are very difficult to see. *Paṭiccasamuppāda*, evolution, happens both outside of us as well as inside of us. There are many aspects, many variations, and many manifestation of evolution, of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

You've probably never had the opportunity before to hear that the great awakening of the Buddha was enlightenment regarding paṭiccasamuppāda. So far you've probably only heard that the Buddha was awakened to the Four Noble Truths, the *ariya-sacca*. But in his own words, the Buddha said that the great awakening was the full and total realization of paṭiccasamuppāda which is all of the Four Noble Truths.

Now our dilemma in life is the problem of *dukkha*. Dukkha is the big issue that we need to solve. So when we speak of paṭiccasamuppāda we focus specifically on the issue, the dilemma of dukkha. In fact, paṭiccasamuppāda has to do with everything, but when we talk about it we focus specifically on the problem of dukkha.

Therefore to make it a little easier for communication, we make an important distinction and then have two different names to represent the distinctions. When we talk about the issue of dukkha then we use the word *paṭiccasamuppāda*, 'dependent origination.' But when we're talking about everything, all things in the universe, material and immaterial, mental and physical, then we use the term *idappaccayatā* (conditionality). But when we're only talking about dukkha, and how dukkha happens and how dukkha is ended, then we use the more specific term *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

In fact, the essence of *idappaccayatā* and *paṭiccasamuppāda* are the same but the words are a little different in order to make this distinction. So what sometimes happens is if we say that *paṭiccasamuppāda* is evolution, and vice versa, the people especially the Buddhists who are literalists, who cling to the words in the scriptures too much, they think we're lying to them or playing a trick, because they're too stuck on the literal expressions in the scriptures and they don't look at things broadly in the way we do.

Now, if we look at *paṭiccasamuppāda* until we see it clearly, we'll see that it is merely the stream of conditioning, the stream of concocting. And if you look at evolution it turns out to be the same thing. Evolution is nothing more than a stream of conditioning, of new things being conditioned out of causes and conditions.

So by now you ought to be interested in and quite curious to study this stream of conditioning as it applies to everything? Or maybe some of you feel that that's too much, but you're interested in studying this stream of the conditioning of life, not

necessarily talking about everything, but looking at how this life right here that we experience so intimately, how it is an expression of the stream of conditioning.

Now, here, we limit our studies specifically to the thing we call 'life.' Life is the specific area for our study. When we talk about life we mean the mind-body or the body-mind. Be careful don't make such a separation that it becomes body *and* mind. Don't separate life into two things otherwise you'll die, but it's better to just say mind-body, body-mind, because life is one. This is the area in which we need to study the stream of concocting.

In Pāli we have the term *nāma-rūpa* which literally means 'name-form,' or more simply 'mind-body.' And this term *nāma-rūpa* is singular, it's not mind *and* body it's just mind-body. Life is an integrated whole, we can't just rip it apart into body *and* mind. The flow of events and conditions throughout the universe is nothing more than the flow of, or stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. And then the flow of life is also nothing other than, nothing greater than the stream of *paṭiccasamuppāda*. It's nothing less than, nothing greater than this flow of *paṭiccasamuppāda* throughout the Universe.

So as we examine the flow of evolution, we see that this flow is nothing but new things arising out of conditions. Dependent on causes and conditions new phenomena arise, and then the new phenomena in turn are the causes and conditions for even newer phenomena. And this constant arising out of causes and conditions is what is meant by dependent origination or *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

Evolution is nothing but this stream of conditioned, dependent arisings and originations. And in that flow of dependent origination you can't find the meanings of positive & negative anywhere. When it's all evolution throughout the universe it is merely this stream of things being concocted out of causes and conditions.

The meanings of 'positive' or 'negative,' or the meanings of 'good' & 'evil,' the meanings of 'getting' & 'losing' don't really exist anywhere. It's our own minds that give these meanings to things, the meanings aren't there to begin with. But because some things please us, because we like certain things we call them 'positive' or 'good.' And because other things displease us, because we don't like them we call them 'negative' or 'bad.' But in reality these don't exist in the flow of causes and

conditions. But because of our own inner concocting, we go and give this positive & negative, good & evil, getting & losing to things.

So there is nothing else but just this flow... something new arising out of causes and conditions; arisings, originations coming from causes and conditions. And whatever phenomena arises or occurs it's always appropriate to its causes and conditions. There is nothing else but this flow of dependent origination everywhere. There's nothing positive or negative. The words 'positive' & 'negative,' 'good' & 'evil,' can't be found in this flow, just the flow itself and not these words that we impose upon it.

It is because of our ignorance, because we lack understanding of what's taking place that certain things please us and other things displease us. So we start to like some things and dislike others. And thus, because of our own ignorance, because of our lack of understanding, we go and consider some things to be positive, others negative, some things good, and others bad. This is only because of our ignorance. The reality is just the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda.

So we need to understand what's happening before ignorance can go and stir up, concoct these ideas of good & evil, positive & negative, and so on. So that we see it is nothing but a flow of paṭiccasamuppāda, even female & male don't exist. There're just the causes and conditions, concocting new causes and conditions, flowing on endlessly.

Therefore the study and investigation of dependent origination is the study of the most profound secret of nature. And at the same time it is the study of our own incredible stupidity. At one and the same time we study the most profound secret of nature and our own incredible ignorance. This tremendous stupidity of ours goes and takes a little part of the stream of dependent origination and regards it as being 'me,' or regards it as being 'mine.' Our stupidity goes and takes part of it to be 'happiness' and other parts to be 'suffering,' takes this to be 'good,' and that to be 'bad.' This is our incredible ignorance, it's just the stream of conditions, causes leading to more conditions and causes. There's no 'me,' no 'mine,' no happiness, no suffering, no good, no evil, anywhere to be found.

There's a very simple immediate example of this. In this world there is the male sex and the female sex, and then when these two interact something new happens;

what we suppose to be a child, what we like to call a ‘child.’ Then this child develops according to the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda, the maleness, the femaleness develops accordingly, the two sexes interact and there’s another one of these things that we call a ‘child.’ And then later there’s this same interaction and that continues according to the stream of causes and conditions. There’s another one of these interactions. And it just goes on and on like this.

But because of our ignorance to the facts of life, we go and think ‘*my* child, and then *my* inheritance, and *my* happiness, and *my* sorrow.’ We go and grasp at these things as being ‘me’ and being ‘mine,’ grasp at these things as getting & losing, wining & being defeated, happiness & suffering. This is a very simple, clear example of how we cling how it is just dependent origination no matter what level you look at it, merely paṭiccasamuppāda, but our ignorance makes us see it in different ways.

Let’s look at the biggest scale of paṭiccasamuppāda, that of the entire universe, and see what our ignorance does. Because of this inherent stupidity we go and take things, we take bits and pieces of the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda, we take this one and we call it ‘the Sun,’ we take that one and we call it ‘the Moon,’ and then ‘the stars’ and we give them all names. Then we call this ‘the Earth,’ and that a ‘mountain,’ and that a ‘river.’ And where this stupidity really gets carried away is when we go and call this a ‘person.’ We say this is a ‘person,’ and those are ‘animals,’ and this is the ‘ground,’ and those are ‘trees.’

The reality is it’s just the flow, the process of paṭiccasamuppāda, there’s nothing more. But because of our own gross ignorance, we go calling things Sun, Moon, stars, Earth and a person. So the problem for each of us is: one, to understand the most profound secret of nature; and two, to understand this incredible stupidity of ours. This is the problem, this secret and our own stupidity. So we need to study and investigate until we thoroughly understand this profound secret, and our own profound ignorance.

This is why that the moment you come here we begin talking about paṭiccasamuppāda, because there’s a very important reason for doing this, because both the secret and our own ignorance are concerned with exactly this issue or this reality of paṭiccasamuppāda, so it’s necessary that we jump into this. When you come here to study the Dhamma we try our best to bring your attention to

paṭiccasamuppāda, because this is what we need to understand. This is what our stupidity is all about.

The great importance of studying paṭiccasamuppāda is that when we've really seen it then we won't go around latching onto things in the old way. When we've really seen paṭiccasamuppāda we won't suppose or classify things as being 'good,' as being 'evil,' as being 'positive,' or 'negative.' When we really just see the evolutionary flow of causes and conditions then we won't suppose or classify things as being 'male' or 'female,' and then 'mother' & 'father,' 'son' & 'daughter,' as 'getting' & 'losing,' as 'happiness' & 'suffering.'

Now as long as ignorance is still operating, we'll keep supposing and classifying things in the old way, and this will always lead to *dukkha*. This will keep us spinning around in the old cycles and habits of *dukkha*. But when we've seen this flow of causes and conditions according to reality, then there is no more possibility for attachment by means of ignorance. It's only because of ignorance that we attach, but when we are deeply aware of paṭiccasamuppāda, that attachment through ignorance doesn't occur, and then *dukkha* has no basis.

In the flow of dependent origination there are just causes and conditions stirring up new causes and conditions. But we, because of our ignorance, go and suppose some things to be demons, and others to be angels. We take this to be heaven and that to be hell, this to be happiness and that to be sadness. But it's only through ignorance that we go grabbing onto these things like that. In reality there's just this endless stream of conditioning. When we realize this, then we stop, we stop grabbing on, and then there is no more problem and no more question. All questions and problems end when we have realized the stream of paṭiccasamuppāda.

Let us focus the issue a bit here, the fundamental problem is the problem of positive & negative, that we ignorantly consider things to be positive & negative. Because we don't see the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda then some things are taken to be positive and others to be negative, and this creates all our problems. There isn't any problem in life that doesn't come from this ignorant positive & negative of ours.

But when there is no ignorance, when we are directly aware of the reality of paṭiccasamuppāda, then there is no taking, or regarding, or classifying anything as positive or negative; and when the mind isn't attaching to things in terms of positive

& negative, then it's free. This is the mind that has realized the highest thing, the mind that has come in contact with the best thing there is in life. Because it's no longer ignorant, no longer trapped within the illusion of positive & negative.

So this is the fundamental issue: is there's still stupidity regarding and classifying in terms of positive & negative? Or is there no more of that foolish illusion? This understanding has been known to humanity for thousands of years. Listen carefully, for thousands of years people have understood this.

For example if you go to the very beginning of the Christian Bible to the Book of Genesis, Chapter Two, there is the story that is believed to be thousands of years old, long, long before the time of Jesus Christ. There is the incident where God tells Adam and Eve, "Don't eat that fruit from the Tree of Knowledge." That fruit which will lead you to supposing and classifying things as being good & evil. Don't eat that fruit, that will lead to knowing, to classifying things as good & evil, otherwise you will die! So this is one example of how this issue was understood thousands of years ago.

And this understanding developed further and appeared throughout the world, whether in Buddhism, or in Taoism which was about the same time, or Hinduism which came a bit later. In all of these there is the same teaching: to not fall under the influence of these dualities such as positive/negative, good & evil. Don't fall under the influence of positive & negative. This is an age-old message contained in all the religions.

Lao Tzu who lived about the same time as the Buddha, he used the terms *yin & yang*. Don't fall under the influence of yin & yang. In Buddhism the terminology was *kusala & akusala* (wholesomeness & unwholesomeness). And then in the Hindu teachings it's *puñña & pāpa*, which is roughly goodness & sin, or goodness & evilness, virtue & sin.

Although the terms may differ a bit, the meaning is the same: not to let the mind fall under the influence and power of positive & negative, good & evil, yin & yang, kusala & akusala, puñña & papa. This has been known for thousands of years, but nobody is interested in it. Our highly educated population which we take to be so civilized has no interest in this greatest wisdom ever discovered by humanity. And so now it's wasted, this wisdom goes to waste because nobody cares about it. People

are only interested in spinning around in positive & negative, chasing after the positive, and so this age old wisdom has been wasted. Maybe it's about time that people started to get interested.

Next we'd like to mention something quite amusing about paṭiccasamuppāda. There's one very amusing fact, one which if you see it, you'll understand this fact and you'll understand paṭiccasamuppāda thoroughly. The funny thing about paṭiccasamuppāda is that it comes from voidness and goes to voidness. This ageless, ceaseless process of evolution or paṭiccasamuppāda, which has gone on for so long we can't measure how long; it comes from voidness and leads to voidness.

There's voidness and out of voidness is concocted non-voidness, non-voidness, non-voidness... until there is voidness again. This is what's so funny about dependent origination that it comes from voidness and ends up in voidness. At the beginning, there's just the voidness of causes and conditions, this flow of causes and conditions is just the natural reality of voidness. It starts off... originally there is just voidness, but then as ignorance becomes active in the mind we go and classify and regard things as being a person, as being 'me,' as being 'mine,' as being desirable, undesirable, good, bad, puñña, papa, yin, yang, until the world is just crammed full of positive & negative. When the world is full of positive & negative there's no more voidness. When we're classifying and attaching to things as being positive & negative, the voidness has now been filled up.

Originally, there is just voidness, natural voidness, but then ignorance came in and filled it up with positive & negative. So now we need to study until we really understand the flow of paṭiccasamuppāda and so we understand our own stupidity. And then we'll stop being deceived by the flow of causes and conditions, and we won't get trapped in it anymore. We won't go foolishly classifying things and attaching to them as being 'me' and 'mine,' as being 'self' (*attā*), or 'belonging to self' (*attaniya*). We'll no longer be trapped in positive & negative. And then there is voidness again. When the mind is no longer ignorantly grasping at anything as being 'me' and 'mine,' being positive & negative, then there is voidness. So it comes from voidness and ends up in voidness. This is something well worth your attention.

Because of our stupidity all kinds of problems occur. Now, when we say 'stupid' here, all we mean is not-knowing, a lack of correct understanding. This is what we mean by 'foolishness' or 'stupidity.' Because of this original stupidity then there

arises the wrong understanding that ‘this is *me*,’ ‘this is *mine*.’ There arises the identity of self, the sense of self is clung to, is identified with, as this is ‘my’ self, this is really ‘me.’ And from this identity of self, there comes selfishness.

Once we’re identifying with our self as being self, then we become selfish and then, all the various nasty and ugly things happen in the world, oppression of each other, taking advantage of each other, hurting each other, abusing each other; all this happens because of selfishness. All the terrible, horrible things that happen in the world because of human selfishness come from the identification with self and the ignorance that causes it.

So it’s exactly because of this that we need to understand the stream of dependent origination. Because when we really see this directly for ourselves, then it’s no longer possible to ignorantly grasp at the positive & the negative, to hang on to things as being ‘me’ – that identity of self with self can’t hold, it disappears, and so there’s no basis for selfishness. Without selfishness where will all these ugly, terrible, human actions come from? The violence, the crime, the abuse, the exploitation, that will all disappear when there is no more selfishness to fuel it. This is how the understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda can help the world.

If you examine all the problems in this world you’ll see that they come from selfishness which comes from our own stupidity. The cure for that stupidity which will end our selfishness is the true understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda. This is the understanding, the knowledge that can really help the world. All the stuff you read in books or learn at university or while traveling around Asia, none of this can help the world the way understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda can help.

Due to our not-understanding paṭiccasamuppāda then there arises *attā*, self. *Attā* means the feeling that this ‘me’ that exists, this ‘I’ who exist, here ‘I am,’ ‘I’ exist here; this feeling is what we mean by *attā*, or ‘self.’ Once there is this feeling of self, this identity of self with self, then anything that pleases the self is positive, anything that displeases the self is negative. So because of the self, positive-ness & negative-ness occur.

And then because of this positive-ness & negative-ness there arise the *kilesa*. This is a very important word so please remember it in the original. *Kilesa*, it means

things that pollute, things that defile, that tarnish and make dirty. So these pollutions or defilements arise because of positive-ness & negative-ness.

If there is positive-ness the mind wants it; ‘I’ve got to have it, I’ve got to get it, I’ve got to keep it.’ If it’s negative; then ‘I’ve got to get rid of it, I’ve got to destroy it, I’ve got to kill it.’ And if it’s not clearly positive or negative, then the mind has to figure out, well what is this? ‘Should I want it or should I get rid of it? Do I like it or don’t I?’ So the mind just chases after the thing, spinning around the thing. These are the three kinds of kilesa: the greed categories of ‘I’ve got to have it, I’ve got to get it’; the anger and hatred category of ‘I’ve got to get rid of it, I need to kill it, destroy it’; and then the delusion and confusion category of ‘What is it anyway? Is it good for me or is it bad?’

So there are these three basic categories of defilement, trying to pull in, pushing away, and chasing after and spinning around. Because of positive-ness and negative-ness these different kinds of kilesa occur. Because of these kilesa all our selfish actions happen. All of the kilesa, all the things that pollute our minds arise because we don’t understand paṭiccasamuppāda.

So it’s understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda that can free us from all these pollutions. An easy example of this are the kilesa having to do with sex, all the lust and greed, all the abuse and exploitation that people do to each other, and all the lust and greed they experience because of sex, or concerning sex.

Now, one old fashioned way to deal with this problem is to go look at corpses, to look at rotting corpses in order to weaken one’s feeling of lust. But that’s a really clumsy way of going about it. It’s not nearly as effective as seeing the reality of paṭiccasamuppāda. Just seeing for a moment the reality of paṭiccasamuppāda then one recognizes that this person doesn’t exist, that person doesn’t exist. Maleness, femaleness don’t really exist – there’s just the flow of causes and conditions. And this wipes out all those feelings of sex – all that lust, all that greed, and all the selfishness about sex that are so dominant in the world today. Just by seeing paṭiccasamuppāda all that disappears. This is the direct way, the most efficient way to deal with these kinds of problems, the kind of defilements and kilesa like those of sex.

Other forms of pollution, of wickedness such as anger, hatred, and fear can be eliminated in just the same way. The knowledge of paṭiccasamuppāda will disappear all of these ugly, wicked states of mind. All the things that disturb and trouble our minds – lust, greed, anger, hatred, fear, worry and anxiety, longing after the past, envy, jealousy and possessiveness, sexual jealousy, and all the other wicked states of mind – all of these can be eliminated through the correct understanding, the direct realization of paṭiccasamuppāda.

This brings us to the end or the conclusion of the meaning and purpose of paṭiccasamuppāda. When we thoroughly realize the reality of paṭiccasamuppāda, then we understand directly, totally, the fact of *anattā* (the fact of not-self) – that everything is not-self. There isn't anything that can be classified or regarded as being self, as being 'me' or being 'mine.' Paṭiccasamuppāda ends in the realization of *suññata* (voidness), that the inherent nature of all things is void of self. There's no inherent being or selfhood in anything.

So the understanding of the teaching of paṭiccasamuppāda brings us to the understanding of not-self and voidness. And through the understanding of anattā, and suññata, then there's no chance for paṭiccasamuppāda to happen. Realizing not-self and voidness makes it impossible for paṭiccasamuppāda to occur. Or if we put it more simply, understanding paṭiccasamuppāda ends paṭiccasamuppāda. When we thoroughly understand it, that stops it, there's no more of this dependent origination of ignorance and selfishness. So this is the cause of a quite marvelous statement which goes: 'the understanding of *paṭiccasamuppāda* will eliminate the flow of *paṭiccasamuppāda*.'

Finally, I'd like to thank you all for being very patient listeners, and we'd like to thank you for that. We thank you because you've given meaning and purpose to this place, this place has value because you've come here to learn about Dhamma. And you also give value to my life, my life has value because it can be used in this way. So you don't have to thank me, instead I would like to thank you.

But anyway, if we have the understanding of paṭiccasamuppāda, there doesn't exist someone who must thank, or anyone to be thanked, because there is just *anattā*, not-self. You can't find the person who must thank, who should be thankful, or the person who is to be thanked. There is just voidness and that's how everything ends.

And so you walk back to the center without any walker. There is just the flow of *idappaccayatā*, of causes and conditions, leading to new causes of conditions, just this process of conditionality. Just the *walking without any walker*. So we close today's meeting at this point.

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Transcribed by Irv Jacob in Dec. 2014

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