

The Three Existences, Part 1 of 4

THE THREE EXISTENCES ARE THE BASIS OF SELF

by Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu

Interpreted into English by Santikaro Bhikkhu

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In the late 80s and early 90s, until his health deteriorated too much, Ajahn Buddhadāsa 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. All Ajahn's teachings are now available on:

www.suanmokkh.org,

<https://soundcloud.com/buddhadasa> and

<https://www.youtube.com/@buddhadasabhikkhu7829>.

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Before all else, I'd like to express my delight and appreciation that all of you have come here to this place in this way, namely in order to find understanding of Dhamma so that you can use it to live your life more peacefully, more successfully. This word, Dhamma, has many meanings – many levels and layers of meanings. However, here we'll say with one simple direct meaning which we can express by saying that if a person lacks Dhamma in their everyday life, their life will bite its owner. They will have to live with an endless stream of pain, suffering and misery.

We will study and explore Dhamma as the law or truth of nature. We do not intend here to study it as a religion but simply as natural truth or natural law. Or we can explore it as a science, as a particular branch of science but not materialistic or physical science, rather a mental science or spiritual science. If we wish, we can approach Dhamma in this way also. Or another way we can look at it is as the supreme art which enables us to live life above all problems, that we can live with minds that are untroubled by any of the situation and problem in the world. In this way, we can speak of Dhamma as the supreme art.

Many foreigners come to Thailand in order to purchase Buddhist art. They want to take some Buddhist art home with them. But what is kind of funny is all they take away are material objects which is not actually Buddhist art. It's just the product, an artefact or craftsmanship. These Buddha images, paintings and carvings are not real Buddhist art. True Buddhist art is not some material thing but it's the ability to live life so that there are no problems, to live life above of all problems. This is a spiritual art. This is by far the most beautiful art form – the spiritual kind.

Now, we'd like to say a few things about the time. This time of day is usually a time for sleeping. At this time most people are looking for some happiness and pleasure from sleeping.

However, we use it in order to study. There are certain reasons why this is an excellent time for investigating profound matters such as the Dhamma. Generally, this is the time of blossoming, of opening up. Around this time most flowers are beginning to blossom. Soon the sun will rise. This is a time of blossoming. In fact, the Buddha awakened around this time. So, this is a good time for our minds to open up to truth.

Another way of looking at it is it's another world or another corner of the world which is for blossoming. Most people don't look at it this way. They consider this to be a time for sleeping. Please don't begrudge us your sleep or any difficulties in coming here. But instead, because if we sleep, we are unable to see this as any kind of world. When we sleep, there's no chance of learning anything, so we suggest you look at this as a time of blossoming in order that you can benefit and open up to something.

And something else very important is that you must walk from the meditation center to here. This is quite important. We would like you to use this morning walk as an opportunity to practice the highest Dhamma — that is to walk without there being a walker, that there is just walking and no walker. This is the highest Dhamma in Buddhism where everything can be done without there needing to be some 'I,' some 'me' to do it. So, we hope that you can use this opportunity to walk here with the highest Dhamma. You should take it to be a lesson or as being in a kind of tour. Walking here ought to be a kind of study. If you practice it, you will be able to learn to do everything without a doer so that any movement, any activity is done by the body and the mind without requiring some 'me,' some ego, but just through the nervous system with the mind controls the body and our activity needs to be done. We can now learn to apply this to eating. So, there is simply the activity of eating without the eater, the 'me' or the ego who eats. So, we eat or do whatever simply with mindfulness and a ready active wisdom knowing what's taking place and responding properly. This can be done without requiring any 'me,' any 'I' learning to. We can learn to do all things in this way.

Basically, there are six activities. There are seeing; When seeing some visual form with the eye, there's no need for the 'I' or the ego that sees. In hearing sound by the ear, it isn't necessary that there is a 'me' who hears or some hearer. In smelling odors through the nose, there's no need for an 'I,' an ego to smell. In tasting flavors through the tongue, there isn't a need for some 'I,' some 'me' that tastes or knows those flavors. When feeling touches and physical sensations to the skin and body-sense, there isn't any need for a 'me,' for an ego. Even thinking, when the mind knows thoughts within the mind, there isn't a need for a thinker or some person or ego to think. In all these basic activities and functions applied, it isn't necessary that there is some 'I,' some 'me' to do them. All of these is a way of expressing the Buddhist teaching of *anattā* which means 'not self.' All things are 'not self,' that one cannot find anything anywhere which can be taken to be 'self,' to be 'me,' to be 'I.' This is the part of Buddhism or Buddhism is found or come to this one simple teaching of *anattā* as we're saying "it's not self." We won't find a real 'self' anywhere.

Because of this teaching or principle of 'not self,' Buddhism is unlike any other religion. Some people will say that this is crazy or even that this is absolutely stupid – this business of 'not self' – because there are many people who insist on having 'self' or being 'self.' Many people just have to have a 'self.' They want to have a better 'self' or a special 'self' or a higher 'self' or something like this, so they can't make any sense out of. They can't accept the Buddhist teaching of 'not self.' But this poor thing about 'self' is the central issue in life because as soon as we regard the 'self,' then life bites its owners. But when we realize that there is life already and can

continue to be life without any ‘self,’ then life no longer bites its owner. So, this thing about ‘self’ is not any craziness or insanity. It’s a very important feature of life. Nonetheless, many people just cannot accept it because they want to have a good ‘self,’ a better ‘self,’ a higher ‘self.’

The condition of *dukkha* or the experience which is life tormenting, the condition of torment in life is like carrying a heavy weight, like carrying a burden. And this burden is nothing other than ‘self,’ than *attā*. For example, when the hand has nothing to carry, it’s free and it has no difficulties, no strain. In the same way, when the mind has no burden, then it’s free. But as soon as the mind grasps at something as being ‘self,’ whenever there is the concept ‘me,’ ‘I,’ then this becomes a burden for the mind. This is the burden which torments, which makes the mind suffer – this heavy weight of ‘self,’ of ‘I,’ of *attā*. Now, this attachment to ‘self’ has both positive and negative forms. Don’t go thinking that there is only attachment to negative thing, that attaching to positive thing is no problem. You ought to observe that attaching to the positive is just as heavy and painful as attaching to the negative. The condition of *dukkha* or torment is there as much in clinging to the positive. In fact, the positive can trick us into attaching to it much more than the negative. And so, sometimes the pain and misery due to the positive is even greater than the negative. We can attach in a negative way. We can attach in a positive way. Either way, it bites its owner. And so, we need to learn to live without clinging to either the positive or the negative, but we value positive thing so much that we’re willing to do this. We get tricked into this. So, whenever we fall in love with something positive, then the inevitable result is a heaviness – having to carry the weight of ego, of ‘self.’ There’s nothing heavier than the ‘self,’ than the *attā*. As soon as we attach to something, as soon as the mind grasps at something, there is ‘self,’ and this ‘self’ is heavy. And then even more nasty than that is that when there is ‘self,’ there follows selfishness. And selfishness is even heavier because the heaviness falls upon others also. To do selfishness, we can take advantage of and abuse others. And so, the weight is even worse, is even heavier. This is the heaviest thing – this ‘self’ and this selfishness. When there is attachment out of this, ‘self’ is born, and selfishness follows. These are the heaviest things in the world.

Please look carefully until you see for yourself that this world is being run by selfishness. Take a good look and you’ll see that the world is being run by selfishness. And so, within the entire universe is being dominated by selfishness and then selfishness tries to force the world to go according to its desire. So then, all the problems, all the crises of this modern world, the economic problems, the political crises such as in the Middle East, the environmental problems, crimes, drugs abuse, exploitation of women and children and on and on – all of these problems are due to selfishness. This selfishness keeps forcing the world to run in this way and this is what makes life so difficult, so dangerous, so painful for so many people.

If we look back 10,000 or even 100,000 years to the primitive humans who were living in the forest, in cave, running around naked, we’ll see that they didn’t have many problems because there was very little selfishness. Material development, technology, and all that had not yet existed. So, people didn’t have any problems. But then through technological and material advancement or progress, human beings developed more and more things to be selfish about. Until now, in the modern world with all our great scientific, technological, and material advancement, all our luxuries, we’re filled up with selfishness. We spent so much time and efforts on material things that we’re full of selfishness. Now, what’s really ridiculous about this is though we think of the world’s acting out of self-interest and self-centeredness, and the first

thing we end up doing is harming ourselves and then we harm others. This is quite absurd that although we're acting selfishly, this selfishness in fact hurts ourselves first of all, then we go and harm and abuse others, other people, animals, the environment also.

So, one can look and see that selfishness is running the world, running our universe. And nowadays, we've got all kinds of education. We're all very highly educated. The problem though is our education doesn't do anything to limit or lessen selfishness. In fact, our education strengthens selfishness. It expands selfishness, makes it more subtle and more refined. So, our modern education, rather than limiting and lessening selfishness, actually increases it and makes it a more intractable problem than ever. And so, our lives are dominated by this selfishness. Our high educations do nothing to solve this basic problem.

So now, we've got all kinds of wonderful technological, material development. We've got radios, televisions, cars, airplanes, computers, lasers, and all kinds of fancy stuff but at the same time we don't have peace. There's even less peace in the world in spite of all our material, technological visibly. Our primitive ancestors, they didn't even have clothes and they didn't have the problems that we've got. They didn't have all these problems of selfishness. The more selfish we are, the less peace there is. The more selfish we are following our education, the more world educated in selfishness, the less there is peace. So, one should look very carefully at this reality — the fact that there is not much peace in this world even within our own society. There's large segment of society that are in problems, abused, exploited, so that many of us even run away from home. We can't stand our own country because there's no peace. Wherever we go, this selfishness is destroying peace. We just can't escape it. One should look at this very carefully and start to ask how we can find peace. Where are we going to bring peace to this world? Just more material development, more technology, more education of the kind we've got now isn't going to do us any good. So, consider where we are going to find peace. And you'll see that there is no peace as long as there is selfishness, egoism, self-centeredness. What kind of ridiculous and also quite pitiful is that we speak of evolution. We're very proud of our evolution and that human beings are supposedly the pinnacle of evolution. But it's just an evolution of selfishness. There is no way you can speak of it as being an evolution of peace. This evolution we're so proud of is selfish evolution, not peaceful evolution. One ought to take a good look at this. And because of all this selfishness we have, all kinds of problems that we shouldn't have that is absolutely stupid to have some of the problems we've got.

If we look at our ancestors who ran around naked. They didn't have a lot of problems that we've got. The problem of drug addiction didn't exist then. They didn't have a problem with pollution. They didn't have to worry about AIDS and many other diseases of civilization and development. We've got something extra now that they didn't have. So we've also got all kinds of problems that there's no excuse for. There's no real reason why we should have such problems. But because of our development, our selfish evolution, we've got all these problems so that we're very frightened people. We don't know how to relax. We can't actually enjoy life because of all these fears and problems and worries we created through our own selfishness.

Why not stop and think for a minute of how those people must be laughing at us. If they could see us now, how they would be laughing at the ridiculous condition we're in. When they see us with all our stress, all our neuroses, all our selfishness and all our problems, they'll fall over themselves laughing.

Long ago, they didn't have all these problems like pollution and drug addiction. They didn't have these problems. Look at the world nowadays. We're killing each other more than ever. People are committing suicide in greater and greater numbers. Abortion is growing. There's more and more murder, more and more suicide, more and more abortions. We keep having to build prisons and mental hospitals. The armies and police forces keep expanding. The primitive people, our ancestors, they didn't have any of these things. They didn't need insane asylums, police forces, and all these other things. Why not look at our world in this way — how, by developing solely through selfishness, by being way over developed in selfish ways, we create the world like this? Why doesn't anybody stop and look at things in this way? How our ancestors must be laughing at us. And then realize that we made an error, that the path we follow has included many errors so that we can begin to correct things. So, the people living in the forest and cave didn't have all of these problems. They weren't civilized and developed like this.

If we could say that we have no problems, if we could say that we have solved all our problems, then we could say that we are better off than our ancestors. But we can't say that. This world is filled up with problems. Although we claim to have solved many problems, we keep creating new ones, and all of these problems come from selfishness. We need to see that all of these problems troubling us, which make the modern world so ridiculous and pitiful. We need to see that all of them come from selfishness and selfishness comes from having a 'self,' from thinking in terms of 'self.' So, this is why Buddhism teaches 'not self' or *anattā* to deal with this fundamental problem of 'self' and the selfishness that comes from having a 'self' and then all the crises that are created by selfishness. So, we study the fact of 'not self' in order to remove all these problems of 'self,' selfishness, and this world of problems and suffering.

The Thai have a saying “phee hua raw (ผีหัวเราะ).” ‘Phee’ are like spirits in the tree, in the earth, in the sky, everywhere. You can think of them as spirits or angels or heavenly beings or whatever. But the Thai, “phee hua raw” means the spirits are laughing. They're laughing at your stupidity. They're laughing at the stupidity of modern man and woman. It's like our primitive ancestors laughing at us but those ancestors are gone. The spirits are still here everywhere all around us, in the sky, in the ground, in the water, all over the place. And they're laughing at the stupidity of humanity, at all the ridiculous things we do, at all the problems we cause ourselves. The ‘phee,’ the spirits are really having a good laugh at us these days. If we were a little bit ashamed, embarrassed by the spirits laughing at us, then we wouldn't do so many foolish and harmful things. We wouldn't act so wrongly and there would be more peace in the world if only we were a little bit ashamed of ourselves at being laughed at by the spirits.

Now we'll discuss the arising and existence of 'self' and selfishness. We'd like to talk about what is called 'pava' or '*bhava*' which means the existence of 'self.' Someone requested that we talk about this. So we'll talk about the meaning of *bhava*, the existing of 'self' which is something very difficult to understand. This word *bhava*, b-h-a-v-a, is a little bit difficult to translate into English. It's usually translated as existence or being, occasionally as becoming. You should see though that the meaning of this word is broader than any single translation. When we speak of existence, first there is a becoming. *Bhava* first is a becoming. Then there is existing and finally a state of being. *Bhava* can be translated with all three of these and includes them all — first a becoming, then an existing and then a state of being. These three and the state of being is then the basis for the birth of 'self,' the arising of 'self' out of these. *Bhava* is becoming, existing and state of being. There is 'I,' then 'me.'

Now, we don't just mean physical existence. We actually don't mean physical existence at all but we're referring to a mental existence or even spiritual kind of existence. This becoming, existing and state of being refer to something mental. If we use the word spiritual abode, this should help you to understand what it's meant. The mind creates a place to be. The mind creates a place to exist, and this then is where a 'self' can exist. However, this is a deceptive thought. This thing isn't actually real. It's an illusion concocted by the mind although it in itself isn't real. Nonetheless, this deceptive thought leads to all kinds of selfishness and many problems. So, this becoming, existing and state of being is something the mind creates as a spiritual abode – a place for the 'self' to exist.

Since the Buddha's time and probably even before, we have talked about three kinds of *bhava* – three kinds of these states of being. The first is the *kāma* which means being in sexuality, existing with sexuality. Then there is *rūpa* which is existing with form but pure form, not a form that is mixed up with sexuality and sensuality but just form of itself. And then *arūpa* which is the formless, existing within formlessness. These are three kinds of being or we could say three states of being which are of course mental. In order to save time and still be able to understand this, we will use a simple example. We'll take a housewife. The state for this hour, our housewife is involved with her husband in the bedroom. So, for an hour totally involved and busy with sex, that's *kāmabhava* – existing in sexuality. Then, the next hour, our housewife is just involved with taking care of her baby or dealing with household things like money, wealth, possessions, furniture, things like that. In this hour, this is *rūpabhava* – existence with or in forms. And then, the next hour, her whole attention and interest, her involving is with doing good, with charity, with earning merit and developing virtue in order to go to heaven or something. And, this is *arūpabhava* – existence with the formless. These are some easy examples of three kinds of *bhava* that is *kāmabhava* – exist in sexuality, *rūpabhava* – existing in form, and *arūpabhava* – existing in the formless. There are these three kinds of *bhava* or states of being.

To understand *bhava* completely, we must understand all three types of the *bhava*. All three of these *bhavas* occur with this one single body. All three kinds of being or existences occur in just this life. But if we follow the orthodox traditional approach, the very conservative approach, whether Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism, then they put these existences on somewhere else. They speak of the sexual realm as whole other world that one after dying, one goes to the sexual existences. They speak of the form existences as whole other world. There's a hierarchy of this world where the *brahmā* God lives in the existences of pure form. And then the formless is even more world where a higher kind of *brahmā* or *brahmā* God exists with formlessness or totally formless of existence. So, this traditional approach, which is very conservative and not exactly Buddhist, is actually more Hindu or something but nonetheless many so-called Buddhists talk about such things.

They're often totally different worlds that have nothing to do with our present life. And so, what good are any of those existences? How are they going to solve any problems in this life? So, if we hold to this kind of explanation, then that's a whole other meaning. It's very orthodox approach. But if we take the Buddhist meaning, then these existences need to be here in this life. The Buddhism is concerned with this life, what's happening now. And so, these three existences as properly taught in Buddhism or somewhere else but are found within this life. In fact, they can all be found today, right here and now. We experience sexual existence, form existence, and formless existence. These three states of being are experienced today by all of us. So, we need to

find them and understand them in this way if it's to be the Buddhist approach, if it's to be relevant to life, if it's to have practical value.

What even more ridiculous is that this people who talk of the *bhava*, of there somewhere in these different worlds up in the sky some place. They say that in sexual existences, this lasts for a hundred years. When you're born in these existences, you live there for a hundred years. That the form existences last for tens of thousands of years. And then the formless *brahmā* God and the formless existences, these last for hundreds of thousands of years. Of what values of use is any of that if these things only change every ten thousand or hundred thousand years? Of what relevance is that have to our own lives? Those are things that can't be changed. We can't do anything with them. It's totally out of our control. Why bother with any of it?

But if we understand the existences to be here in this life, you'll see that they are changing all the time. Sexual existence might only last 5 or 10 minutes. For example, our housewife, maybe she spends 10 -15 minutes with her husband. And then 10 minutes with a child or possessions and then 5 minutes doing good or with charity, with being virtuous. In this life, these existences are changing every 5-10 minutes. In one hour, there can be many existences. So, this is something that is changing all the time in ordinary life. So, it's something that needs to be controlled. We need to be untroubled of this existence. So, it's much more relevant and useful. These existences that we see today in our own lives and not in some lives, who knows where.

Now, we'd like to look at the problems arising from these three *bhavas* – these three existences. For example, we can take a housewife again. When she involves in sex with her husband, there are all kinds of problems and difficulties trying to please her partner, trying to get some fun out of it herself and so on and so forth, can be of one set of problems and hassles in this sexual existence. And then when dealing with the children, with the house, the furniture, the bank book, money and things like these, there're another set of problems and difficulties involved with form existence. And then when dealing with honor, with fame, with doing good, with virtue, there are other difficulties in maintaining and developing things like a good name or respect. So, whatever kind of existence it is — whether sexual, form, or formless — it comes with various difficulties and problems. As soon as there is *bhava*, this existence state of being, then there is *jāti* – the birth of 'self,' the birth of 'I,' 'me' – and then there will be problems. As long as 'I' exists, 'I' will have, problems. So, through whatever kind of existence it is, this is the place where 'self' is born and then the 'self' has problems.

So, question is then how can we be free of these – the problems of *bhava*? How can our housewife live without the problems of sexual, form, and formless existence? It's impossible that she will have nothing to do with any of these. For the ordinary housewife, sex is part of life, dealing with the house and children and possessions is part of life, and dealing with one reputation and name and trying to be a good person – all of these are necessary part of life. So, how can our housewife be free of the problems of these three kinds of existence? Now, these things aren't just problems for the housewife, they're also problems for the househusband. He also has to deal with all these different kinds of existence. So, the husband and the wife need to be very good friends to co-operate and help each other to deal properly with the different kinds of being, different kinds of becoming and existence so that they're not problems, so that it's not just a bunch of suffering. So, let's look at *bhava* a little more closely in order to see how to deal with them so that it's not just more problems.

We'd like to take a minute to speak about marriage. Marriage should be where a man and a woman live together in such a way they don't increase their problems. As individuals, a woman and a man have already had problems with the different kinds of existence. When we get married, we shouldn't just increase our problems, especially to make many more problems out of sex as it's commonly done. Most people when they get married, then turn sex into a lot of craziness. Except nowadays, especially in the west people don't even wait for marriage, but they just become lovers and then make lots of problems out of sexual existence and let alone the other time. But marriage or real love ought to mean that there is understanding between both partners, that both of them understand these existences well enough so that they don't make more problems out of sexuality, form and formlessness. This means we really have a real marriage or a Dhamma marriage. It's not necessary to solve the problems of these different kinds of existence which means we need to study them carefully to understand them.

We'd like to use the term 'sexual existence' and then 'formage existence.' This word doesn't exist in any English dictionary. So, we'd like to make one up – 'formage existence' and then finally 'formless existence.' One needs to understand all three kinds of being. However, the later, nobody is at all interested in. And even the very basic one of sexuality, very few people can actually manage it or get it straight. So, it's time to start to understand these three kinds of *bhava* of existence so that there're no longer problems for us. So, please don't make marriage just more problems. Marriage shouldn't just be an increase of problems. Marriage ought to be a way to decrease and eliminate problems. In a world of fools, marriage just brings more problems. But in the world of intelligent people, marriage is a way of solving problems, of combining the strength, experience, and intelligence of two people in order to solve the problems of life rather than to increase them. To do so, one must fully understand the three *bhavas*. So, we ask you to study them very carefully.

We must pass the lesson of these three existences. All three of them will be lessons for us that we must pass. They would test us, and we must pass these tests in order to graduate to Nibbāna. Nibbāna is that which is beyond, above these three existences. But to graduate into Nibbāna, we must pass the test of all these forms of existence. Even for the Christian to be with God, to enter the kingdom of God, to do so we must learn the lessons of these three kinds of existence. We must pass their test in order to graduate into the kingdom of God. And so, let's understand these different existences so we can pass the test and graduate to our lives that is without problems.

The first lesson is that of *kāma*. Don't confuse with 'kamma' or 'karma' but '*kāma*' k-ā-m-a or sexual existence. This is a lesson that we cannot avoid because nature has arranged things so that we inevitably experience sexuality. There's just no way that we can avoid it. So, we need to learn and pass this lesson. In order to reproduce, nature has arranged for sexuality. Reproduction in itself is not much fun. The work, the effort, the stress, involved in the reproductive process is quite a bit of difficulties and we wouldn't do it if it wasn't for the fact that nature has arranged for sex or sexuality. In the reproductive process, nature has added the sexual feelings and this is the only reason why anybody would bother with reproduction in the first place. So, reproduction and sex are two different things. There's just the physical reproduction and then sex is more the mental feelings and then there's sexual existence from that. You can see sex and the strong kind of physical pressure that comes from sex as being wages. Nature hires us to reproduce, and the payoff is sex. How many of you would bother with all the hassles if there wasn't this payoff? In fact, it's so effective that people spend hours, days, years, very willingly getting involved in all this very difficult business because the payoff is so strong and because people like it so much.

This is true not just for the housewife but for the househusband as well. So, there's this basic lesson in life. It's there from the start. Many modern psychologists, most of all Freud emphasized the important of sexuality and there's quite a bit of truth in that. The infant even before knowing sex itself has a kind of sexuality. For example, in acts like urinating and defecating, the child experiences some sexual pleasure. There's a kind of satisfaction and pleasantness in passing urine or when the lump of feces drops out. The child feels good. There's a very basic level of sexual feeling in even these acts. This is how nature has arranged things. So, all of us must pass through these sexual existences. It's happening to us, so we need to learn the lesson to pass the test so that we no longer have any problems due to sexuality. But most people are just infatuated with sex. They haven't taken a good look at it. They're so bewitched by the powerful pleasure that sex pays that nobody looks at it very completely. Nobody notices that sex is just the way to trick us into spending all the time and effort to reproduce. Nature requires that species reproduces, and so it tricks us into doing what's necessary. But very few people take the time or make the effort to step back and take a look at it. Instead, people simply indulge in sexual existence. They chase after it. We make all kinds of TV shows and movie produced. Look at the way people dress, the way people walk and talk, chasing after sexual existence. We need to start to learn this lesson so that we can graduate from it, where we no longer make any problems, when we're no longer trapped and controlled by sexual existence.

Once we get married, our excitement and infatuation with sexual existence begins to weaken a bit and they begin to be much more concerned with material existence or formage existence dealing with the house, the car, the furniture, the possessions, the bills, the bank book, and all these things, getting a VCR, computer, mountain bike and all that. So, there's a natural tendency that the interest in sexual existence diminishes and the concern, the involvement with formage existence develops. And then later, as one grows older, those things begin to fade as well. The house is paid for, nobody cares whether the car is so fast anymore, and all those things begin to fade. And people as they get old begin to realize that death is coming. And so, they want to do good and store up merit and so they start going to church or going to the temple and doing things in the formless existences.

So, in an ordinary life for ordinary people, all three kinds of existences are present. Each of us goes through all of these different existences, so we need to learn their lessons. If we merely pass through or merely go spinning around in these different kinds of existences, we don't learn so much. When sexuality weakens and we get more involved in formage existence, that doesn't mean we're necessary any better or wiser unless we actually learned what these different existences have to teach us. We need to study them in order to get free of them for the sake of emancipation. Normally, we're trapped in one of these different forms of existence, if not sexuality, then the formage, and if not that, then the formless existence. For moment to moment, generally we're trapped in one of these. We need to learn what is all about in order to be emancipated from all types and kinds of existence.

There's a word '*avacara*' which means ready to fall into. It's a habit of falling into. And so, we use this in terms of the three *bhavas*. When the people who are always ready to fall into sexual existence, we then speak of as existing in sexuality. Those who have the habit of falling into formage existence, we speak of as existing in form. And then, those who are having the habit in falling into formless existence, we speak of as that. It's a way of speaking about the general habit or tendency of people. In fact, we're falling into all of these. But different people will have a predilection, or their habits tend towards sexuality or towards formageness or formlessness. So,

there are these habits of falling into different states of being. We will study these in meditation and Dhamma practice.

We study these different states of existence so that we don't need to fall into them. We speak of people according to their habit of which one they fall into the most, but in fact, we're not existing. In reality, we're simply just existing in this body, in this world. Naturally that's all of these happening but mentally we keep falling into these three kinds of existence. We study them in order to understand and from this understanding we can control these different kinds of existence. We need not be the slave to these different kinds of existence, instead, we can be in control, in charge.

Now, all kinds of existence are difficult and the most difficult of all is the sexual existence. It's the hardest to control. It's the hardest to get free of. Right now, therefore, we ought to take a good look at ourselves and see which kinds of existence we are tending towards. Which way that we incline — towards sexuality, towards the form or towards formlessness? Almost certainly for most of us is sexual existence, too difficult for the people to get free of that and exist primary in formage existence or formless existence. Most people are primary going at falling into sexual and sensual existences. Once you take a good look at it oneself to see what's going on and then with time, we may raise ourselves up beyond sexuality and then beyond the formage existences and eventually, even get free of formless existence. The way to do so is to develop the understanding of what's actually happening through studying Dependent Origination and then, practicing *ānāpānasati* or mindfulness with breathing in order to be able to put the understanding of Dependent Origination into practice. We'll speak about Dependent Origination and mindfulness with breathing later. These are necessary if we are to control the existences.

Thank you for being very good and patient listeners, you are patiently and we thank you. May you all be successful according to the aspiration to understand the practice Dhamma which has brought you here. Thank you.

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