

FOREWORD

At a time when Buddhism is spreading fast across the globe, it is our intention to make the general public acquainted with the great teachings of the Lord Buddha.

Whilst listening to a sermon is the ideal way of going forward in the path of Dhamma, some may prefer to read it at their leisure and comprehend the teachings at their own pace and time. Then there may be those who are weak in their faculty of listening, so the only way they can understand it is by reading a text or a Dhamma book.

These transliterations are available for all those who wish to have an understanding of the Lord Buddha's teachings in order to find true salvation.

****This work is a transcription of the sermon held in 2018-12-02. There may be the odd omission or inclusion inadvertently due to quality issues of the audio or deliberate editing to make the text more readable.**

This sermon revolves around 'what is the Buddha?' distinguishing between 'what' and 'who'. In addition the Thero explains the importance and the value of being grateful or showing gratitude to your roots.

Moreover he explains his own experience on his reflection on Dhamma proving that, we like scavengers pick up the colours that are discarded by the sights we see.

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KEY WORDS

What

Buddha

Grateful

Gratitude

Winnowing fan

Paticcha Samuppàda

Great

Qualities

Scavengers

Friend

Foe

2018 – 12 – 02

What is the Buddha?

When I speak of the Buddha,

What do you feel?
What thoughts come to mind?
Is He a hero?
Is He a champion?
How do you feel about the Buddha?
What do you feel, your connection is with the Buddha?
You're not friends with Him on Facebook, are you?

No, that isn't the connection I'm talking about. But what connection do we have with the Buddha? He's not here any longer,
Does He care what connection we have with Him?

Does it matter?
Does He care, do we care?
Who is the Buddha to us?
Is He a teacher?
Is He your master?
In which case, are you His slave?
Are you a student?
Are you a follower?
Are you a disciple?
What are you?

I mean you pay homage to the Buddha. You offer flowers at his feet. You light incense. You light oil lamps.

So, what is this connection that you have with the Buddha?
Why is it that you do that to him, perhaps not others?

So, there must be some connection between you and the Buddha, this is why you go to see Him. When you go to the temple, you go looking for the Buddha don't you? Knock, knock is the Buddha home?

So, what is this connection that we have?

What connection does He have with us?

Do you think you owe Him something?

Is that why you keep offering flowers at His feet, is that why you offer pooja, give alms to the Buddha? Do you feel that you owe Him something?

Think about New Years' day or the Sinhala & Tamil New Year, we have customs isn't it? Some of our customs involve visiting those that we have connections with, relations. We go visit them, and then we take sweets, things that they like to eat, gifts and sometimes when we go see them, we take a handful of betel leaves and worship them. So, there's a connection there. When we make an offering to somebody, is that because we owe them something? Is that a debt that requires to be repaid? Or are we just being grateful?

Do we need to be grateful to the Buddha?

What's the point of us being grateful to Him?

He's not here anymore, He's gone. He did his bit and now He's gone.

So why do we need to be grateful?

Well to answer that, it requires the understanding of what is the Buddha? Distinguish between 'what' and 'who'. I said what is the Buddha, not who is the Buddha. Who is a person? When you say what, I can ask who is the doctor but what is the doctor? There are entirely two different questions, right? A Who is a person, that's a doctor, and there's who is a doctor? One of you might put your arms up and say "I am a doctor". But when I ask what is a doctor? Can anyone of you put your arms up? No, because 'a what' there's no person behind a what.

When we make offerings to the Buddha, when we speak of the Buddha, I want you all to understand that it is not a who that we have a connection with. It is not a who that we have a relation to, it is not the who behind the Buddha that you go offer flowers to, worship, light incense, make offerings. No, it's not the 'who', it's the 'what'.

The Buddha is the culmination, the amalgamation, the coming together of all the great qualities there ever was, there ever is, and there ever will be. Where all great qualities ever known to humankind, all mankind, all devas, all brahmas, all beings come together what you find there is the Buddha. Not the 'who', the 'what'. If someone asks who is the Buddha, you can say, well there was a prince named Siddhartha, who renounces and after six long years of asceticism, he found the dhamma under the bodhi tree and he became the Buddha.

Now what is the Buddha?

Now you can't speak of Siddhartha, because you're not speaking about a person. We are speaking about what it entails, to be a Buddha. **If someone asks you what is a Buddha? Then simply the answer is, all the great qualities there ever was, there ever is, there ever will be, all joined together, all brought and put together into one single point. Bringing all the good qualities together, then you have the Buddha.**

It's like the big bang, have you all heard of the big bang? There's the big bang theory, how the entire cosmos, the universe was just one dot at one point. I'm not speaking in favor or against it, I'm just saying there's a theory called the big bang theory, where the entire universe was one dot, one tiny speck and then the whole thing went bang! And then you have stars, the planets, the moons and everything. If you reverse that process, everything is brought back together, and you come back to that one tiny dot.

Likewise, if you bring all the great qualities that you can ever think of, you can ever find in whom? You can find them in people, parents, they have great qualities, teachers, friends, grandparents, they have great qualities. What about your pet dog? Does it not have good qualities? No matter how much you mistreat the animal, it's still going to come wagging its tail when it sees you. Can you name one person that might do that? No matter how you treat them. Your mother and father might, but beyond that, I can't think of many, but a dog always does, that's why it's called a man's best friend. No matter how you treat your pet dog, it's always going to be delighted to see you. Now isn't that a great quality? It recognizes,

"This is the person that fills my stomach, puts me out of my hunger, has given me a home and takes care of me."

You see how a dog recognizes qualities in you. Are you intelligent and clever enough to spot the qualities in the dog? The dog sees the good qualities in you, this is why it comes wagging its tail, no matter how you mistreat the animal. It will still come after you, licking your feet, that's what a dog is like, but are you the same? If the dog dirties the carpet, will you treat the animal just the same? Or at that point in time, will you forget that this is your pet? Here's the animal that keeps you safe from strangers, at that point in time do you forget about the good qualities of your dog and a good old stick comes to your hand? Do you have the good qualities of a dog at least?

So, you got to think, that animal is grateful, are you? If you can't be grateful to your pet dog, how can you be grateful to the Buddha? If you can't be grateful to your pet dog, who's always by your side being there for you, barking at strangers, keeping your home safe when you're fast

asleep at night, who guards your home? It is your dog. So, you don't have to come running outside, get out of your bed and come check who is loitering around. Well, your dog is doing your security business for you, because that animal is grateful. Do you have the same gratitude that your dog has, at least? If not, and if you can't spot the good qualities of a dog, then how can you be capable of spotting the great qualities of the Buddha? Because they are worlds apart. But the good qualities of a dog are also a part of what makes a Buddha. I'm not saying the Buddha is a dog. What I'm saying is the great qualities that you can find wherever; extract all the great qualities from all sentient beings bring it to one place, now you have the Buddha.

The Dhamma is not to look back & regret

If animals can be grateful, I think we need to recognize the importance of being grateful, because a lot of people come and speak to me and share experiences of how their lives have evolved since they started listening to the dhamma and it's really interesting. A lot of the time they come and tell me,

"Swaminwahanse, you know if only I have been able to listen to your sermons, or these sermons by any monk six months ago, my life would have taken a very different direction. I would not have made my wife pregnant." Others say, "if only I have been able to listen to these sermons a week ago, I wouldn't have tied the knot."

They come and talk to me about things that they are now regretting, repenting. I listen to them and say,

"What makes you think that your wife has not helped you to be where you are today? What makes you think that the circumstances that your life has taken now, whichever path it has taken now, is not the reason why you got to listen to these sermons?"

A guy breaks a leg, unfortunate perhaps, and he is now bedridden. A friend comes along to see him and he says,

"Hey, now that you're going to be bedridden for the next 3 months, why don't you listen to this CD? I have been listening to some sermons and I think they are quite interesting, why don't you listen to some of them as well?"

Here you go. Now he has no choice, because he's bedridden, so whenever he's not watching T.V. he decides, why don't I listen to the sermon, nothing lost. He gets an opportunity to listen to it. If he hadn't broken that leg, he would've been partying, clubbing, not having the

opportunity to listen to those sermons. So why does he then complain that he broke a leg. We love to regret, don't we? Aren't there things in your life that you regret? Consider your past and think,

"Oh, I shouldn't have done that, that shouldn't have happened to me, I shouldn't have met him or her, why did that person come into my life? They wasted me, they ruined me, everything I owned, everything that I worked hard to earn. They took all that away from me."

What a shame, so much regret. Does this regret help you feel joy in your heart? What does regret bring you? Joy? Pleasure? No, it brings you pain, remorse, dissatisfaction. Where does the Buddha say remorse, dissatisfaction and pain lead you to Nibbana? Where does the Buddha say that? He doesn't say that anywhere, because those thoughts are not conducive to Nibbana.

The thing is, there is no point in regretting or repenting. Looking back at the past thinking, *"I shouldn't have done this, done that, that person shouldn't have come into my life"*, these thoughts are not useful, they are useless because how can you go back into the past and change them? The really sad fact of the matter is, you don't realize how those events really supported you to get where you are today. You don't see the connection, you are failing to see the connection, that's why you're regretting. If you somehow figured out how you getting married, was the reason why today you are able to listen to these sermons, then you would be a happier person. If you somehow realize that you having a child, was the reason that you somehow got to listen to these sermons or any sermons. I am not talking about these sermons in particular, I am talking about finding a path or to enter the journey of Nibbana. If you somehow found that connection, I think you would be a happy person.

Every day, I am grateful that I got married as a lay person. As a lay person, I held onto some distorted views about the world. I didn't believe in *kamma & vipàka*, I didn't believe in after life or the life before. I was a very materialistic person, I didn't believe in gods, I didn't believe in offering alms, it's just a waste of time. If I earn something, it's mine to keep, so I can spend it however I want. Why should I go offering alms to people who don robes and don't do anything for themselves? These are thoughts that I used to have. I didn't bother going to the temple, observing *sil*. I wasn't interested in that kind of stuff. Becoming king was what was in my mind, becoming the best, wealthiest, richest, the most powerful was what I was most interested in.

Then I got married and the person that I got married to, she slowly but eventually, encouraged me into the path of dhamma. She said that we should go listen to sermons sometimes. We

should offer alms to the temple at least once a month, things she asked me to do and so I started.

At first, I didn't see the point in doing all that, but eventually things started to make sense. If I hadn't done that, I doubt that I would be here right now today. If I hadn't given alms when I had the opportunity to, if I hadn't made the effort to go to the temple and make offerings to the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha, perhaps those were the things that earned me the merit that I required, to be where I am today. Before she came into my life, I never offered an *ata pirikara*, that was the first time I have done so. Perhaps that was what earned me enough merits to get into robes, because you can't do that if you have never offered an *ata pirikara* in your life or at any point in *sansāra*, because you need those merits. So now is it right for me to look at my life, at my past and go, "*I shouldn't have got married, if I hadn't then I would've come onto this path much sooner, earlier, all that time I have wasted.*"?

Because when you walk the path of dhamma, you might begin to realize the uselessness of certain things that we do in our worldly lives. Like building attachment to other people, building connections, setting expectations, and how all that leads to suffering. When you contemplate such realities, you might begin to look at your past and then regret, "*I shouldn't have done that at that point in my life*".

The dhamma is not to regret ladies and gentlemen. The dhamma is not to look back at our lives and go, "*I shouldn't have done this or I shouldn't have done that*", that is not what the dhamma is for. The dhamma is for the purpose of looking at the future and going, "*I shouldn't be doing this, I shouldn't be doing that*". Not, "*I shouldn't have done that*", because that is regret, repent, remorse, what is the point? Show me one place where the Buddha admonishes somebody saying, "*You shouldn't have done this, or shouldn't have done that.*" Except when he sets discipline, the code of discipline, when He speaks to his monks and says,

"Monks, why did you do that? That was wrong of you to do and from here forth I set a rule of discipline whereby, you're not allowed to engage in such conduct."

Except for those occasions, there never has been a time where He talks about the past of somebody as a means of giving advice, admonishing, telling off, because there's no point in doing that.

Because feelings of repentance are negative thoughts, thoughts that take away joy. Taking away joy is not something that leads you to happiness. I mean how can being unhappy, to be happy make sense? Because when you're regretting, these are not thoughts of happiness

right? There are thoughts of regret, repentance, remorse. These are negative feelings, and you're trying to traverse the path that leads you to happiness, which are positive feelings. How can fulfilling negative feelings help you achieve something that's positive? That just cannot make sense.

The dhamma is not to look back and regret, the dhamma is to look at the present moment and into the future. I made mistakes yes, but let me learn from them, so that I don't make the same mistakes again. From our past mistakes we can learn things and also, something I think we should all try to do, better than we do already, is to be grateful for things that already happened in our lives.

Past & the present net result

Who you are now is the net result of all the things that happened in your life, true or false? Yes or no? Who or where you are now, what you are doing now is the net result of all the things that had happened

in your life up until this point. The fact that you are here right now, listening to this sermon, is the net result of all the things that have happened from the beginning of *sansàra* to a minute before you entered this hall, all things combined. Now if the net result of all those things that happened in your life, is you being able to be here and if you want to be here and that's why you are here, then tell me, can you name one thing that happened in your past that you feel, *"No that shouldn't have happened to me"*. Because if that had changed, the net result would be different, could potentially be different.

Earlier this week, a wife and husband came to visit us at the monastery, and their child is mentally handicapped. Now the parents tell me that they are really suffering, not my words, but their words, because I can't decide if someone else is suffering, that is what that person decides. The parents visited me and said,

"Swaminwahanse we are really suffering. We brought this child into this world and because of this child, we go through so much pain and agony. Looking after this child is not easy, this child cannot look after itself and we realize that from now on, as long as we are going to be alive, we are going to have to attend to this child. There is never going to be a moment of peace for us."

the parents said with tears in their eyes. I said *"Well tell me a little about what life was like before this child came into your life?"* They said that,

“before that we were really happy, a happy couple. We went sight-seeing, went around the world, we did all the fun things in life.”

“So, what happened after this child came into your life?”

“Well then reality hit us. We went seeking help from doctors and when doctors failed to help us, we went to the temples, speaking to monks asking if they could help us. Eventually we got to listen to the dhamma and now we are on the path of the dhamma, we can see how it helps us get to Nibbana”. We regret

I said,

“Well you regret having that child? Are you serious? Is it not because that child came into your life, that your life took a different turn? Because had that child not come into your life, had a fully formed child, without any disabilities, without any handicaps come into your life, where would you be right now? Probably be at a party, probably in some other country having fun. But where are you now? Listening to the dhamma, in good association, in noble association on a path to Nibbana. So, are you telling me that you regret that event? Or are you failing to see the blessing? Aren't you simply failing to see the silver lining in the dark cloud?”

This is why I say ladies and gentlemen, we should never be regretful. Things that have happened, have happened. Because regret has never solved any problems. Repent never solved any problem. You can't go back into the past and change past events. All you can do is change the future. The past is what made you who you are, isn't it? You are the gentleman you are today because of past events that happened in your life. If you're thrifty today, it may be because you're not born into a well to do family. Because your parents found it difficult to make ends meet, so what did they do? They taught you to be thrifty, to be resourceful and to be careful with spending your money.

Perhaps if you were born into a well to do family, then you might not be so thrifty today. Perhaps you might go spending. Perhaps you might not be here today because all you want to do is go spend money, entertaining friends and partying. So how can you say me being born into a poor family is the cause for my suffering? That shouldn't have happened in my life?

I think we all need to be a little bit more grateful in our lives. This is why I say, I am always grateful to who was my wife in my laylife. If it wasn't for her, I probably wouldn't be here today or I wouldn't be in robes today. If it wasn't for my teachers from montessori, I probably wouldn't be here today. When you transfer merits, do you remember your teachers? I had a

habit as a lay person even after I left school, I used to ring up my teachers every New year. Even when I was in the U.K. I would ring them in Sri Lanka and then speak to them, because I knew that saying a few words would make them happy. Just them knowing that I was doing well, thanks to their efforts, made them happy. That was a habit that I had. Do you do that? I am not saying I'm great, I am just saying that these are things that we can all learn to do. Do you encourage your children to go and speak to their teachers when they have left school? After they have left high school, college and move on to do jobs and now they are doing well. Do you encourage your children to go back to their schools or where they went to the montessori, or where they did their scholarship, where they did their O/Ls, A/Ls because that was their founding, that is where they became who they are right now. That's where they spent their formative years. Where is the gratitude? That gratitude is essential because if you're not grateful to your teachers, how can you be grateful to the Buddha?

Today's diminishing values

If you don't realize what your teachers have given you, the teachers whom you have come across and associated with in your life, living breathing people, how can you be grateful to the Buddha whom you have never seen? How can you be grateful to someone who only lived two and a half thousand years ago, someone's face that you have never seen? How do you know that this is the true face of the Buddha? You don't know that. This is what someone thinks He was like. You can never make a sculpture of the Buddha, exactly like the Buddha was. That's an impossibility. You'll never see the Buddha, not in your lifetime, but your teachers, you have. Tell your kids to speak to their teachers. At least if they can't go to the schools, give them a call. It's really important to be grateful and if you don't instil those values ladies and gentlemen, your children are going to forget their parents pretty soon as well. They are going to forget their father and mother, they will just be two people that did what they were supposed to do, to bring me up because they brought me into this world. That was their duty and obligation, so they should have done it. It was not nice to do, but they had to do it. Your children are going to begin to think like that. I'm not only speaking about you, because these sermons will be listened to by others and possibly in other countries, even many years from now. As you know, values are diminishing every year, as time passes by, we are not who we were and who our ancestors were. Do you know how much our ancestors valued these values? Nowadays, kids put their feet up on the table in the presence of their teachers. It surprises me how someone could even do something like that, but that has become the norm now. Children speak up to their parents and shout at them. Our ancestors wouldn't have dreamt of something like that. The reason why our ancestors were happier than we are today is because of those values that they had in their lives. All those values that we just washed, put it through the washing machine and what came out was just riches and wealth that's it, all the values washed away.

What a pity, eventually all we are going to be left with is a husk, not the grain. The good stuff will be gone, if we don't do something about it. I'm not saying "Let's go out and try to change the world, let's go and make the world a better place for you, me, and everybody else". That's not what I'm trying to say.

The value of showing gratitude

What I'm asking you to do is apply this into your own lives. Teach your children the value of respecting parents. Teach them who their parents are and to be grateful to them. Particularly as you walk this path of the dhamma, eventually what will happen and I can say this as if I can see into the future. If you don't have a solid founding, if you're not based in gratitude, ungratefulness is an army of the *Mara*, it is one of the *dasa Māra sená*, conceit and ungratefulness in gratitude. Army of the Mara will defeat you on your path to Nibbana. This is why it's so important to be grateful for everything, all the events and people that helped us in our lives.

What did the Buddha do after he attained Nibbana? He looked back at His past, my teachers, *Álárakàma & Uddakarámaputta*, "How can I go and be of assistance to them but alas, they are not in a place where I can help them now." Then He looked at the five ascetics, the five ascetics that abandoned Him, because they thought that

"He has given up, He no longer has the courage, so let's just abandon Him."

Despite that abandonment, see how much gratitude the Buddha had? He still went looking for them.

Now tell me if perhaps there has been someone in your life, perhaps an ex-partner, ex-spouse who had abandoned you for whatever reason. Do you still hold a grudge against them because they weren't good to you? What about all the things that they did for you, while you were still together? Isn't one of the reasons that you are here today, right now because of the time you spent with them or perhaps because they left you at that point in life. Perhaps they did you a favour by leaving you at that point in life because if they hadn't done that, your life might have taken a completely different path. You know the old saying "*A butterfly spans its wings in one part of the world and there's a storm in the other part of the world.*" What is the essence of that? Little things can make a huge difference. So, if I move my arm to the left versus moving my arm to the right, it's going to make a difference. Because history has now been written this way. If I move my arm to the right, that's a different story from that point forward. So, whoever has come into your life ladies and gentlemen, be grateful. Those people might not be

in your lives today, they might have left you, you might have left them, but still be grateful for all that time they were with you.

Who makes you angry?

Sometimes guys come up to me and say,

"Swaminwahanse, there was a girlfriend that I was going out with and then she dumped me, I curse her."

And I say,

"Do you not realize young man, all that time she was with you, she dedicated her life to you, she didn't look at another guy, she didn't think about another person, all she cared about was you, your happiness. She dedicated herself to your happiness, did you not think about that?"

Why did you just see the one bad thing that she did, what about all the good things she did and the time she spent with you? All the good things she did for you, why do you think about all the bad stuff? Why do you go digging for dung? You know what's going to happen then. Look for the gold, gems, and jewels.

If at any point in our lives that we had suffered mentally, then we know now what the answer and cause for that mental suffering is; What is the cause for all mental suffering? Attachment. Not the girl dumping me, not the guy dumping me, not my partner filing for a divorce, that was not the cause for mental suffering. Attachment is always the cause of mental suffering. If attachment is always with me, always in my mind, who else is to be blamed? Who do we have to blame? The only thing we have to do is be grateful. Seriously think about that for a moment. If there is no one in this world, can you name one person in this world that has made you angry? I know what you are thinking, there is Sam, Samantha, Richard, oh!!! I hate that guy, he made me really very angry When was the last time someone made you really angry? Can someone else make you angry? Is anger something that someone else can do to you? No, anger is something that you do to yourself, because all others can say are words. How you construct those words, how you tie those words together like you do with a necklace, depends on your state of mind. It's you who process those words. You are the processor, others just give you the inputs, you process how you like it then comes the output. He shouted at me, she scolded me, so she made me angry. Incorrect, you made yourself angry.

Remember last week or the week before, I told you about the visit to the zoo. You go to the aviary. There are birds in cages, you go listen to the words and you think the birds are singing along, singing bird songs. They are chirping away, singing bird songs, only because you don't

Speak bird language and that's why you think that. If one day you learn bird language, you will realize that they are cursing at you, what are they saying?

"I lived a happy life in the forest with my baby birds and everybody else in my family. I used to eat leaves and fruits from the trees. I had a very free life and what did you do? You cage me up and put me in a zoo. Now look at me, I'm stuck here."

So, do you think they are singing bird songs? No, they are cursing at you, just like all the other animals in the zoo. They are cursing at you. Do you like to be caged? What makes you think an animal likes to be caged then? Anyway, that's beside the point.

What I was trying to say was, you can't name one person that has made you angry. Because anger is not a product of the outside world, anger is a product of the inside world, you become angry. It is not the other person that makes you angry. So, if no one made you angry, can you name one person that made you sad in your life? Come on surely, there must be somebody in your life that made you sad, just give me one person. No. If no one's made you angry, if no one's made you sad, then the only thing that the other person has given you is happiness. Supported you, assisted you in some way shape or form, being of assistance to you, helped you. Because help can come from the outside world and I'm talking about that kind of happiness. I'm not talking about mental happiness, because again mental happiness cannot be a factor of the outside world either. So, no one in this world made you happy, no one made you sad. You did it all by yourself, but people in the world can assist you, support you, give you a meal, shelter, clothing, and bring you comforts that makes life easy for you to live. All that they have done for you.

So, if you think about a husband-wife relationship and the reason that they are going for a divorce, is because the husband says that she always makes him angry, is that true? If that is the reason that he's filing for a divorce, knowing and understanding that the wife never made the husband angry. What has the wife given the husband? Three meals a day? Ironing his clothes? Washing clothes, dirty dishes, sweeping the house, and feeding the children. All things that made his life easier, comfortable, right? So, if the wife has never made him angry, then the only thing that the wife has ever done to this guy is made his life easier and comfortable, so why is this guy filing for a divorce then? His wife has never done anything bad to him, all she has done is good. Do you get my point?

No one has ever made another person angry and if a couple is trying to break up because the other has made him/her angry, then we know that is not true, because no one else can make us angry. But in a relationship, they help each other out by helping each other have a more

comfortable life. So that is real, that is true, cooking a meal is not a fabrication of the mind, that really happened. So, if those things really did happen, but making someone angry is not true, that is just a fabrication of the mind, then why are you trying to divorce? You're trying to fix your problem by treating the outside world, when is that going to work out? That's not going to work out, that's pointless. If you're not capable of looking at things like that, then you forget about the gratitude. You forget to be grateful. Be grateful. Children be grateful to your parents, and these are not just words, it has to come with a feeling behind it. Think about how much our parents have done for us.

I think one of the first sermons that we delivered; one was in Australia to some young children. One of the things that I asked them to do from here forward is to help do the dishes at home. I think children aged 6,7,8 and so on, I told them to do the dishes at home. Again, parents here, I ask you if you don't encourage your children to do dishes at home, that is because if you think it's too much trouble for them. Well, I think you're setting them off in the wrong direction. You're ruining them because they are going to forget gratitude. If they can't see how and why they should be grateful to their parents, when are they ever going to learn why they should be grateful to the Buddha? Because they can't begin to comprehend what the Buddha is. At least children can begin to think about what parents are because one day you can become a parent, but who here wants to become a Buddha? You have to become a Buddha, to know who a Buddha is or what a Buddha is. To know what a parent is, you have to become a parent. There's a lot of movies, when people look back at their lives in retrospect and start crying and then they think about their parents, thinking "Oh!! I should have looked after my parents much more than I really did", treated their parents better. Most of the time, this happens when they become parents themselves and then they realize how difficult bringing up a child is. When you become a parent, then you begin to understand

what a parent is, likewise you know what a Buddha is when you become a Buddha. I have no intention of becoming a Buddha, certainly not a supreme Buddha, because that's too far to aim. I have no intention of aiming that far because there's a closer target that we can aim for. Before trying to understand who or what the Buddha is one needs to understand what your parents are, not who. Who your parents are, you'll say this person that person, but what your parents, teachers, friends, and relations are, how much they have done for us. Be grateful, have that gratitude.

Being humble - Five people compared to the five fingers

If there are five people at home, these five people are like the five fingers on your hand. They are all of different lengths as you can see. The thumb is the shortest, then you have the little

finger, then the index finger and so on until you get to the middle finger. They are of different lengths.

If you think of this as how far you have come along this path in the dhamma, if there are five people at home and their progression, understanding, comprehension in the dhamma is like the five fingers on your hand. One will be further ahead, he/she will have passed everyone else in their family and that could be you. But remember that there are others who are still taking baby steps, there will be someone at home who's still the thumb. They haven't come very far in the dhamma, they've only begun to observe the five precepts. You're talking about *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, you're talking about the *satara satipattána* and they are only beginning to learn the meaning of the five precepts. Then there will be someone else who's trying to abstain from the unwholesome deeds, but you're trying to take steps to become an *anágàmi*.

The thumb can never jump up and reach the middle finger, can it? What happens if the thumb jumps? As it jumps, the rest of the fingers are going to keep moving up as well. The thumb is never going to be able to reach the middle finger or any other finger for that matter. It's not for the thumb to jump and reach for the middle finger, it's for the middle finger to come down and reach the thumb. Because that's what it can do, without the thumb having to do anything. That middle finger can bend and reach the thumb,

If you're the middle finger at home, who has gone the farthest in the dhamma, then it's your duty and responsibility to realize that everyone else at home, may not be at the same level as you. You have to realize that you were once where the thumb is today. You have to realize that perhaps your wife, spouse, husband may be where the thumb is today and you are right up there as the middle finger. You have to realize that you were there yourself. Step into their shoes. Don't gauge them from where you are right now, get into their shoes.

Promises and changes.

Think about when I was like them, how did I feel about the world? When we got married, we never decided to become a monk and nun one day. The reason why we got married was so that we can go enjoy the world. Have kids, a family, wasn't that why everyone here got married? To have a beautiful life, isn't that what you promised each other? So, when you have given all those promises, now maybe that one person in the family has started listening to the dhamma and that person might have a completely different aim, purpose in life. But the other person, they are still holding onto what you promised them, they still want kids, a beautiful family, but to you, that's not what interests you anymore. Who's changed in this relationship? You or them? You have changed, so why do you point the finger at them? If you have changed, why

point the finger at them? They came along with you because you promised them. Husbands think about your wives. Wives think about your husbands. Parents think about your children. Children think about your parents, whatever your relationships are, whatever your connections are, this is why I say, *be grateful*. Despite who you were, were they not willing to get married to you? Were you an arahant when you got married? Were any of you an arahant when you got married? So, if you were not an arahant when you got married, weren't you just a bundle of *rāga, dōsa, mōha* walking on two legs? Despite that I still agree to get married to you and live under the same roof, knowing fully well that you're a **mundane, pruthakjana** knowing that a *pruthakjana* is prone to committing unmeritorious deeds, unwholesome deeds, there's a chance that this person might cheat on me one day. There's a chance that I might have to die at this person's hand one day, knowing all that, did they still not get married to you? How can you be ungrateful? Isn't that a quality that you really have to praise? Despite who you were, they still got married to you, when the guy next door didn't get married to you. The woman next door didn't go out with you. Your husband did, your wife did because they were able to see some good qualities in you. They decided, let's do this. So never be ungrateful.

This is usually the case, in a family with two people or more, one is always going to be at least one step ahead of the others. Look at your own families, and see if this is not the case. There is always one person ahead of the other. If your understanding is like the one who's further ahead, and if that's who you are, then it can happen when you look back at the other person, possibly feel remorse and think *why did I get married to this thing? I shouldn't have done this. Why doesn't she just understand, why can't she get into her head, this is all pointless.*

Bend and reach the thumb

The other day a young man came along and said,

"If I had listened to your sermons six months ago, I wouldn't have done this."

All regret, regret, regret and then he says,

"Ever since I started listening to sermons my life has changed. Before I listened to sermons, I used to treat my wife at least once a week. I used to treat her by taking her out for a meal. Every birthday, valentine's day, and New Years day I used to treat her, take her to a massage or something like that. I give her the best that I could afford, get her some jewelry, presents, but now I don't see the point in doing any of that because it's just pointless. It's all anicca, dukkha, anatta,"

Then he says,

“Well, now my wife is not helping me, surely, she should be helping me to walk this path of dhamma, why isn’t she helping me? She’s against me coming to the temple and listening to sermons, surely that’s very evil of her. Swaminwahanse can you please speak to her and give her some advice, because I have tried telling her, but she won’t listen to me.”

So, he wants me to speak to his wife and give her advice to adjust to this new person that her husband has become. Who’s changed? The husband has changed. All I can say is,

“Sir you’re making it difficult on yourself. It’s not your wife that’s stopping you from going out to listen to sermons, you’re doing it to yourself. If every two weeks, you took her out for a meal, I suggest you start doing it every week now. If every valentine’s day, birthday, New years’ day, all you got her was a box of chocolate, I suggest you also get her a Rose now. Why? Because if you stop doing the things that she’s expecting from you, if you stop giving what you promised her when you tied the knot, all those promises such as I’ll never leave you until death do us apart. All those beautiful promises are forgotten, just because you have started listening to the dhamma. You made it difficult on yourself sir. I said you promise all these things to her, and now it’s only right that she expects them from you, because you promised her.”

So now that you’re not delivering what you promised, well it’s no surprise that she’s disappointed, frustrated and feels that you listening to sermons is the cause for her suffering. Because clearly, if she listened to sermons, she will realize that attachment is the root for all suffering, but she hasn’t yet and the way you’re going, she’s never going to. You promised her the world, and you’re not giving her a modicum, you’re not giving her anything. From her point of view, she might think this is mistreatment. The more you mistreat her, the more she’ll blame the dhamma for the cause of her suffering. She’ll think that we lived a really happy family life, until this bugger went along and started listening to sermons. Now the Dhamma, Buddha and Sangha are to be blamed. Now what do they start to do, they really do start to blame the Dhamma, Buddha and Sangha and in doing that is *arya upavada*.

Now tell me, when is she ever going to understand that attachment is the cause of her all suffering. Is he not just digging a bigger hole every day? Because he’s going to have to live with her until they part, he’s just making it more difficult for himself by doing this. So, this is why I suggested that, if you took her out every fortnight now you should start taking her out every week. Then what is she going to think?

“Ahh... actually since he started to listen to sermons, he’s treating me like a queen. He only took me out every other week, now he’s taking me out every week, what’s the cause for this change? Oh, he’s listening to sermons. Go, go listen to more sermons.”

If you used to speak to your wife using her name before you started listening to sermons, now what do you start calling her? Darling, sweetheart, honey, why? What is she going to start thinking now? Because she doesn't realize that attachment is the cause for suffering. Who is to be blamed? Ignorance. The same ignorance that this man was in, before he started to listen to sermons. This is why he got married, the same ignorance. So now what you ought to do is help her come out of that ignorance, you're expecting this thumb to jump up and reach the middle finger. The thumb can't do that sir, you have to bend, you have to be flexible. You have to reach down, touch the thumb and help the thumb come up, make progress. So, you have to get down to your wife's level and realize that this is where you were before you started listening to the sermons, so get into her shoes. Look at the world from her view. Look at yourself as a husband from her perspective and wives, do the same the other way.

This problem will be everywhere, whenever you start to walk on this path of the dhamma, because the way to the world is one and the path to Nibbana is another.

***"Anyáhi làbo patissa, anyà nibbána gámini"*. The path to Nibbana is one, the path to riches, wealth, joy in a worldly sense is another.**

Completely different, 180 degrees apart. So, you promised to take this person this way, now all of a sudden you decided to go the other way. You have changed, not the other person. So, you have to be more understanding. You have to be grateful. If you begin to realize how much *rāga, dōsa, móha* you had in your hearts before you started listening to sermons, you will all come to that point, come to the point where the fires of *rāga, dōsa, móha* are starting to become extinguished. It's then that you begin to look back at the past and think, *"Good heavens, how much rāga, dōsa, móha there was in my heart before I started listening to these sermons"*. Now thinking about that, do you realize what kind of person your partner got married to?

The day you become a *sótápanna*, you'll never want to cheat on your wife or husband, you'll never want to do that. It's not because you want to restrain yourself when you feel the need to do it, because you'll just not want to do it. Two different things. One guy wants to do it, but he thinks, no I shouldn't do it, it's bad, I shouldn't do it. The other guy just doesn't want to do it. When you become a *sótápanna*, you will not want to do it. When the day comes where you don't want to do it, you'll be able to retrospect, look back into the past, think about the day, think about the time, think about the guy who used to want to do it. And the wife still got married to him, right? Wasn't it great for your wife to do that? To get married to a man who's willing to cheat if the opportunity arose. Now where's the gratefulness? Make sure gratitude is not something you shed on the way to Nibbana.

Importance of being grateful to your roots

If the Buddha was the most grateful person ever, having attained Nibbana, he looked back at his infinitely long journey in *sansára*.

“Every person who helped me to be where I am today, how can I help them now?”

Don't you see that, in the process, journey of becoming a Buddha, what He did was He cultivated, developed this virtue and quality of being grateful and it culminated at the point of becoming a Buddha. At its peak, there is no one on this earth who's more grateful than the Buddha, no one. That being the case, we should all realize if that's where we are aiming or heading, then gratitude is not something that we should shed along the way. It's something that we should continue to foster, continue to develop. So be grateful to everybody and anybody who would have helped you. Even if they might have just offered you a glass of water.

This is why at the end of sermons ladies and gentlemen, I take a moment to ask you to remind yourself of your local temples, the monks and nuns in your local temples and nunneries. Because you might come along here and listen to sermons, you might decide that this is where we are going to be listening to sermons that help us to go to Nibbana. That may or may not be the case, but have you forgotten those monks, those nuns in your local villages and temples who were there by your side through thick and thin, through rain and shine. Who came along to your funerals, for your alms giving. We never came, they came. I have never come into any of your homes, but they did. Monks just like us, who made a promise in front of the Buddha, my life I now dedicate to attaining Nibbana and despite that, they set aside time to attend to your needs and wants. Where do you send your children to *daham pasala*? Not here. We don't have a *daham pasala*. It's to your local temple, so is it right then that just because you come here to listen to sermons, you forget your local temple? The temple that was always by your side, your grandparents, great grandparents, parents and yourself as a child that went there as a young child. Just because you decide this is where I got to learn the dhamma, this is where I am now able to become a *sótápanna*.

If you forget your past and roots, I doubt you're even a *sótápanna*. Anyone who might have touched your lives in any way shape or form, be grateful. If there has been anyone that has converted to a Buddhist like someone from a church who has been going there all their life, then they get to listen to the dhamma and decide that the church is not for me, I have to go to the temple. What about the priest at the church who's always been there to listen to you and your confessions? What about that priest who spent time, how much did they charge you to listen to your confessions, that time they spent on your behalf, can you forget them? How can

you be ungrateful? An incredibly important value and I can't stress how important being grateful is, because if you can't be grateful to your parents, the monks at your local temples who were always by your side, through rain and shine, through difficult times particularly, then you'll never be able to be grateful to the Buddha, because you don't know what the Buddha is. You may know who the Buddha was, but you won't know what the Buddha is. Because that is the pinnacle of gratitude, so reflect on that.

Be exemplary parents

Make sure your children know about this, make sure your children learn how to be grateful. Instill that value in their hearts and in their minds from very young ages. If your children have siblings, brothers and sisters, make sure that they say "Thank you" whenever they receive something. It's just a word, but don't make it *just* a word for them. Help them realize the importance of being grateful. Thank you aiya (elder brother), thank you nangi (younger sister), make sure they say that, don't let them walk away without saying that. If they do, stop, go back, thank them, but he's only my aiya, so what? He gave you something that belonged to him, now you're able to enjoy that because of him. One day, that child is going to grow up and even when you're not around, the siblings are going to look after each other. Because if you don't do that, if you don't put that glue between the siblings that are in your family, as your children, then when you're not around, they're going to fight among each other for the land that you leave behind. You might as well not leave the land then, because that's what's going to cause a rift in the family. If you don't teach them those values, for the wealth that you leave behind, they are going to fight with each other or kill each other to get their hands on the money. You might as well not leave it, if you don't instill these values in them. As parents, there is so much you can and have to do. Now that you brought children into this world, there is so much that you have to do.

Because like *guru swaminwahanse* said yesterday, otherwise you might as well have left them as *gandhabbas*. Because what have you done? You brought them into the human world, not taught them values, all you have given them is education, wealth and property. What are they going to do now? All they know is to be happy in this world, I just need them alone, just let them be where they are. At least as a human *gandhabba*, they are not in the ***dugati (realms of suffering)***, they are in the ***sugati (realms with less suffering)***.

The best way to teach somebody is by example. So, make sure you're an exemplary person at home. If you have rifts in the family, perhaps you have among your siblings, your brothers and sisters. Don't let your children take a lesson from that. Don't leave that opportunity where your children learn it's okay to have a grudge with your brother or sister. Don't let your children

learn that, be the better man. If your brother or sister is not willing to speak to you, then teach your children, it's not right to hold grudges and best to sort it out. You pick up the more education, more wealth, more properties, that's it. It doesn't matter where that has to come from, by hook or by crook, I'm going to get it. So, if I have to kill my brother, if I have to cheat on my sister, it doesn't matter, I'm going to do that, so that I can be wealthy, be more prosperous. You might as well not have brought them into this world. Because in doing such things, they are going to pave the path to the four hells. You've just given them a one-way ticket to hell. Why? Leave phone, why wait for them, you go ring on their door and say,

"Sorry, something is not right with us, yes this thing happened in our past, but let the past be past. That's water under the bridge. You and I are siblings, we came from the same mother and father, what do we have to fight for?"

Let's not set a bad example to our children, because otherwise they are going to grow up learning that it's okay to have a grudge with their brothers and sisters and then they are going to fight between themselves. Where's the peace and harmony? So, set an example, be exemplary parents. Is what I'm saying unjust? Is any of this unreasonable? Tell me if that is so. Because if you brought children into this world you have to teach by example. Instill those values in them, because without those values, they'll never be able to see what the Buddha is. They are never going to learn. Without those values, they're not going to have a good foundation. Without a solid foundation, how can you build the castle of Nibbana? You can't. So, this is general advice, now onto the meaty and juicy stuff.

Paticca samuppáda, Dependent origination

We've been talking about this process which leads to the birth of suffering and what is that process called? ***Paticca Samuppáda, dependent origination process***, the dependent origination of what? Suffering. That's why at the end of the *paticca samuppada* process the Buddha teaches;

éva me tassa kévalassa dukkak kandassa samudayó hòti. This is how mountains of suffering come into being.

So, this is the process that describes this. Now, someone who is ignorant, someone who doesn't realize that this world cannot bring me pleasure, there's no happiness in the outside world, in the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch. It's not the outside world that brings me these. When someone who is ignorant of that, is going to continue to think that it's the sights,

sounds, smells, tastes and touch in the outside world that brings them happiness, pleasure or satisfaction.

The other day, I was reflecting on this, because like I said ladies and gentlemen, this is what we need to reflect on. If this doctrine has sunken in your minds, if the penny has dropped from that point forward, this is what we need to contemplate on. If anyone of you can put your arm up and say,

*“I no longer feel **pleasure, àshwàda** when I look at a sight, when I listen to a sound, when I see a pretty girl, I don’t feel pleasure when I have a nice delicious bit of cake served on a dish put in front of me, I don’t feel pleasure, my mouth doesn’t start watering.”*

If you can put your arm up to any of those, what you’re saying to me is that “I no longer am in **vexation**”, **peleema**, which also indicates, no more attachment. Which also indicates no more ignorance. Which also indicates you’re an Arahant. So thankfully I’m not giving a sermon to a group of Arahants. Because if that’s the case, we are seated incorrectly. I should be there and you should be here.

When you’re sitting down for meditation or at any moment, you should reflect or contemplate or think about a time when you looked at a sight and pleasure came to mind, you felt pleasure *because that’s a good feeling. When we say, **Vedanà (feeling) paccayà tanhà (attachment), phassa (contact) paccayà vedanà (feeling)**, we’re talking about the **àshwàda, pleasurable feeling**, which we all are able to experience. But now we have gone beyond the experience and now we’re able to see through insight and wisdom, because that’s what helps us to look at the process and then find out where in this process, we got it all wrong and then rectify the process.*

How do we see objects?

What I was contemplating on recently was, we have been talking about how sights never brought us pleasure. Then I was thinking,

“If a sight never brought me pleasure, if a sight never brought me happiness, what did a sight bring me?”

Let’s take this simple example of this winnowing fan. This is a sight. You can all see this. So, this is a sight. If you knock on this, then it’s a physical sensation. If you hold it next to your nose, then you get a sensory smell. If this winnowing fan cannot bring you pleasure, then tell me

what can it bring you? What are you seeing? Colour, you are seeing colour. How do you see shapes? Difference in colour. The reason that you know that I'm holding a winnowing fan against my robe is how? My robe is one colour, the winnowing fan is another colour. If both were the same colour, you won't be able to tell. So, all we are able to perceive is the difference in colours. So, this winnowing fan, we can say the colour is yellow. The point that I'm trying to get across is, how little really do outside world objects have to do with us. Our interaction with them is really next to nothing. Let me show and prove this to you.

If you studied science to some extent, could you tell me how it is that you see that this is yellow. Light falls on the winnowing fan and then reflection. What is reflected? Only yellow. Why is yellow reflected? What happens to the other colours? Absorbed, right? So, what this winnowing fan does is, it absorbs all the other colours and discards yellow, I don't want it. I have nothing to do with you, go away, I don't want yellow. So, what we perceive is what this winnowing fan has decided, I don't want. Throw it away, discard it, I have nothing to do with yellow. I'll absorb everything else, except yellow. When we look at the winnowing fan, and make this decision and say this is yellow or all we actually see is whatever this winnowing fan has discarded. It is not even what this winnowing fan has given us, because if it is what the winnowing fan was giving us, we should be able to see everything but yellow, because what does this winnowing fan absorb? All the other colours. If this winnowing fan was giving us a sight, then we should be able to see all the other colours, but yellow, because what is the winnowing fan doing? Absorbing all the other colours, except for yellow. What it is throwing away is what we're picking up. Now is the winnowing fan even giving us colour? No, it's not giving us anything. Lights falling on it, it's absorbing all that it wants, and what it doesn't want, it discards. That is what we're picking up. So, it's not the winnowing fan that's giving us yellow, it's whatever is not taking in, we're picking up. It's saying, "I don't want, I'm discarding, useless, I don't need this". We're picking that up.

(Sound lost for few seconds)

Is the winnowing fan even giving us colour? No, it's not giving us anything. Because light is falling on it, it's absorbing all that it wants and what it doesn't want is discarded. This is not giving us anything. Now let's apply that to a real-life situation.

Let's say a flower, you can see those flowers there, aren't they beautiful? They're beautiful right? When you say the flower is beautiful, now that you know that the flower doesn't have any beauty in it, you do know that now. The flower can't give you happiness. Now these are purple flowers, but is it the flower that's giving you the purple colour? It's not even giving you the colour, it's absorbing every other colour and discarding the purple. That is what you're taking in and then you're deciding that flower just gives you purple and therefore that colour,

that flower is purple. We're just eating leftovers. What are animals called who eat leftovers? They are called scavengers. Scavengers eat leftovers, pigs, crows, and stray dogs eat leftovers. Would you like me to call you a pig, stray dog, crow or scavenger? Isn't that what we're doing?

Strangers, enemies and friends

Most people that we see on the street are strangers, isn't that so? When you walk along the roads, most people that we see are strangers. How does someone become a stranger? Why is it that some people are strangers, others are friends and others enemies? You have friend, foe, and stranger. Generally, these are the three categories you can categorize people.

Who's a friend? A friend is someone who makes you happy, is that right? So, friends make you happy.

A foe is someone who makes us sad, unhappy, we don't like them. We like people who make us happy, so we call them friends. We don't like or dislike people who make us unhappy, angry, so we call them enemies.

Then strangers are who don't do either of the above. They neither make us happy nor do they make us angry. That's who a stranger is.

What interactions do we have with friends? How do we treat and deal with friends? You invite them over, you go over to theirs, go get a drink, go to the pub, have a party, go out for a meal, these are things you do with friends. Give them a call, have a chat with them at the garden, go out for a walk, these are the things you do with friends.

What about enemies, do you not have interactions with them? Yes, we do. The interactions that you have with your enemies are interactions that are in your favour, so that you can keep them away and that they don't come into your world. They might want to come into your world, but you don't want them to come into your world. You keep them away and do things like shoot them, not literally and hopefully. So, you keep them away, this is how you interact with foes.

Let's say, the property next door is up for sale, now who do you ring up and tell about this to? Your friends, because perhaps your best friend will move next door, so that you can be close to your friend. Who would you not like to get to know that the property next door is for sale? Your enemies, foes. So, even then you would take certain steps to prevent that from happening, wouldn't you? For example, if there were posters that have been printed, put on the walls where your enemies live, overnight you'll probably go and to take them all off, so that your enemies don't find out that the property next door is for sale. You probably do things like that.

Think about when you were in school. When it's time to grab a seat, you were probably very particular about who sat next to you. If it's your friend that comes along, you would say, "Hey friend, this seat is yours, come sit here". If it's your enemies, someone you don't really like and they come along, you might say "This seat is taken, it's not for you". It's like reserved seats on the bus, you know when you get onto the bus and it's crowded, there are a lot of people trying to get onto the bus, what do you do? You put your handbag on the seat next to you right? So that your friend can sit next to you.

So, you have interactions with friends and foes. What about strangers? Do we interact with them? No, we don't look to interact with strangers, the reason why we don't interact with strangers is because they don't bring us happiness, unhappiness, or suffering. They have nothing to bring us. Our happiness, sadness, or unhappiness is not determined, has no dependency on that outside person, therefore we call them strangers.

Now think about sights, sounds, smells, taste and touch. These things exist in the outside world. Don't you have friends and enemies in the sight, sound, taste worlds? For example, is chocolate a friend or foe? Friend. Bitter gourd? Possibly not a good friend. Chicken biryani? Friend. So now you got the idea. What about the smells, Jasmine? Friend. What about faeces? No, not a friend.

Why is one a friend and the other a foe?

Why is one a friend and the other a foe? I'm not talking about sights, sounds, taste, friends and so on. I'm talking about people friends, why is your friend a friend again? Because you made a call that they make you happy. Your association with them makes you happy because they bring you happiness, right? This is why you open the door and welcome them with open arms and embrace them as they walk into your home. "Oh! where have you been, I'm so glad that you're here. Let's take a seat and have a chat". They bring you happiness and that's why they are your friends. The foes, they take away, steal your happiness, they make you sad and angry. Like chocolate? Makes you happy right? That's why you call chocolate your friend.

So, you have friends and foes in the **rūpa (form)** world, in the **vedanā (feelings)** world, in the **sannā (perception/identification), sankhāra (actions), vinnāna (consciousness)** world. *Rūpa, vedanā, sannā, sankhāra, vinnāna* are the things that arise in the mind. Sights, sounds, smells, taste and touch are on the outside and have to come from the external world so that's why you need your faculties (eyes, ears, etc.) A sight has to come through your eyes, but when it does come through your eyes it leaves that mental impression. Then, the brain leaves the mental

impression on the mind at that point, *rúpa, vedana, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*, the English words being form, feeling, perception, formation or fabrication & consciousness. They come alive. They arise in the mind. This is what happens, this is the scientific process.

Sight in front of the eyes -> in the *mind rúpa rúpa*, and then -> *vedaná, sanná sankhára, vinnána*.

Sound -> ear -> in the mind -> *sadda* (sound) -> *rúpa, vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*.

Taste -> tongue -> inside the mind -> *rasa rúpa* -> *vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*.

In the mind, you have five that come alive that are given rise to *rúpa, vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána* and in the outside world, it is the sight, sounds, smells, taste, and touch. We have all made friends out of these things. Now, has it ever occurred in your life, when a friend becomes an enemy? Never happened. He/she used to be a friend, but now not so much. What about the other way? He/she used to be someone I really didn't like, but then I got to know him or her better and then they became a friend. When you say, I got to know him or her better, what do you mean by that? What really happened? Mental impressions gone, continue, expand. Whether someone's a friend or not, is not determined by the outside person, you make that call. Your best friend is not my best friend, so a best friend is not someone who lives in the outside world they are just a person. Someone becomes a best friend in my mind, in your mind. How did someone who you really didn't like, turn into someone who you really like? How did a foe become a friend? There must've been something that changed, where did the change happen? Inside, and what was the change then? Ability to give pleasure. So, their ability to give something, not pleasure, everybody has the ability to give something, all sights, sounds, taste, smell and touch. For example, when you're hungry, how do you get relief from that? You have to put something into the stomach. It is not only food, it doesn't matter what that something is, the repercussions might be something that we'll need to deal with later on. But when something goes into the stomach, you're no longer hungry. So, people can give you something, and what changes inside is whether you like it or not. It is we who changed. It's always we who change, not the outside person, because if our happiness depends on the outside person, then we can never be happy. We can never find happiness. A lot of people who complain that they can never find happiness, complain so because they expect the outside person to change. They expect the outside world to change. I don't like it to rain, it's raining every day, oh god. The one who goes fishing doesn't want it to rain, but the farmer, he likes it to rain, but when? Not when he's yielding crops, but when he is sowing. When it's time for the crop to grow, that's when he likes the rain. So, whether the rain is a curse or a blessing, is determined by what? By the state of mind of the farmer, by what he is expecting. Do you see ladies and gentlemen, how based on our expectations, we judge the outside world? Is that fair? We are so eager to judge other people, aren't we? We are so eager to say, he's a bad guy, and she's a really bad woman. They

never put an arm on us. They never touch us with a finger, nothing. All we're saying this is, because they said something, and it hurt my feelings. Where's the fault now? In me, why am I blaming the outside person? Why am I saying you are bad or evil? You shouldn't have said that, am I not being judgmental about another person? Whose fault is it? It's my fault. I am the one to blame, but I'm pointing the finger at another person who is innocent. So, a friend or foe is not determined on the outside but is determined on the inside. When one day you begin to understand that none of these sights or sounds or smells or taste or touch really brought you happiness because happiness and pleasure was not something that could be delivered from the outside world, then the world is no longer your friend or foe. Then we no longer have friends or enemies in the outside world, they're all just strangers.

We don't fight with strangers, don't even go to bed with them, because they are strangers. Strangers are strangers. How many friends did the Buddha have? He didn't have any friends. He associated things and people, but He didn't have any friends. When is a friend born? Because it's a stranger whom one day becomes a friend or it's a stranger who becomes a foe. A foe can become a friend and a friend can become a foe, but ultimately what we need to do is make everyone a stranger. That's where we need to get to. The day when everyone in this world is a stranger. When I say a stranger, I don't mean that I don't know the guy or his name so that he is a stranger, that's not what I mean. I mean in the sense of, we call someone a friend because he or she brings me something that I like. That thing I like, is determined on the inside (mind) and not on the outside. This is why your best friend is not every other person's best friend. Each of us have a different best friend because we have decided that person brings me the things that I like. Your friend is someone that brings you things that you like. So, whether someone becomes a friend or not is determined by what I like or don't like. So how can you blame the outside world?

Did anyone make you angry?

This is why I asked you the question, *"Is there anyone in this world, who's ever made you angry?"* No, because there's no one in this world that can make you angry, so people are innocent. Everyone that you pointed your finger at and said,

"You, how dare you make me angry!"

Have you not been pointing your finger at an innocent person? Okay, tell me this, is it right or wrong to blame someone that's innocent? Wrong. Aren't there people in your lives who you have pointed at and said, *"How dare you make me angry"*. Did they really make you angry? They have been innocent all along. So, what have you been doing? Pointing your finger at someone and saying *you made me angry*. So, they never did anything wrong, but what about you? You made a blunder, you made a mistake, you pointed your finger at someone who is

innocent and said *you made me angry*. That's a false accusation. Is it or is it not? No one's made you angry or sad, but you pointed your finger out and said, "*You make me angry, you make me sad, how dare you.*" False accusation. Is a false accusation a meritorious deed or an unmeritorious deed? The outside person never did anything wrong to you, but you took liberties and just made a false accusation. You just dug yourself a deep hole, the world never did anything to hurt you.

An example to show 'Everyone is a stranger'

Again, I'm not talking about the physical. Mentally, there are no friends or enemies in the world. Everyone is a stranger. We make friends and foes out of strangers. The way someone becomes a friend or an enemy is based on what we like and are attached to our minds. This is why Chocolate today is your friend, not because Chocolate has anything to give you. You like the taste of Chocolate therefore you say Chocolate is my friend. You don't like the taste of Bitter Gourd therefore you say Bitter Gourd is not my friend. But what if a day comes when you really like it. You really like Bitter Gourds, and now a foe has become a friend. What if a day comes where you don't like chocolates? That day is never going to come right? But what if that day were to come? A friend becomes foe. Now that's just an example.

Inside & outside world

Now think about all sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touch. This thing that we call the world. What is the world, if it's not *rupa, shabdha, gandha, rasa, sparsha, dhamma*? This is the world. That's what the world is on the outside and on the inside, *rupa, vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*. This is the **world** that we're attached to, '*lokaya*'. ***Kaya lowanawa***. '*Kaya*' is *rùpa, vèdaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*. '*Lowanawá*' is to attach, to dwell, to indulge.

So, there's the outside; sights, sounds, smells, tastes & touch. There's the inside; *rùpa, vèdaná, sanná, sankhàra, vinnána*, together they make the world and the thing that connects these two are eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and the mind.

This is the bridge that connects the sights to *rupa, vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*. Sounds to *rùpa, vèdaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána* and taste, you get the idea. These are the faculties that connect the outside world to the inside world.

When we have this distorted view, distorted perception, and distorted consciousness that, it's the outside world that brought me happiness, now you continue to attach yourself to the outside world. Because you see, this is a feedback loop, *one* false impression leads to the next false impression and it continues to cement one layer on top of the other. Because what happens is, if you remember discussing the dependent origination process, at one point there

was *vinnána paccayá náma rupa*. Those '***náma rùpa***' were the ***rùpa, vedaná, sanná, sankhára, vinnána*** that we clinged onto in the past, which are now in the memory banks.

So, this is the magician, the wizard trying to perform a trick, bringing his tools to the stage.

These tools, equipment that he's using are *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankhàra, vinnána* from the outside world or rather from memory.

There's the *vinnána paccayá náma rupa*, but later on where it was ***phassa*** (sense contact) *paccayá vèdaná*. It's not just *phassa paccayá vedaná* but *phassa paccayá rupa, phassa paccayá vedaná, phassa paccayá sanná, phassa paccayá sankhára, phassa paccayá vinnána*, all five.

So now here's what I was expecting, here's what I've received now, do they match? So, what we're doing is the matching process. This is a matchmaker, *kapuwa*. Are you a *kapuwa*? Aren't we all? We are great matchmakers, what do we do? We take what we had in the past, what we now have in the present and now we do a matching. Do they match? If they match, there's ***sukha vèdanà, a pleasurable feeling***. If they don't match, a ***duka vèdana*** (not a pleasurable feeling). When you're still deciding and investigating, that's where ***upèkshá*** (equanimity) ***vèdana*** is, because you still can't make a call. ***Peleema, vexation*** is like where that gift is still in the wrapping paper, you don't know what it is. You're shaking it, trying to bang it on the floor, do I know what this is, that's *upèksha vèdana*, still, ***peleema, vexation*** is there.

Creation of Self

Another point I want to try to get across and you need to contemplate on this. Remember that the purpose of a mind that is based on ignorance, is to create the self. Yes, this is self-procreation, continuously we're in the process of creating self with every thought that arises and passes by. We are producing a self. ***Upàdánaskanda*** is one word, **pleasure world** is another word for self.

With every thought, what we're trying to do is create this pleasure world. Now, it happens to be the case, that although this is what we're trying to do, the world is not always kind to us, because the world is ***anicca***, the world is **not to our liking**. Therefore, on some occasions, what we receive through our faculties are sights, sounds, smells, and taste that we like, which we were expecting. But on some other occasions, there are sights, sounds, smells and taste that we weren't expecting, this is not what we wanted. Therefore, *sapa vèdaná and duka vèdaná*. But with either of these two, we're still trying to create the self and let me show you how.

Where it is *phassa paccayà sukha vèdaná*, no problem there because there is a match. Then immediately *vèdanà paccayà tanhà*, attached, why attached? Because it was a pleasurable feeling that I just received. This is what I was looking for, this is what I have been now able to

receive, therefore this is surely helping me to build my sandcastle, another word for self. What happens when it's *duka vedana*? Not *tanhà*, but ***patigha*, aversion/dislike**. For those who might have contemplated what the meaning of the word *patigha* is. '***Pati***' is attachment, '***gha***' is ***gateema*, friction/conflict**, so there seems to be an attachment to conflict. A bondage to friction. We're not just fighting; we like to fight. This is not just *I don't like it, take it away if you can*. I don't like it, take it away now. Do you see the difference? Because now, you are wanting for this to go away, *I don't want this, this is not what I was expecting and it is something completely against my expectations*. Therefore, I just received *dukkha vedanà* a moment ago. Now, I'm trying to build the self, but I am unable to build the self because the *rùpa*, *shabdha*, *gandha*, *rasa*, *sparsha* that came from the outside world are not what I have asked for, it is not to my liking. Therefore, here is a moment of conflict.

An example showing how the pleasure world is created

Now, think about this for a moment, I give you some money (in an account) and you can overdraw from it. Today, let's say you have 100 Rupees in this account, and if you withdrew 100 Rupees, now you have a zero balance. If you continue to withdraw and let's say you withdraw 200 Rupees, now your balance is minus 200 Rupees. If I were to ask you, with an account where your balance is minus 200, what would make you happy? When you start to see the balance go down or the balance go up? The balance go up, right? Now remember, at this point, it's minus 200, if the balance went down to minus 300, would that make you happy or unhappy? Unhappy. If the balance went to minus 100, where it was minus 200 before, does that make you happy or unhappy? That's good right? Because your balance is increasing, it's still in the negative space, but at least it's increasing, and you like that. Minus 200 becomes minus 100, minus 50, minus 25 and eventually gets to a zero. Then you put more money in and it continues to increase and now you have a positive balance in your account and even that still makes you happy. So, answer this question. You have zero balance, 100 Rupees deposited into the account gives you 100 Rupees balance in your account. That gives you a certain amount of happiness, right? Let's say you have two accounts, in one account zero went to one hundred, and in the other account minus 500 went to zero. Which made you happier? Minus 500 going to zero that would make you happier. Although that's still in the negative space, that was an increment. Both these events brought you pleasure, because you like a positive balance in your account. You like it going up, not down.

Creating the self is the same, because we're trying to build a world of pleasure. Being able to construct brick by brick the pleasure world so that we can build this pleasure world up, brings us pleasure no doubt.

Creating the pleasure world and attachment to conflict

There's something else that also brings us pleasure. If there are external factors that keep taking away these bricks one at a time when I'm trying to build my pleasure world. If I'm able to stop that from happening, does that not bring me happiness?

Let's say I'm trying to build one side of a wall, so this is the pleasure world that I'm trying to build. (On one side) I'm putting bricks up to build this wall, on the other side, bricks that were put in before, someone comes and takes them away one at a time. As I'm building one side, someone comes and takes bricks away from the other side. I'm putting one brick up every minute. On the other side, someone is taking two bricks away every minute. You tell me, which of these two would make me happier? Continuing to put bricks up one at a time, one brick per minute or going and attending to that guy who's taking away two bricks a minute. Which is going to make me happier? Attending to that guy, making sure to stop that from happening, because I'm trying to build my pleasure world and on one side something is happening in the outside world that's becoming a barrier, becoming a hindrance, taking away my happiness.

Using this example of building this wall, just as much as I like building this wall, one brick at a time, I also like to stop whatever is trying to take bricks away. If there's anyone that's responsible for taking my bricks away from this wall that I'm struggling so much to build, do I not like to do that? Is that not something that I do willfully, willingly, earnestly because I'm trying to build a wall. When I'm trying to build a wall, someone's coming and taking away bricks that I have already laid. If I were to go and stop that person, is that not something that I would do quite happily? Because they're trying to stop me from building the wall. Surely, I have to get into conflict with that person. Because he or she is doing something that I don't like and I want to go and stop that person from doing it, conflict. I want one thing and they want another, so conflict, friction, but don't I do that willingly, happily, gleefully? Yes, I'm quite happy to do that. Because I'm trying to build a wall, they're not letting me do it, so I'm going to come and stop you and do it quite happily. Isn't that a bondage, attachment to conflict? Because trying to build a wall, you're not letting me do it, I'm going to come, show and teach you a lesson and I am doing it quite happily. Just as much as it makes me happy to build the wall up one brick at a time, it makes me equally happy to go and stop the guy who's trying to take away bricks from my wall. They make me equally happy.

Being Ignorant

That's how even when there's *patigha*, and *duka vedanà* at that point in the dependent origination process, what this mind is now willing to do is thinking that unhappiness, displeasure came from the outside world, now I have an interest to take that away from my world. Because it was a sight or sound that brought me unhappiness, I was expecting one, I received something else and I'm not happy. Now that's stopping me from building a pleasure world. So, what do I have to do now? Stop that from happening again. Do I not do that happily and quite willingly? But there has to be conflict there, but am I not voluntarily putting myself forward to go and do it quite happily? That's where **gateema, conflict** is but still I'm attached to it, *patigha*. I'm attached to that conflict. Even when I'm still attached to it, I'm still trying to build the self by doing that because the net result is me having built this wall completely:

Imagine my project is to build a wall brick by brick, so that there is no space between the ceiling and the floor and it's a solid wall. This is my project, which is the self. As I'm trying to lay bricks on one side and on the other side someone's taking two bricks away at a time. To build this wall, I have to not only lay my bricks, but also stop the guy who comes and steals my bricks. Both of these have to happen and both of them make me happy because they are both supportive/conducive to me building the wall. This is why, even in the process of *dukkha vedana paccaya patigha*, we're still building the self. Because even that has to happen, for the wall to be built. Even when there's *dukkha vedanà*, for as long as we believe that it's the outside object that brought me this displeasure, unhappiness, I'm going to get into conflict. Because there's no understanding that it's attachment that brought me *duka vedanà*. It's attachment that brought me *sukha vedanà*, no understanding of that, ignorance. We're speaking of an ignorant person, who believes that *duka vedanà*, *sukha vedanà*, *upèkkha vedanà*, all three of these come from the outside world. When they have that view and based on that view, they will take action, either to continue building or while continuing to build, stop whatever external factors there are, that gets in the way of me building this wall. Because they think that both building the wall and taking bricks away from the wall are things that other people are responsible for. The outside people, the outside world is responsible for not something that I'm responsible for entirely and solely. Pleasure only ever came from relief from suffering, relief from vexation and that's the only time we experience pleasure that is not from the outside world.

Connection between attachment, vexation and pleasure.

Imagine that there are three people, all standing in a straight line. One person is standing up (in front, person A = (arising and passing away of the world- the world being, sights, sounds, smell, taste, touch on the outside & *rupa, vedanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna* on the inside), the person in the middle (person B = vexation) is sitting down, and the third person (person C = pleasure) is

standing up. The person in the middle is sitting down, because person A (person in front) is standing up. The world (person A) is standing up, vexation (person B) is sitting down, pleasure (person C) is standing up. Pleasure (person C) doesn't see vexation (person B) sitting down. When he looks straight, all he can see is the world (person A) standing up. He doesn't realize that the reason why he's able to stand, is because vexation (person B) sat down right now. The moment world (person A) sits down, vexation (person B) stands up and when vexation stands up, pleasure has to sit down. My pleasure has passed away, he believes: because when he looks to his right, he sees the world has sat. That's what he sees.

A thing or a process

However, what we need to get into our minds, this is what really needs to sink. Because when you no longer point your finger at the outside world. You no longer find friends and foes in the outside world. Chocolate will not be your friend, and Bitter gourd will not be your enemy. None of these things really can bring you pleasure. You like something, and when you receive what you like, that makes you happy because that's not that object that brought you happiness. It's because through your liking, you're in a state of vexation. It just happens to be as by coincidence, when the outside object came into your world, you were now relieved from vexation. It's the relief, it's a process, really pleasure is a process. Pleasure is not a thing, it's a process. The outside world that's a thing, vexation that's a process and pleasure, that's also a process. It's not an outside world thing that can bring it to you, it's a process and that process is described as dependent origination process. How vexation and pleasure come forth, how they become obvious.

Being grateful

A practical advice is to be grateful. Look at everyone in your life, who has touched your life in any way, shape or form. That could be small things, what about your barber, shouldn't you be grateful to your barber. Don't fall into this view where everything becomes materialistic. I pay my barber so why should I be grateful? What about your drivers? Shouldn't you be grateful to your driver? Don't fall into that *I paid my driver, so* (audio cuts out). Why are you not driving? (Because you aren't able to drive, perhaps of disability or maybe you don't like to drive). Well, some other guy is doing it on your behalf. All the money in the world and he's still not prepared to do it, now what do you do? It's not money that makes the world go around, it's people. Be grateful to the people that touched your lives. From the very first two people that touched your lives, your parents. From the doctor that brought you into this world from your mother's womb, be grateful. Everyone since then, your Montessori teachers, nursery teachers, grandparents, your siblings, who shared their toys with you.

There might have been differences later on as you grew up, fights, brawls, disagreements in the family, life is not long enough to hold onto these disagreements and grudges. Just let them go, because for every moment that you have that grudge, who is it burning? You, can you afford to be burnt? When you have this battle to fight with *Mára, rága, dōsa, mōha*, why cling onto these little grudges that eat you from the inside. Just let them go, be the better man, pick up the courage and go speak to them, put to rest those disagreements. Perhaps, they might not still agree with you, but don't hold grudges, because a grudge only burns you from the inside. Whatever people do to you, don't fight with them because it might be someone that leaves you, in search of another partner. It might be that someone that shouts, scowls, blames you, but remember no one in this world can really make you angry except yourself. If you're angry and you pick up something to throw at them, remember you're picking up faeces and this is excreta. You defile yourself before you defile the other person, you're touching it in the first place, you're burning first, before you burn the other person.

Put them aside, there's no time for us to meddle with these pesky little grudge. How much longer do you think you'll be alive? Even if it's a natural death, how much more time do you think we're all going to be alive? Put aside accidents, we don't know when they are going to come. Are you sure you're going to be around in the next 50 years' time? Can you guarantee another 40? Some of you might be able to count your next few years on your 10 fingers. Some maybe just on one hand. So how much time do you have left? Is it worth holding onto these little grudges in the time that you have left, when there's so much left to do on a clear path that we all can walk on to redeem ourselves from suffering once and for all. I don't know about you, but I don't have time for that. There's no time to mess about. If you haven't become a *sòtápanna* yet, the moment you go deaf, you might as well not come to these sermons anymore, because you can't listen to me anyway. You might as well stop meditating, stop everything, because you're not going to become a *sòtápanna* in this world. Do meritorious deeds, but meditation is not going to help you. So, we don't have time to mess about, there's a huge task on our hands to attain *nibbana*. This is precious time that's ticking by. Be an example. Show/teach your children, best friend by example.

You see, each and every one of you, because you're all walking this path of *dhamma*, is a blessing to society. Perhaps in your past lives or rather earlier on in your lives, you might have been a curse to society. I don't know about you, but you can think of your own lives, the way you were, the way you conducted yourselves. Maybe you were just a walking *rága, dosa, moha* or *lobha, dosa, moha*. Always instigating hate in other people's minds, you were a curse to society back then, but now you're a blessing to society. Just the sight of you can do good to other people. A few words that you speak can do good to other people because now you don't

try to instigate anger and hatred in other people's minds, do you? No, when you speak to another person, you talk to them about compassion, benevolence, charity, being kind, you talk to them in words that help them to let go and not attach themselves to the world. So, you're a blessing to society, to your family, extended family, so be that blessing. People like you are rare, the people who listen to the *dhamma* are rare, because the *dhamma* is extremely rare, so be a blessing to society.

No matter what we choose to do with the rest of our lives, we're going to go one day. The day you go, there will always be good and bad people in this world. Even after the Buddha passed away, there are still good and bad people in this world. The day you go, one of two things will happen, good people will praise you, and the bad people in this world, will say good riddance, or it's going to be the other way around. The bad people in this world, will praise you, and the good people in this world, will say, good riddance. Which one are you prepared to hear?

Yesterday Guru Swaminwahanse said in his sermon,

"Nariyò hoo kiyuwata kamak ne, deviyo saadu kiyawanam."

What if it happens the other way around?

"Deviyo hoo kiyaddi nariyo saadu kiyuwothin hema."

None of us want that right? So, it's not the past that matters ladies and gentlemen. Don't regret, don't repent, the past has happened. Let's learn from what happened in the past, let's be grateful for everyone who touched our lives in any way shape or form. You might feel that they did you a disservice, that's okay, still be grateful because whatever, they came and touched your lives. If it had not been for *Devadatta*, we would not have the Buddha today. True or false? True, how would the Buddha be able to fulfill his perfections if it had not been for *Devadatta*? Every time *Devadatta* stood there like an enemy to Lord Buddha, to cause Him harm, hurt, and abuse Him, what Lord Buddha did was, He fulfilled the perfections. He practiced compassion, patience and ultimately the end result was the Buddha. So, thanks to *Devadatta*, who sacrificed himself and went to *Aveethiya*, today we have the Buddha. So, shouldn't we all be grateful to *Devadatta*? If you can see the good in *Devadatta*, what about your dog, enemies, boss, employees, ex-wife, ex-husband? Surely, there's good to be seen in them, right? Then do so, be the better person.



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Proof read by C.P