

1. *IDAPPACCAyatā* - The Buddhist law of nature.

In this first talk we'll concern ourselves with '*idappaccayatā*,' the highest, the most important aspect of the Buddhist religion, and attempt to explain just why we think so.

It's observable that, although it's the heart of the religion, we've never yet shown much interest in it, and, what's more, in its 'dependent origination' mode it's talked about in such a way that it results in misunderstanding and argument. It's as if there's not enough disagreement around already we have to argue about this too, which is damaging. Hence, we should take a look at this subject and try to come to a proper understanding. So, be interested, pay attention and we'll concern ourselves with this unusual word '*idappaccayatā*' - unusual even for Buddhists, albeit Buddhists who don't yet know the heart of their religion.

Now, this is a wide-ranging matter, something that concerns the whole world, in fact the entire universe.

The first point to deal with is that of *idappaccayatā* as being the Buddhist god. Some will immediately object to this and point out that the Buddhist religion doesn't have a god. They say this because they don't really know what god is, for one thing, and because they're still ignorant of the heart of the religion for another. 'God' can be simply defined as the highest, as the ultimate. People are accustomed to god as defined in everyday speech: 'god' with this or that appearance, dwelling here or there, the creator, the controller of the world who made all the many and various things, who rewards when pleased, etc. People without proper knowledge pray to god for help, to make things be this or that way. So, for now we'll take the word 'god' to mean the highest thing, the ultimate.

Now, the story goes that the Buddha-to-be donned the yellow robe and practised assiduously for a long time until finally becoming perfectly awakened. He was seeking for the fundamental truth - *idappaccayatā*. It was during the night of his awakening that he sought thus: What does suffering come from? Then he realized that it came from *jāti*, from birth. *Jāti*, 'birth,' what does birth come from? 'Birth' comes from *bhava*, from becoming. Becoming arises from *upādāna*, from clinging. Clinging comes from *taṇhā*, from craving, from desire. Craving, comes from the *vedanā*, from feeling. Feeling comes from *phassa*, from contact. Contact comes from the *āyatana*, from the senses. The senses come from *nāmarūpa*, from name and form. Name and form comes from *viññāna*, from consciousness. Consciousness comes from *sankhāra*, from the power of concocting. The power of concocting comes from *avijjā*, from ignorance. He investigated and reviewed this business back and forth, back and forth during the night. What he investigated and reviewed was the arising and the going down of suffering, which is more usually referred to as *paṭiccasamuppāda*, or dependent origination. *Paṭiccasamuppāda* and *idappaccayatā* are really one and the same, in truth there's only one law of nature, but if we're dealing with human suffering in particular, then it's called 'dependent origination,' if it's the general form of *dukkha* that attracts our attention then it's called *idappaccayatā*. Anyway, he finally broke through to the deepest truth of *paṭiccasamuppāda/idappaccayatā* and became enlightened. At about the same time doubt arose as it occurred to him that, knowing this truth, who was there left for him to look up to, because he couldn't live reverencing nothing. In the end he made up his mind that he'd revere the *Dhamma* he'd awakened to: he'd 'enter into and dwell within it,' that is, he'd take it as his refuge.

Now, consider: that which the Buddha discovered and revered, should that be called 'god,' or not? Well, should we do that it would be a god unlike any of those in other systems. *Idappaccayatā* isn't any sort of a person so it can't be the same as those gods who talk, feel, like, dislike, who experience love and anger just like people do - who even have homes. People-type gods are that way. But *idappaccayatā* isn't a person, it's a law, the law of nature. But why shouldn't we call it god? After all it's the ultimate, it creates and controls everything, exists in everything, thus performing precisely the same duties as the gods of any religious system we care to mention. It's believed that god can do anything - creating, controlling, destroying - and that god dwells everywhere, knows everything, has power over everything, and so on, but it's not perceived that it's really the equivalent of god, the 'god' *idappaccayatā*, that actually does all of that.

This is the beginning of the understanding that the Buddhist religion has something that can do all the duties of a god but which isn't a person, or anything like a person. We can have gods of both kinds, those that are people-like and that which isn't - which would be better? Well, a god that's actually the law of nature would, for instance, be acceptable to the scientist, because it would have a scientific basis, and, as the Buddha taught that nothing escapes *idappaccayatā* - happiness, suffering, all that changes and transforms, in fact everything in the world operates according to, and is intertwined with this law - then it makes for a scientifically credible kind of god.

Idappaccayatā can be understood as the god of the Buddhist religion in the same way as those other gods: *Jehova*, the god of the Jews and Christians, *Allah* of the Moslems, *Brahma*, *Nārāyan*, *Shiva* etc., of the Hindus, and so on. Whatever the religion it will have an ultimate, a highest thing - a god. The Buddhist religion has a god too, but one which is more so, more skilful, more capable, a truer sort of a god. But first be willing to allow that the Buddhist religion has a god just as other religions do, the difference being that those gods are people-like, whereas the Buddhist god is the law of nature.

This is the first point for Buddhists to know, that their religion has a god, has a deity, but that it's not a person-type god. So don't bother with those who say that the Buddhism doesn't have a god, those people who arrange all religions into two types, those with gods (theistic) and those without (atheistic), and who then label the Buddhist religion as 'atheistic,' god-less, and who then stir things up even more by saying that if there's no god there's no religion either, so that the religion becomes a philosophical system and not a religion at all. However, if we follow what they themselves say, then a religion is a system of practice which allows mankind to reach the ultimate; a system of practice which allows mankind to enter into relations with the highest. If it's put in that way then the Buddhist religion *is* a religion because it has a system of practice which, when properly developed puts human beings into relation with the highest thing, with *nibbāna*, and, as *nibbāna* is the ultimate, beyond anything else, then it follows that the Buddhist religion is more of a religion than any other.

Anyway, that's something that we should be aware of, that the Buddhist religion does have a god, namely, the law of nature, the ultimate, the highest thing, and is thus a religion in the fullest sense, not just a philosophical system as some claim. This, then is the first point to acknowledge, that Buddhism has a god, a 'god' called *idappaccayatā*, the law of nature, a god with scientific credentials.

Now, point number two: *Idappaccayatā* isn't restricted to being just the god of the Buddhists, it's also god of the universe, the whole universe. Notwithstanding that, the law of *idappaccayatā* is simplicity itself: *when there is this thing, then there is this*

thing too; because this arises, this can arise also; when this thing isn't, then this thing isn't either; when this quenches, then this quenches too. This is the essence of the matter, that there isn't anything that is self-existent, there's mutual dependence, cause and effect, that is, everything is a condition for something else. All things operate in dependence on conditions. The law of 'conditionality' is the highest of laws, the law that makes everything work, and this we call *idappaccayatā*. We're surely all familiar with the term 'universe,' how vast it is, and so on, well, we can have as many universes as we like, but every one, and the numberless stars and worlds that group together to form one, will all be composed of tiny parts called particles, and the particles will group together into atoms, the atoms into elements, and the elements into systems, one of which is the system of body and mind. Beasts, people, plants, trees, they're all formed from atoms grouping together, and in every atom will dwell the law of *idappaccayatā*. There's no need to just believe, take a look at this through the eyes of knowledge, recognise that every atom coming together to form a world, to form a universe is controlled and created by the law of nature. *Idappaccayatā* is present in every atom of every thing that comes together as a universe. Think about that: every universe, and every atom in every universe is under the control of the law of nature, the law of *idappaccayatā*, that which the Buddha discovered, immediately felt reverence towards, and taught about from that time on. That's so because the law of *idappaccayatā* existed before anything else, before everything. If someone should ask about nature, where does it come from? We could say, without having to think too much, that nature comes from the law of nature which has the power to make natural things arise, so we then straightway realize that it – the law - must pre-exist nature itself. *Idappaccayatā* then is the pre-existing law of nature. Pre-existing from precisely when? Well, who could say, that's impossible to know given our current knowledge. At present we don't know with any certainty when the solar system first arose, so when all systems whatsoever first came into being, this no one knows, let alone when the law itself originated.

So, the law of nature, *idappaccayatā*, pre-exists all things in the universe and is the reason for the existence of the universe itself. That being so, can we, or can't we look on *idappaccayatā* as being the 'creator'? In the theistic religions they say that it's god who creates. We say that the god *idappaccayatā* is the creator, and the preserver and destroyer of everything, is what causes all things to arise, to persist for a time, and then to cease: arising, persisting, and ceasing, arising, persisting, ceasing, this is the power of *idappaccayatā*. This is nature: arising, persisting, ceasing; arising, persisting, ceasing. There isn't anything that doesn't behave in this way. *Idappaccayatā* causes everything, every universe that ever exists to arise, undergo change and transformation, and then to disappear, to cease. So, as everything is under the power of *idappaccayatā*, we feel that we can call it the universal 'god' possessing the triple characteristics of *omnipresence*: existing everywhere in every single atom wherever it may be; of *omnipotence*: as it's the law that makes all of nature arise and function it exercises supreme power over everything; of *omniscience*: because everything arises from and through it therefore it's all-knowing. It knows everything: the birth of the sun, the moon, the world, of the elements of earth, water, fire and air, of everything that mankind has knowledge of. These days we brag about going to the moon and so on, but the level of knowledge involved in that sort of thing is trifling, not even remotely equal to the all-knowing of *idappaccayatā*. Behold, *idappaccayatā*, the law of nature, the 'lord' of the universe, the universal 'god.'

We've looked at two points: *idappaccayatā* as the universal god, and as the god of the Buddhist religion. *Idappaccayatā* that ignorant Buddhists don't know

about even though it's in their scriptures - because they've never taken much of an interest in it. They hear it as something odd, strange, as if we're talking about something from the *Zen*, discipline, from the *Mahāyāna*. But in truth it's textual, it's in the scriptures, so we talk about it.

To summarize: the Buddha sought after one thing until he found it and was enlightened by his discovery. Once he'd found what he was looking for he immediately felt reverence for it and then taught it so that we could understand and practise for the final quenching of suffering too. *Dukkha*, suffering can be quenched if we can live in harmony with the law of *idappaccayatā*. Because *dukkha* arises according to the principle of *idappaccayatā*, then it follows that it must be quenched by the same means. We feel bold enough to say that all of humankind, no matter that we be Chinese, Indian, from the West - whatever nationality, whatever religion we adhere to, suffering must quench according to the principles of the law of nature. As mentioned, it's a matter of dependent origination, so, don't go wrong at the moment of sense contact and *dukkha* won't happen, if there's suffering it's because of being careless at such times. Now, there are those who believe in life after death and those who don't, but both sides of that argument will have to quench suffering according to the principles of *idappaccayatā*. People can believe whatever they want, but, whatever their beliefs, they'll still have to quench suffering in accordance with the principles of *idappaccayatā*. There is no other way.

The third point to look at is the actual meaning of '*idappaccayatā*.' *Idappaccayatā* means 'conditionality,' that is, *with this as condition, this arises; because there is this thing, this thing arises*. Things without sentient life - a stone, cement, metal, wood, how do they come to be? They depend on the conditions being available: because there is this as condition, this arises; which applies to all of the multitude of things in this world that aren't sentient. So, we sit down somewhere and say: '*because this is a condition, this comes to be.*' Then, perhaps we recognize that everything around us is, in a sense, 'flowing,' we observe that 'everything flows.' A Greek philosopher contemporary with the Buddha uttered wise words when he said that '*everything flows.*' '*Pantarhei*' is Greek for 'everything flows.' He saw the truth but didn't say anything more than that, only that 'everything flows.' This is the Buddhist understanding too, it's the meaning of *aniccaṇ*: everything changes, thus 'everything flows.' Now, we have to say that, if Buddhists don't see this too then they're less wise than that Greek gentleman. That 'everything flows' is the gist of *idappaccayatā*: because there is this as condition, this arises, and then becomes the condition for something else to arise, and so on, and so on.

So much for that without sentient life, now we can take a look at that with sentience - ourselves. We can divide our physical selves into hair, body-hair, nails, teeth, skin, and so on, into many, many parts, and see conditionality in every thing: because there is this as condition then that which hair is composed of arises as hair, it must do so, and then something else will arise from the hair, because hair is the condition for something else, even if it's only a nest of lice. Because there is this, this can arise: hair, body hair, nails, teeth, skin, everything material, everything that is a '*rūpadhamma*,' that is physical, comes to be in this way. That which is mental, *nāmadhamma*, is the same, whether it be the mind, consciousness, mind-contact, feeling, or whatever. If you can really see this then you'll know that in the body and mind everything is flowing, spinning in a way which is quite amazing: there is this, therefore this can arise; because there is this, this can come to be. It's possible to divide the body into many hundreds of parts but they'll all exhibit the condition of flowing on according to conditions, of changing and flowing - something that's worth

a twinge of fear actually. But it's the same for all creation: the beasts, the animals - pigs, dogs, crows, chickens, all are like this; the trees are like this; everything that has life is like this; everything that doesn't have life is like this too. This is *idappaccayata*, the law of nature, that which makes things work, which controls the entirety of nature. All of the many and various things that exist are the fruit, the produce of the law of *idappaccayatā* which we, here, call 'god,' the god of the Buddhist religion, the god of the universe.

Now, *idappaccayatā* is, as mentioned, the law behind all things, behind everything, but where it concerns people, and especially when it's a matter of the suffering of people, we change the name and call it *paṭiccasamupāda*, or, to give its full title, *idappaccayatāpaṭiccasamupādo*. If we just say '*idappaccayatā*' it applies to everything without exception that either has or doesn't have life, to everything that is concocted, conditioned, but if we're only concerned with people, and particularly with the arising and going down of their suffering, then we change the title and call it '*paṭiccasamupāda*.' The Buddha often used the longer version, but we won't, we'll stick with *paṭiccasamupāda*.

So, we know that *idappaccayatā* is the general law of nature, covering everything that happens, while *paṭiccasamupāda* is the law of nature where it concerns human suffering.

The essential import of *paṭiccasamupāda* is: 'in dependence on this, this arises,' thus '*dependent arising*,' or '*dependent co-arising*,' *paṭiccasamupāda* means 'dependent co-arising,' or 'dependent co-origination.' '*Paṭicca*' means dependent, '*samupāda*' means arising, or origination, thus dependent arising, or dependent co-arising. *Idappaccayatā* means 'because this is a condition, this arises.' *Paṭiccasamupāda* means 'in dependence on this, this arises.' The meaning is much the same, but there's a difference in the breadth of the meaning.

There's always a cause for the arising of any new thing. This characteristic is very important, anyone who doesn't see this isn't really a follower of the Buddha. Buddhists ought to recognize this basic characteristic common to all things: people, dogs, cats; trees, whatever, see this in anything at all: *because there is this, this arises; because there is this thing, this thing can arise*. True Buddhists are those who know this, who are awake to it, who dispel ignorance when they 'see' it. When 'seeing' in this way it's called seeing according to the truth of nature, and seeing the truth of nature is to see '*tathatā*.' '*Tathatā*' means '*just like that*.' In the *Pali* there are three forms of this word: '*tathā*,' meaning 'like that,' '*tathatā*' meaning 'just like that,' and '*tathātā*' which means 'just like that' too - all of which makes it easy to remember: 'like that!' 'just like that!' 'just like that!' If we're ignorant we won't see everything as being 'just like that.' If we're wise enough then we will. Look into hair and see that it's really 'just like that,' consider body hair, nails, teeth, skin, bones, see each of these as 'just like that.' Contemplate *vedanā*, feelings, as 'just like that,' see perception, *saññā*, as being 'just like that,' see happiness as 'just like that,' suffering as 'just like that,' pain as 'just like that,' death as being 'just like that,' and so on. If someone is wise to this truth in any one thing then they'll know everything else as being the same. This is 'seeing' *idappaccayatā*, or 'seeing' *paṭiccasamupāda*, or, as it comes to the same thing, 'seeing' *tathatā* - seeing things as being 'just like that.' Supposing a husband doesn't love his wife, then it's not a matter for crying over, it's 'just like that.' If the husband goes and takes a new wife it's 'just like that' - or perhaps the wife has a lover and the husband says it's 'just like that.' No one needs to kill anybody, and no one needs to get angry, to be surprised or puzzled, even over those kinds of things. 'Seeing' in this way is seeing *idappaccayatā*, seeing the highest

god. We see ‘just like that,’ we see *idappaccayatā* in all things. There are several words we can use instead of *idappaccayatā* - *tathātā*, ‘just like that’ - *avitathatā*, ‘not different from that’ - *anaññatathatā*, ‘not other than, or again, not different from that’ - and *dhammathithatā*, ‘established according to the norm,’ (which is a fancy way of saying ‘just like that,’) - while *dhammaniyāmatā* is another word for the law of nature. *Anaṭṭā* means that there isn’t an abiding ‘self’ in anything, only a flow of conditions, only that which is ‘just like that,’ only the flow of *idappaccayatā*. The body and the mind are no more than a stream of conditions, of *idappaccayatā*. The Buddha had said that all *dhammas*, all things are *anaṭṭā*, without anything that could be called an abiding ‘self.’ A more elevated designation would be *suññatā*. *Suññatā* means free, or void of ‘self,’ that there isn’t anything that could be called a ‘self,’ if there’s anything at all it’s just the flow of *idappaccayatā*, the endless flow of concocting within which there isn’t anything that abides – hence it’s said to be ‘void,’ or ‘free.’ ‘Void’ here doesn’t mean nothing at all, rather it means that all things are flowing on according to the law of nature, so are void, free of any *abiding* essence, of a ‘self,’ or anything that could be clung to as being a ‘self.’

Now, the Buddha had said that whether there are Buddhas or not that *Dhamma* element exists; ‘that *Dhamma* element’ is *idappaccayatā*. The law of *idappaccayatā* simply is, whether the Buddha arises or doesn’t arise isn’t a problem, this law exists before anything. Something that pre-exists all else is the rule in every religion, as in the Christian religion, although there it’s not called ‘god’ it’s called the ‘word’ : ‘*in the beginning was the word.*’ In the Christian religion they put it like this, then they say that the ‘word’ was ‘with god,’ and subsequently that the word ‘was god.’ The ‘word’ and god are the same thing here so let’s just say ‘god,’ in the end we’re left with god. In the Indian scriptures, in the belief system of the *Sikhs* it’s much the same: in the beginning was the ‘word,’ they use the *Sanskrit* version of ‘word,’ but whichever language is used the ‘word’ was first. As for us, the law of *idappaccayatā* becomes the ‘word,’ or, if we prefer, the ‘command,’ or the ‘commander.’ Christian, *Sikh*, or Buddhist, in the very beginning the ‘word’ was.

Now, to sum matters up: *idappaccayatā* is something that we hardly know anything about, that some people won’t even accept as being a basic truth of the Buddhist religion, while others, because it sounds strange, look on it as coming from outside the religion. People in this world can hold to any religion they like but they really should know about *idappaccayatā* - they should because it is them, it’s what controls them. *Idappaccayatā* is the law through which all things arise and operate.

Before going on here’s a little light relief: usually the deity is called ‘god,’ but we call it ‘got’ (‘got’ is the romanized version of the Thai word for ‘law,’ as in ‘law’ of nature.) Some friends of ours, Christians, came here and discussed this matter with us, and we told them that the Buddhists have a god just as they do, but that in our language the word ‘god’ is pronounced as ‘got.’ It’s amusing, and entirely accidental that in the Thai language the word ‘got’ can be understood in such a way that it corresponds to the English word ‘god.’

Anyway, to continue: *idappaccayatā* is the second of the four meanings of *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* (here with the meaning of the ultimate truth - the way things really are - hence it’s spelt with a capital ‘D’) has four meanings : nature itself; the law of nature; the duty to be done according to the law of nature; and the fruit, or result arising from doing or not doing that duty. If we want to understand *Dhamma* in its fullest sense then we should see it in these four ways. The first meaning is as ‘nature.’ There isn’t anything that isn’t nature, whether physical or mental, all there is of us, for instance, is nature. The second meaning is the ‘law of nature,’ that which

controls all those natures. We are nature completely under the control of the law of nature: we develop, undergo change, that is, we're born, we grow up, and we perform the various functions of life as we grow: we eat, bathe, excrete, etc. etc. all under the power of the law of nature. Because there is the law of nature controlling us we pass through the stages of life: youth, old age, and death all happen according to the law. The third meaning of *Dhamma* is 'duty.' We need to understand this point, that is, the necessity of doing our 'duty,' of living correctly according to the law of nature, otherwise there'll be problems. The fourth meaning concerns the fruit, or result arising from how the duty is performed, if it's done wrongly then the result will be wrong too, if correctly then the fruit will also be correct. The 'fruit' or result of practising according to the law of nature is also referred to as *Dhamma*. *Dhamma* thus has four meanings: nature, the law of nature, the duty according to the law, and fruit, or result arising therefrom. The second meaning, the law of nature, is *idappaccayatā*, but *idappaccayatā* is also intertwined with the other three meanings, insasmuch as nature itself is under the control of the law of nature, duty, no matter how performed, and the result or fruit coming from the doing of duty also come forth according to the law of *idappaccayatā*.

Continuing on with the understanding that *idappaccayatā* is, as mentioned, the Buddhist god. In the Buddhist religion there's a highest thing which accords with the meaning of 'god' in other religions, but it isn't a person, it's the law of nature. As is their wont people will usually see god as being some sort of a person, but the Buddhist religion has something able to do the duties of that sort of god and in just the same manner, but it's a law - *idappaccayatā* is the god of the Buddhist religion. Let's finish with this matter by saying that there isn't anything that would say there isn't a god, because the feeling of things that can sense, that is, of things that have life, mind, that can think, will always be that there's some highest thing: ants, insects, crabs, fish, or whatever, will feel this. It would seem that this god concept arises from an instinctual feeling that there is a something, a highest, an ultimate something that we should fear. Thus, whether it be of the base, childish sort, of the more exalted, or of the most high, the ultimate kind, everything that has life and can think will feel that there is a 'god.' Buddhists through developing wisdom recognize in the law of *idappaccayatā* a god of the highest sort, which is also, because it dwells in every atom that comes together to form it, the god of the universe.

To continue: it's also the Scientist's god: supposing some scientific person has *satipaññā* (mindfulness and the right kind of knowledge), then, in searching for the ultimate they'll finally arrive at the law of nature, *idappaccayatā*. Thus, *idappaccayatā* is the sort of god that could be accepted by Science. Some of today's scientific community can't believe in the gods of the ancient scriptures, but they could straightway accept one that doesn't conflict with scientific principles. *Idappaccayatā* is such a god, one that is discoverable and observable by science.

Now, consider carefully: *idappaccayatā* orders the world; this world operates according to the law of *idappaccayatā* - wrong or right activities happen, and must happen in accordance with this law. For example: at present education is misguided and encourages the defilements, so the world is a bad place, almost at the point of calamity. Are you aware of this? Education is mismanaged and the result of that is a world of defilement, a bad, a violent place. This happens in accordance with the law of nature - there must be this result. Whenever things are managed correctly, then, as a result of that, there will be an enduring peace. Now this isn't the case because we're foolish and mismanage everything.

Thus *idappaccayatā* is that which the human population ought to venerate as the ultimate. The word ‘venerate,’ or even a phrase like ‘make an offering to’ can be used in connection with *idappaccayatā*. In religious language they might call it ‘worshipping’ - as in the Christians ‘worshipping’ their god. Buddhists, however, say that they don’t have a god so they don’t need to do any worshipping. We should apologise for the ignorance of those who say that. Having a god of the *idappaccayatā* sort then some kind of worship is required, hence we should try our best to behave correctly in accordance with the precepts. In this way Buddhists would do all the worshipping necessary.

Now, the Buddha introduced *idappaccayatā* as the ‘*ādhibrahmacariya*.’ *Ādhibrahmacariya* is the well-spring from which the *Brahmacariya* (the holy life) comes: it’s the source from which the religion for the quenching of all *dukkha* arises. It’s said that the Buddha would recite the *dhamma* called *idappaccayatā* to himself, in much the same way that we would sing or repeat anything in order to memorize it, as in the way that children do when they memorize the multiplication table for instance. The Buddha is said to have used this method with *idappaccayatā*. It has it in the *Pali* that one day the Buddha was sitting alone reciting the law of *idappaccayatā*, thus: ‘*when the eye meets a form eye consciousness rises, the meeting together of these three is contact, phassa; contact conditions feeling, vedanā; feeling conditions craving, taṇha; craving conditions clinging, upādāna; clinging conditions becoming, bhāva; becoming conditions, birth, jāti; birth conditions ageing and death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair, etc.*’ He began with the eye, and then recited in the same way for the other senses. The Buddha was sitting alone reciting and on turning around saw a monk standing behind him listening, and said to him that it was a good thing he’d come there, that what he was reciting was the *ādhibrahmacariya*, and that he, the monk, should take it away, learn it, and put it into practise. Now, ‘*ādhibrahmacāriya*,’ according to the books, means the basics, the rudiments, the fundamentals of the *brahmacāriya*, but in truth it’s not quite like that, it’s actually the origin, the source from which the *brahmacāriya* comes, and, as such, is always complete within itself from the beginning to the end of time. *Idappaccayatā* is the same thing, being the fundamental *Dhamma* forming the starting point for anything and everything, which is then always present until the very end, or, in the human case, until the attainment of *nibbāna*, which happens by way of it. *Idappaccayatā* is thus comparable to the ABCs of the Buddhist religion. So study the ABCs, learn everything about the ABCs, because, although we may be experts in some other way we perhaps still won’t be beyond the ABC stage in this matter. Get to know *idappaccayatā* as the *ādhibrahmacāriya*.

At present some, according to their tastes, don’t study *idappaccayatā*, they study the Buddhist religion but they don’t bother with the ABCs. They start to study the history of India, the philosophies of India, or whatever, spend half a lifetime in study of that kind, but don’t bother with *idappaccayatā*, or its partner, *paṭiccasamuppāda*. They study *silā*, *samādhi*, and *paññā*, the *Buddha*, *Dhamma*, and *Sangha* from another angle, not from the point of view of *idappaccayatā*, so they don’t really know the Buddhist religion. They don’t know about the heart of the religion so they can’t really understand it. But still they write a lot of books, and there are serious mistakes in every one, especially where *kamma* and ‘rebirth’ are concerned. ‘Rebirth’ is *Hinduism*; while *kamma* taught as ‘do good, get good, do bad, get bad’ means that one is unable to make use of the law of *idappaccayatā* to live above the concepts of ‘good’ and ‘bad.’ Some people understand the Buddhist approach to *kamma* only as ‘do good, get good, do bad, get bad,’ and aren’t aware that

idappaccayatā, when well comprehended, would enable us to live above the good and the bad, to escape from, to cancel out good and bad *kamma* completely. Studying the *Buddhasāsanā* in a half-baked way, seeing *kamma* as ‘do good-get good, do bad-get bad’ means that there’s no understanding of how to dwell above it, and then writing about swimming around in death and birth after the *Brahman* fashion, seemingly unaware that we don’t have a ‘self’ to swim around in anything. They put this sort of thing in one or two chapters of their Buddhist books, so be aware that some books on the Buddhist religion will have these two incorrect chapters, but, apart from that, they’ll be fine, good enough, and we can use them.

To continue: *idappaccayatā* forms the universal basis for the quenching of *dukkha*. ‘Universal’ means that, be they *devas*, human beings, *Brahmas*, whatever - or, in this world, be they Chinese, Indian, European, adhering to the Christian, Islamic, or whatever tradition, the work of truly quenching suffering must be a matter of *idappaccayatā*, that is, through knowing directly how it is that *dukkha* arises and how to operate so that it doesn’t arise. Thus, no matter who it may be, whatever belief they may have, whatever ideology they may adhere to, the arising and going down of *dukkha* must happen in this manner, and there is no way other than by behaving correctly at the moment of sense contact and not allowing foolish feeling, desire and attachment to arise. No matter what religion we prefer, the arising and quenching of *dukkha* must take place in this way. There is no other way outside of doing the right thing at the moment of sense contact.

Further: the law of *idappaccayatā*, this highest law of nature, is the true meaning of *Amitāyu* and *Amitābha*. Some people won’t understand this point: in the *Mahāyāna* lineage, or some branch of it they prescribe the highest thing, the Buddhas *Amithāba* and *Amitāyu*, as being the source of the ordinary Buddha - the Buddha of mankind. That is to say, they have an *ādhibuddha* - *Amithāba* - with the power to cause the arising of the human Buddha, *Gotāma*. It seems then that the meditation, or spiritual perfection, or whatever of the Buddha *Amitābha* was the cause for the arising of the Buddha *Gotāma*, the Buddha of mankind. *Amitāyu* means infinite age, age beyond measure, beyond calculation, that is, eternal. *Amitābha* has the meaning of infinite light, or infinite wisdom, thus: all knowing. One who holds to this form of *Mahāyāna* religion will recite the mantra ‘*Namo Amitābha, Namō Amitābha,*’ repeating it over and over, how many tens of thousands of times no one knows, in order to be certain of going to *nibbāna*. It’s as if they recite and recite and recite until they realize that which is all-knowing and eternal. One who does this will come to know the ultimate according to that form of Buddhism, that is, *Amithāba* and *Amitāyu*. We say that *idappaccayatā* is the same as *Amitāyu* and *Amitābha*.

Now, looking at *idappaccayatā* or, as some would say, *Amitābha* and *Amitāyu*, as being ever-present and in all things. The most important characteristic of god is that, if it’s to be a true god, it must really be found in all things at all times. *Idappaccayatā* fulfils this requirement because it’s to be found in every atom that goes to form everything. Everything operates, that is, everything arises, persists, and ceases in accordance with this law. *Idappaccayatā* is thus ever-present in every atom, in every particle of a human being. It controls every atom of everyone who’s ever been born, of everyone who will ever be born. Now, those scriptural gods, are they the same? The god *idappaccayatā* is even to be found in every atom of a pile of dog mess. Can any of those scriptural gods be found in a pile of doggo? *Idappaccayatā* can, because it’s in everything, in every atom, even in every atom of excrement. We say that *idappaccayatā* is the true god, even existing in and controlling a pile of dogola, which is something that cannot be said of *Jehova*, *Brahma*, *Shiva* and so on.

Idappaccayatā is thus a more complete, a more genuine kind of god. Know it as the one thing which dwells in and has power over every single atom of everything in the universe.

We can continue by dividing things into the material and the mental: every atom which goes to create materiality does so according to this law, thus all the material elements in the universe operate according to the law of *idappaccayatā*, the controller of material things - all the laws of materiality, the laws of physics, of chemistry, of technology, or whatever, all those laws derive from the law of *idappaccayatā*. Everything non-material, everything 'mental' also arises through the law of *idappaccayatā*, thus any state of mind will be the handiwork of this law, any consciousness arising at the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or the mind, any contact, feeling, perception, any thought of whatever kind, all of this will be the fruit of *idappaccayatā*; craving, desire and the subsequent clinging also happens according to this law. Everything psychological falls under the power of *idappaccayatā*, operates according to the law of nature. Now, that which is a problem for us, for everyone in the world, the matters of happiness and suffering, of *sukha* and *dukkha* - in this world there isn't anything so important as people's happiness and suffering - both *sukha* and *dukkha* happen according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. The Buddha clearly taught in this way. Some people believe that the happiness and suffering we have to experience now are the result of old *kamma*, (of deliberated activities done in some previous life) but that's a wrong understanding occurring because they don't see that it actually happens in accordance with the law of *idappaccayatā*. If our happiness and suffering was the result of old *kamma* it couldn't be made to cease, but right now we can use the law of *idappaccayatā* to put an end, to put a complete end to its results - or, we can make old *kamma* give its result immediately. We can, through the law of *idappaccayatā*, resist *kamma* by controlling contact, feeling, etc., so that there isn't any suffering, so that old *kamma* becomes sterile old *kamma*. If anyone believes that *sukha* and *dukkha* are the result of old *kamma* they're naive. That sort of thing belongs in some other creed, not the Buddhist religion. In the Buddhist religion it has to be *idappaccayatā* controlling the things that can cause happiness or suffering. Suffering comes from wrong doing at the moment of *phassā*, (sense contact,) within the flow of dependent origination; *sukha* comes from doing the right thing at *phassā* - behaving correctly in the moment of sense contact brings *sukha*, behaving incorrectly brings *dukkha*. Therefore the phrase 'it's the fruit of old *kamma*' isn't right and comes from something other than Buddhism.

We could resist the consequences of old *kamma*, could chase them away by living correctly according to the law of *idappaccayatā*. If anything really was the result of old *kamma* then we'd have to put up with it - it would be useless to resist. But we don't need to put up with anything at all, we can get rid of any suffering, we can create *dukkha*-less-ness, create *sukha*. Thus *idappaccayatā* is what causes *dukkha* and *sukha* to happen depending on how we behave. Now, some hold that happiness and suffering are creations of a god, of *Shiva*. *Sukha* and *dukkha* are creations of *Shiva*. There are people who believe this, so they pray to that god, but they don't see the god *idappaccayatā*. Thus is superstition - worshiping some form of god that isn't real. Any god can do anything they like, but if we operate correctly and encourage the form of *idappaccayatā* that quenches *dukkha*, then *Brahma*, *Shiva*, *Narayan* together couldn't make *dukkha* arise - it can't arise as long as we do the right thing with the law of nature, the 'god' *idappaccayatā*. Yet others hold that happiness and suffering arise by themselves, that they don't have a prior cause, but this is sublimely stupid, to believe that something can arise without a prior cause. The law of

idappaccayatā is the law of conditionality: because there is this, this therefore arises; because there is this, this arises. Thus *dukkha* and *sukha* have prior causes and conditions, if we can deal correctly with them we can attain our heart's desire. Misapprehensions such as that happiness and suffering are caused by old *kamma*, or are the creation of a god, of *Shiva*, or that they arise by themselves and don't have prior causes come from another creed. To say that happiness and suffering are due to wrong or right action per the law of *idappaccayatā*, this comes from the Buddhist religion. Thus, *sukha* and *dukkha* become things that we can control, that we can manipulate, can even relinquish, let go of. This is the power of *idappaccayatā* - power over the happiness and suffering of humankind.

Essentially, it's the duty of any human being to maintain life correctly. If they don't then they must - in accordance with the law of *idappaccayatā* - experience the result, the punishment: suffering, ranging from being unable to sleep, to nervous disease, to deadly pain.

The last thing we need to bear in mind, need to understand, is that the human mind can evolve, can reach the path, it's fruit and *nibbāna* by way of the law of *idappaccayatā*. The ultimate goal of the Buddhists is *nibbāna*, which is to be 'above' suffering, 'above' defilement of any kind. This evolution happens according to the law of nature: making the mind, making life prosper by living correctly with the law of *idappaccayatā* always in mind culminates in the attainment of *nibbāna*.

Idappaccayatā existed before anything and can be found in all things. This is still the case and thus there can still be the aspiration to attain *nibbāna*, to attain the path, fruit and *nibbāna*. Practising for *nibbāna* isn't out of date, neither is it impossible, because we have the law of *idappaccayatā* to use in our practice. *Idappaccayatā* is timeless, so, regardless of time or place we can always make use of it to bring about the mental evolution and, perhaps, attain the goal. The foregoing examples illustrate what we ought to know concerning the law of *idappaccayatā*.

Now, please, everybody, get to know the god *idappaccayatā* as the highest, the ultimate. Don't let this word be something unfamiliar, something alien, know it as the heart of the Buddha's teaching, as the 'all' of the religion. Know it as the starting point for *Dhamma* study, as the ABCs of Buddhism, that which we need to learn about first of all, and then, perhaps, we won't waste the opportunity of having been born into the human state and of having met with the Buddha's teaching.