

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 2018-03-11. 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 a few questions posed by listeners, 'how does one know when they have attained the noble fruit of Sotàpanna?'. 'What do you mean by following the way of Dhamma?'

The Ven. Thero goes on to explain the attributes of a Sotàpanna and gives indicators to see to assess themselves whether they are in the path or have attained the fruit which are all experiments for you to do on yourself. Your measuring stick to evaluate the state of Sòtapanna.

The way to know if you are correctly following the way of Dhamma is by introspection, looking at your own mind. Compare what you're doing right now to what you would have done in the past.

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KEY WORDS

Pizza

Nibbana

Angulimàla

Prutajjana

Sòtapanna

Avyàpàda Sankalpanà

Pòtila

The Noble Eightfold Path

Sammà Ditti, right view

Sammà Sankappa, right thought

Sammà Vàcà, right speech

Sammà Kammanta, right acton

Sammà Vàyàma, right effort

Sammà Àjìwa, right target

Sammà Sati, right mindfulness

Sammà Samàdhi

Ven Ananda

Faith

Conviction

UK

Office

Personal experience

Karma

Vipaka

Ego

2018 03 11

Path to Nibbàna in a Pizza!

How does one know if they have attained the noble state of Sotàpanna?

One of these questions was, how does one know when they have attained the noble fruit of *Sotàpanna*. How can you tell? So that was one question that was posted and this is a really interesting question and I'm sure whether you asked this question or not, it's absolutely a question that comes in the minds of everyone that listens to Dhamma. This can't be the first time you would have asked that. You will have asked that from yourselves and you probably ask that from yourselves every day. Have I done, have I achieved it or is there more I need to do to get there and particularly you know, because we always say that, as long as the Dhamma and the discipline continues to prevail, as the **Lord Buddha described in the *Mahàparinibbàna Sùtta*, "There will always be noble attainments, there'll always be Arahants for as long as my Dhamma and my discipline prevails in the world."** You are now getting to listen to this Dhamma and you're beginning to hear stories of Arahants, who've come into this world and they attain *Anupàdisèsa Nibbàna Dhàthu*, which is where you completely let go of the life faculty and having completely attained the stage of Arahant hood, who are not reborn again and that therein is the end of all suffering.

It is fair for people to be thinking about this and it's fair for people to be asking this question and it's one I would encourage to a certain extent and I will tell you, why I say to a certain extent. It's because sometimes, one can be deluded, listen to the Dhamma sometimes you come pass a point where you compare yourselves to the Dhamma that is taught, you compare yourselves to what perhaps you read in a book and you ask yourselves, 'well you know, I don't do the things that I used to do. I don't do the ten *akusals*, the ten evil deeds and therefore perhaps I have attained this fruit of *Sotàpanna*' and also you might think, 'well, I'm also beginning to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in the world around me and therefore it is probably the case that I have now attained *Sotàpanna*'. The issue that we have here is, when you try to compare yourselves to something that you read, something that you hear or something that someone tells you, it's a subjective comparison.

The example I can give is, if you go to school or wherever you learn how to work out a math problem, only you know whether you've understood that problem or not. Your teacher can teach you the method to solve a problem but whether you've understood how to solve the problem or not is entirely something that you know. You can't go and ask your teacher, "*Have I understood what you've taught me.*" That's not a valid question. The teacher's only going to say, "*Well how do I know that, can you work these problems?*" They might give you some new problems that you haven't seen before and say, "*Try working these out*" and if you can work, then try working some more out when you've done those, try working a few

more out and then you'll know whether you've understood how to work those problems or not and likewise whether you've attained the fruit of *Sòtàpanna* as well as the other fruits of *Sakurdàgàmi*, *Anàgàmi* and *Arihath* is very much a case of another person. A third party can't validate that for you. Well in fact there was one person who could do that but we don't have the luxury of Him because He passed away. He went into enlightenment 2600 years ago and that was the Lord Buddha. The Lord Buddha was able to look at our minds and look at how much *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha* which is desire, aversion and delusion we have in ourselves and He was able to look into our sentiments and confirm which noble attainment we would have achieved. But that is not possible now. So, we have to be a mirror for ourselves and see where we are on the path. The other thing I would like to say is, fortunately when the Buddha was asked what is it that a *prutajjana* or someone who has not listened to the Buddha's Dhamma, someone who is an ignoble person, I can use that word as the best translation I can find of the word *prutajjana*. It's simply a layperson or it could even be a monk makes no difference, if you've not listened to the Dhamma if you've not practiced the Dhamma that helps you attain at least the state of *Sòtàpanna màrga*, then you are a *prutajjana*.

Thankfully when the Buddha was asked,

"What is it that a prutajjana needs to do to become a Sòtàpanna?"

He said,

"Practice aniccha, dukkha, anatta"

and when He was asked,

"What is it that a Sòtàpanna needs to do to become a Sakurdàgàmi?"

He said,

"Practice aniccha, dukkha, anatta"

and then when asked,

"What is it, the Sakurdàgàmi needs to do, to become an Anàgàmi?"

"Practice only aniccha, dukkha, anatta"

and what is an *Anàgàmi* needs to do to become an Arahant, it was the same answer. Well, the Buddha was finally asked,

"What is it an Arahant needs to do?"

"Practice aniccha, dukkha, anatta."

Which is an excellent advice and instruction for us because what that tells us is, it doesn't matter where we are on the path, it's the same thing we need to do, we need to keep doing over and over again.

In fact, there was back in the time of the Buddha, and this happened between I think was a nun, I can't remember her name now, but between her and Venerable Ananda where, this nun approaches Venerable Ananda and explains to him, she says,

“Venerable Sir, I can see but I have no interest in looking at things, I can hear but I have no interest in hearing things, I can smell but I have no interest in smelling things and I can taste but I have no interest in tasting things”

and likewise, she talks about the five senses and she asks Venerable Ananda,

“Venerable Sir, what is this state, what does the Buddha say this state of mind is?”

To which Venerable Ananda says,

“Well, actually I'm not entirely sure, so I'll have to refer you to the Lord Buddha.”

He goes to the Lord Buddha and repeats the question and to which the Lord Buddha answers,

“That Ananda, it's the state of Arahant.”

So, what's clear from that example is, sometimes one can attain the state of *Arahant* but not realize that they have become an *Arahant*.

I'll take a really simple example. Don't read too much into this, just take the story that I'm trying to tell you here. Don't take the example I'm trying to give you here. Let's say, to become a doctor, all you needed to do was, learn what was in a text book and this text book was a thousand pages. Once you study this text book, it's a thousand pages, and you can work out all the problems in this book as well as other problems which may not appear in the book. But as long as you've understood the philosophy that's in this book, as long as you can understand the theory and it all makes sense to you and you can apply to whatever problem you come across. Let's say that's all the knowledge you need to become a doctor. If I give this book to you and say, go read this book, go study this book, work out all the problems and understand and learn how to work out these problems but I don't tell you that, once you've gone through this, you're a doctor now or you have all the knowledge you need to become a doctor you'll go away and start reading this book because you're interested in it. You go and study this book, you go and work out the problems and you come back and tell me, yes, I've done all of that, ask me any question out of any of the theory in here and I can give you the answer. Why did you ask me to read this book, what is it that I've got to gain from this? At which point I'll tell you, well, actually now that you've learnt everything in that book, you are a doctor. I didn't realize that because what we didn't do beforehand is explain to this person that when you studied all of this, you're a doctor. So likewise, if you don't know that once you've eradicated *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha* in your minds entirely, then you're an *Arahant* but if I only tell you all you need to do is eradicate *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha*. You wouldn't know what the result is at the point you get to the end of that.

Keep practicing *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*

Remember when Angulimàla comes running to the Lord Buddha, he didn't come and ask the question 'how do I become a *Sòtàpanna*.' The Buddha didn't say "Angulimàla listen to this and at the end of this sermon you are going to become a *Sòtàpanna*." This is why Angulimàla when having attained the fruit of *Sòtàpanna*, all he said was,

"I can now clearly see the path; I can now clearly see the change that's happened in my life."

He didn't say, "*I now know that I'm a Sòtàpanna*"

because that teaching was not given to him, he doesn't know what this state of mind is and that's perfectly fine. So fortunately, this is what I'm saying, you don't need to know where you're on the path as long as you're on the right path. This is why even after you become an *Arahanth*, what have you got to do after that? Keep practicing *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. If say, after you become a *Sòtàpanna* to become a *Sakurdàgàmi* you had to do something else, then we have a problem, because you would need to know that you are now a *Sòtàpanna*. If you had a problem, if there was a teaching that said once you become an *Anàgàmi*, you had to do something different. Now you have a problem, if you didn't know that you are *Anàgàmi*. But fortunately, we don't have that problem, from start to end and from end onwards practice *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*.

Now having said all of that, the Buddha gives us certain characteristics of a *Sòtàpanna* and there's no harm in learning a little bit about the attributes of a *Sòtàpanna* because that can help us if you are a *Sòtàpanna* and again I can't emphasize this point enough, don't use this as the absolute kind of acid test, if you have become a *Sòtàpanna*. Keep practising the path because only a Buddha can tell you for sure. I mean what if you've gone crazy, you know you're mad and you're thinking you're a *Sòtàpanna*, how can anyone come and prove that you're wrong, you wouldn't accept it. Just because you feel that you've become a *Sòtàpanna*, might not necessarily be an absolute crystal-clear indicator that you're a *Sòtàpanna*. Okay. This is why I reemphasize the point, just keep practicing the path. As long as you're on the path you will get there.

What are the attributes of a *Sòtàpanna*? Example of Angulimàla

Okay, but nevertheless what are the attributes of a *Sòtàpanna*. Let's look at how one becomes a *Sòtàpanna* in the first place. I'll use the example of Angulimàla? When Angulimàla approached the Buddha, remember he was not a disciple of the Buddha, he didn't know Buddhism, he didn't know any of the Buddha's teaching. All he was interested in was cutting off thumbs, so that he could add that to his necklace of thumbs. If you haven't heard this story then I would encourage you to go and read it up. For those listeners of ours who may not be familiar with this particular story, Angulimàla was a renowned murderer back in the day and

he did this because he was asked to fulfil his teacher's instruction and his teacher wanted him to make a necklace out of human thumbs. So, he went around and every person he would meet, he would kill them and chop off their thumb and then add that to a necklace and that was what he was notorious for back in that time. So, when he saw the Buddha there all he could see was, here's a man that I can chop his thumbs off and add that to my necklace. Now the story also goes of course the reason that the Buddha approached Angulimàla was because he was about to go and kill his mother, and if he had killed his mother then he would have committed a **heinous crime** or **ànantariya pàpakarma** at which point no matter how many Buddhas, he would come across he would not attain *Sòtàpanna*. He would not be able to remove himself from being born in the *apàya*, in the hells in the next birth. Okay, so when the Buddha approached him, He started to preach to him the Dhamma. Having seen the Buddha, Angulimàla spoke harsh words. He said,

"Hey, you stop there, I want to chop your thumbs off."

All he could see was a bald-headed man and so he said,

"You bald-headed person, you bald-headed man, stop there, I'm going to come and chop your thumbs off."

So, he was using harsh words. He was being very angry obviously and running after Him with his sword to kill him and cut his thumbs off. At which point the Buddha did a miracle and the miracle was, the Buddha stood still and Angulimàla is running towards the Buddha but it appears to Angulimàla as if the Buddha's moving and he's running as fast as he possibly can but he's not approaching the Buddha. So, this was a miracle that the Buddha performed at the time and at which point Angulimàla speaks to the Buddha and says,

"Stop there I want to try and approach you, what are you doing, stop moving"

and then the Buddha says,

"I'm not running, I'm standing in one place and you are the one who is running."

Now although Angulimàla was a murderer, he was an intelligent person. In fact, he was his teacher's best student. So, he realizes, there must be something in what this person has just said because He looks like someone who is of good descent, it looks like this is someone who is a good person, a virtuous person, so there must be some meaning to what He's just said. So, he says,

"Well, I have stopped running, you are the one who is running, why are you then asking me to stop running?"

At which point the Buddha replies,

"Well Angulimàla, I stopped running in sansàra a long time ago but what about you, you are still running in sansàra."

Then Angulimàla realized there was a profound message in this teaching and so he dropped his sword, got down on his knees and he asked the Buddha to preach more of this Dhamma. And then the Buddha started preaching, the Buddha started to teach him *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* at which point Angulimàla becomes a *Sòtàpanna*. So, he was a *prutajjana* before that. An ignoble person becomes a noble person by listening to *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*, by listening to the Buddha's teaching.

How does one know that they are practicing the path?

What is the message we need to understand from this story? It's to look at ourselves. We always use a reference point. In fact, we were discussing this on our way here. How does one know that they are practicing the path and this is also a question that came through as well. How do we know that we are actually practicing the path? Have we become stagnant? Have we stopped moving on the path? This is a question that people will come across very often. The only accurate indicator is, what are your thoughts compared to yesterday, what are your thoughts compared to last week, when things happen which you don't like, when things come across which you used to get in to conflict with yesterday or the day before or last week or last month or perhaps two years ago, three years ago, how did you use to react to them? What was your state of mind when people came and shouted at you, when people came and said bad things about you, when people lied to you and they got caught, when you were at a loss, when someone stole your money, when someone took something that belonged to you, what was your state of mind? How much did you suffer inside, when something like that happened? But what about today, are you more at peace with yourself, do you realize that? Well, this is the nature of the world. It's not for me to go and get into conflict with the world. Every time I get into conflict, the reason I get into conflict is because I have this view that the world needs to be the way I want it to be. This is the *niccha* view of the world, not the *aniccha* view. The *niccha* view of the world is that things happen in the world to my liking. But when you understand the Dhamma, you realize, well the world is *aniccha*, it doesn't happen to my liking. My liking has nothing to do with what's going on in the world, as long as there are causes, you get the effect or the result of that. Things are preconditioned not predestined. So be careful, they are two different words and they have two different meanings. In fact, some people ask me, is everything predestined? No nothing is predestined. This is where fate comes in. Some people say, well... life is nothing but fate and I have a destiny. No, that is not the case, you can change, where you get to it with life.

You are who you are right now

In fact, two weeks ago, we had some visitors in the monastery. There was one guy who approached me and he said, he was a visitor to Sri Lanka. At the end of the sermon he came and said Venerable sir, *"In my life I've committed a number of sins, I've done lots of bad things, in fact I've been to prison twice, I've done things that are unimaginably;"* a normal person wouldn't think of doing something like this and he said, *"I have trouble sleeping at night because I see all these things that happen to me in the past and the things that I did in the past and these are really bothering me and they are a huge weight on my shoulders. Will I never be able to rectify my errors, will I never be able to go forward."* And I replied, well what happened in the past belongs to the past. You are not who you were two weeks ago, you are not who you were two months ago, two years ago, you're not even who you were two seconds ago. You are who you are right now. Who are you? Are you not just a body and a mind? Well,

if the body is constantly changing and if your mind is constantly changing, it's just a series of thoughts that come and go. Well then who are you? It's like pointing at a flowing river and saying that's me, just there. The moment you pointed at it, the water in the river has flown down, and you point it again, that's me. Well, where's the 'me' in there because the water in the river is constantly flowing, it's not a lake, it's a river. You have the water that is constantly flowing and you have a body that's constantly changing. So, this is why we say, the mind is nothing but *rùpa, vedanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*. It's constantly changing and therefore what happens to us is, not predestined but it is predetermined because it is determined by the causes that give you that result. So, it's important that we understand that.

The story I was relating, Angulimàla, when Angulimàla approached the Buddha he didn't know the Dhamma, he hadn't listened to the Dhamma and in fact having seen the Buddha, he didn't have thoughts of respect, he didn't want to go and worship the Buddha. What he wanted was to go and kill Him. But having listened to the Dhamma, completely different story, now he wants to venerate the Buddha, he wants to worship the Buddha and he says,

"This Dhamma that you've just taught me, I've never heard before. It's changed my life. Please accept me as one of your disciples and I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dhamma, I take refuge in the Sangha. From today onwards I am one of your disciples, please accept me Lord Buddha as one of your disciples."

He said this, having listened to the Dhamma, not having seen the Buddha, this is why the Buddha says,

***"Yò Dhamman passati sò man passati"* - to see me you have to see the Dhamma, you can't see me just by looking at my physical form.**

Moving from faith to conviction

So, you know you might have a Buddha statue at home or you might go to the temple, you might offer flowers at the alter and worship the Buddha and come home. Do you think you've seen the Buddha in the temple? Where is the Buddha? Is He in the temple? Is He at home? No, He is in the Dhamma. When you see the Dhamma, then you understand the Dhamma. That's when you begin to see the Buddha. When you understand the Dhamma you have complete conviction in the Dhamma, complete. So, this is where you go from faith to conviction. Faith is what we call *bhaktiya* in Sinhala and conviction is what we call *shraddhàwa* in Sinhala. You move from someone that accepts something by faith and you take something by conviction. You can only accept something by conviction, when it becomes true for you. Just because I believe in something, doesn't mean you're going to believe in that. You might take it, you might trust me but you're going to verify that. When you verify, it becomes real for you. Trust but always verify. This is what you've got to do with friends and in fact with the Dhamma as well. Just because you read the Dhamma in the *Tripitakaya*, how do you know

whether this is the Buddha's Dhamma. How do you know that? You get a book, someone says, "Hey I found this really great video" or you know it's these YouTube sermons. Someone approaches you and say "Hey, I've been listening to these YouTube sermons and I think you need to listen to this as well because I think this is the Buddha's Dhamma." You shouldn't accept it straight away, you shouldn't reject it straight away either. What you should do is listen to that Dhamma.

See if it makes sense to you and how does it apply to your own lives and can you feel *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha* removed from your minds and that might not happen overnight. It's going to take time but every time you get to listen to the Dhamma, what change does it impact in your hearts and in your minds. That has to be the indicator for you to understand whether this is the Buddha's Dhamma or not. How does it compare with the Buddha's doctrine; what is the Buddha's doctrine? *Paticca Samuppàdaya*. *Paticca Samuppàdaya*, the dependent origination teaches us about, how it is that 'birth' comes into the picture. How, it is that we give rise to not just human beings and animals and gods and brahmas but also the thoughts that we have in our minds. How do they come into life? Every time whatever comes into life, if the end result is *dukkha dukkha*, *sankàra dukkha* and *viparinàma dukkha*, then we got to know, this is not the Buddha's Dhamma. Buddha's Dhamma is a teaching that helps us find happiness. It's eradicating *dukkha dukkha*, *viparinàma dukkha*, *sankàra dukkha*, that has to be the Buddha's Dhamma.

Buddha's Dhamma help eradicate suffering permanently

So whatever sermon you listen to, whatever book you read on Buddhist teaching if it doesn't show you how to eradicate suffering permanently, we're not talking about temporary relief from suffering, you can get that when you go to your local GP. You can go to your teacher, you can go to your lawyer, you can go to your best friend and they can give you temporary relief from suffering. But to get a permanent relief from suffering, there's only one person that can do that for you. Who's that? Yourself. But who gives you the path to do that? That's the Buddha. Only you can do it for yourself. So, when you practice this Dhamma then you get, then you listen to the Dhamma you practice and then you understand, this Dhamma is what's going to help me, relieve myself from suffering. This Dhamma is what's going to help me find the Supreme Bliss, that is what we call *Nibbàna* and therefore, you move from accepting the Dhamma by faith to accepting the Dhamma by conviction.

Again, if you go back to the example of learning a math problem at school say, you are looking for a teacher that can help you. There your friends come and say, "Hey, we know this great teacher he's a really good guy, he's really good at what he teaches, you should come to his lessons." Well, you can be absolutely guaranteed that not every person you know will find that those classes are the best. It might work for your friends but it might not necessarily work for you. So how do you work out which teacher is right for you? You go into those lessons,

you sit in those classes, you practice what has been taught and then you apply it into your own lives and then you work out, this works for me. How does this apply in my life and am I finding what it is I'm looking for in my life?

Remember, we've talked very often in the past what is our purpose in life? And it's really straightforward, it's happiness that is the purpose in our lives. No matter what you do in life, you do it to be happy, do we not? Why do you wake up in the morning? To be happy. Why do you put the kettle on the fire? To be happy. Why do you cook your meals? To be happy. Why do you go to work? To be happy. Why do you study and work hard and learn, you do all of these things, earn money, build a house, make kids; it's all to be happy. So, if you can't find happiness in what you're learning, if you can't find happiness in the teaching that is given to you then you're not going to move from faith to conviction. You take it by faith, you verify it, what is verification? It's the process of applying it to your own examples, to your own life and then moving from faith to conviction.

Happiness is 'letting go'

So, when you practice this Dhamma, when you listen to the Dhamma and you start practicing that, putting it into your lives, there comes a point when you realize, hey! it's this Dhamma that helped me to become happy, it's this Dhamma which I didn't have up until now, that taught me the way to be happy is by letting go. All this time when I associated people in the world around me everyone said, *"Hey, go build more, hold on to more things, buy more things, gather more things, make more things, develop, do lots more things and that's how you're going to be happy"* and you try doing that over there every day, but you realize, I'm still looking for happiness, I'm still trying to be happy, every day I'm building something new, every day I'm doing something new and I'm still trying to be happy. When are you going to be happy? When is that day going to be, when you're actually happy; when you stop trying to be happy and be happy? Everyday you're trying to be happy. When are you going to be happy? This is the problem because you've gone to all the wrong people asking them, hey, how do I be happy, one person who you didn't go to that was the Buddha. How do I be happy and he teaches you, let go, just let go, stop trying to be happy, then you'll be happy. We have talked about this plenty of times because you know, this is our purpose in life. If you are not happy then what is the point of living, right. What is the point of living life, if you can't be happy? So when you realize that it's this Dhamma that's helped me to let go of the things that I used to cling on to, that I used to attach to and the more I have let go, the less I suffer, the less that I am affected by, when things don't work out in my favour, then you realize this Dhamma is the answer to my problem.

The key that unlocks the door to happiness - Example

It is like say, you have been locked in a room, you are trying to get out of that room. Say, there are keys all over the room, you're trying to find the right key that's going to unlock this door. Now people come in and tell you "*Hey, try that key*" and when someone tells you try that key, you have faith, you walk up to that key, pick the key up, try it in the lock, you turn the key, doesn't work, you put it to a side. Then someone else comes and says "*Hey, try that key over there,*" you walk up and remember as soon as someone says, and especially if it's a trusted friend, you're going to take it by faith, yeah, it's probably going to work, why, because it's my friend saying, it's going to work. So, you walk up to that key, pick that key up, try and put it in the lock, try to turn it round knowing the door doesn't open and you keep trying that. Again, one fine day another person comes and says, "*What about that key over there,*" you walk up to that key again by faith, you pick it up, bring it to the lock, turn it and guess what, the door unlocks. Now do you need to take by faith that this key is the right key, you don't need to take it by faith anymore because now you know a hundred percent with absolute certainty that this key is the key that unlocks this door. Now you can tell everyone else in the room as well hey, here's the key that's going to unlock the door, forget about every other key, this is the key that works. That is someone that's becomes a *Sòtàpanna*. He has tried out lots of different things, he's gone after various teachers but the day you find the key that unlocks your door and what's this door we're talking about? The door that takes you to happiness. What happiness are we talking about, happiness which gives you, which stops this rebirth cycle, happiness from eradicating *dukkha dukkha*, *viparinàma* and *sankàra dukkha*. Happiness that gives you relief from *jàti dukkha*, *jarà dukkha*, *vyàdhi dukkha*, *marana dukkha*. So that is the suffering that comes with decay, suffering that comes with disease, suffering that comes with death and suffering that comes with being born again and again and again.

So, once you found that key then you know by conviction, yes, this is the right key. Now you can tell everyone else as well. Now you become a noble person you become a *sathpurusha*, you've become a *kalyàna mithra* because you found that key. What about the person that told you, "*Hey, try this key, I know because I have tried it?*" That's what everyone else said, but now what about that person that gave you that key. You have a feeling of utmost respect towards that person because you have been trying to get out of this room for a very long time. But you never could find the right key because there were lots of keys. Imagine this room is full of keys up to your knees, there's only one key that works and you found that key. This is what the Buddha gives you.

Road to conviction in the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha

How does a Buddha know that this is the right key? He has tried every other key. This is the difference between a Buddha and the *Shràwaka Buddha*. The difference between a *Sammà Sambuddha* and a *Shràwaka Buddha* is that a *Sammà Sambuddha* has tried every single key

in the room. A *Paccèka Buddha*, He tries a few keys and by luck He gets hold of the right key, He turns it and the door open. He says, well and then someone asks how did you find that key? What does He say? Well just reach out and you know, by random you're going to pick the right key and that doesn't work for everybody whereas a *Sammà Sambuddha* He has tried every single key and He knows this is the only key that works. All other keys don't work and a *Shràwaka Buddha* needs the help of a *Sammà Sambuddha* to do that and then you can unlock the door. So, when you have found the right key now you protect that key. In-fact think, the next door is the same key, the door off that is the same key. You have a series of doors you need to cross until you get out of this building. Fortunately, every door you can use the same key to unlock. So, now that you found this key, you use that key to unlock every single door in front of you and then you get out of the building. The building is on fire, that's why you're trying to get out of here. The fire of what, the fire of *jàti*, the fire of birth, the fire of decay, the fire of disease and the fire death. Then the person that showed you this key, you have so much respect towards and now you accept this person as someone that has helped you in your life and therefore you have that conviction about that person. Then there are other people who will have passed those doors, you will find other people going through those doors on your way out, this is the *Mahà Sangha* because they will have also found the right key and just like you, they use the help of *Sammà Sambuddha* to get out of that door. So now you're going to have trust, have faith and have conviction in those people. So, once you have that conviction you have absolute faith in yourself.

Now you see, once you found that key, it doesn't matter if anyone else comes and tells you, "*That is not the right key,*" you're not going to believe it, are you? You're not going to believe the other person, why, because you've tried it yourself and it unlocked the door. So, no matter who comes and tells you, that's not the right key, "*In fact why don't you try another key,*" You're going to say no, why should I? I found the right key, I don't need your help now because now he knows the path and no matter who comes and says, "*Hey, don't believe that guy, the guy that gave you that key.*" He says don't believe in that guy because he is a liar. You are never going to believe him, why? Because you know that, that is the person that helped you get this key, to get out of that room. So, you have so much faith, so much respect and conviction in that person. What about the people who actually managed to get out of the room? People might come and say, don't believe in those people. You're not going to take their word for it, why? Because all of them found the right key and they all believe in the right person to get there, so you will have absolute conviction in all of them. This is how you have conviction in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha.

Listening to Buddha's Dhamma eradicates ràga, dwèsha & moha

The other thing you need to remember is, how do you again understand a *Sòtàpanna* or how do you recognize a *Sòtàpanna*. Don't try to recognize a *Sòtàpanna* in people around you. Try and see if you're a *Sòtàpanna* not the people around you. Never try to judge the outside

person and check, is this a *Sòtàpanna*? Is this a *Sakurdàgàmi*? Is this an *Anàgàmi*? Is this an *Arhant*? Because 99.99% of this time, you're going to be wrong. Don't try to do that. See if you are a *Sòtàpanna*, you have managed to escape the hells, this is the only thing you need to do. So, what if the other person is a *Sòtàpanna*, how is that going to help you, if you haven't escaped the four hells, how is that going to help you? Listen to all kinds of Dhamma as long as you have the skill to be able to check if what you're listening helps you to eradicate the fires, to extinguish the fires of desire, aversion and delusion, *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *moha*. As long as that's happening inside you, when you listen to any kind of Dhamma continue to listen to that Dhamma because there is the Buddha's teaching. As long as there's someone that can teach you that Dhamma, listen to that Dhamma, even these sermons. Say, you've been listening to these sermons for a couple of months now and then, one fine day you switch on Dharmayai Obai Budubana English and then you hear me saying, "*You know forget about aniccha, dukkha, anatta, I was wrong when I told you all of that, what you need to do is to be happy and go to the heavens, live life in the heavens because life is really nice over there, you get to eat lots of lovely kinds of food, you get to be with lovely people devas and brahmas and life is really glorious there.*" Stop listening to these sermons from that point forward because that what I am saying, I am not preaching the Buddha's Dhamma. Every word I say, every sentence I speak, every message I give must help you to eradicate *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *moha*. If that's not happening, I am not speaking the Buddha's Dhamma. So that should always be your yardstick to evaluate what you listen to.

The nature of a Prutajjana

So, when you listen to this Dhamma, what's going to happen is, remember as an ignoble person, as a *prutajjana*, you used to associate with, you used to practice the *dasa akusala*, the ten unwholesome deeds. It didn't take a lot for you to kill. Well, if you think, no that's not the case, what about mosquitoes, isn't that killing? When the mosquito used to come and annoy you, you didn't have to think twice about it, you just slapped them while they were sucking your blood on your arm. Didn't take a second to squash them with your hand because you didn't even need to think about it or that happened almost automatically. What about when you had to lie to escape a certain problem? Didn't have to think twice about it? Someone comes and ask you why did you do that, first response - wasn't me. That was your immediate response because you had no fear, you had no shame in lying. What about when you saw something that you thought, 'I really liked that, I want that.' It didn't matter who you had heard, who you had to harm, who you had to steal from to get hold of that. This is the kind of person that is a *prutajjana*.

Avyàpàda Sankalpanà – Right thoughts

Now having listened to the Buddhist teaching where He says,

‘Nothing in this world is to your liking, it is just cause and effect and everything that you go and attach to, only brings you dukkha dukkha, viparinàma dukkha and sankàra dukkha.’

You begin to realize, well, what have I got to gain by killing, stealing, lying, slandering or sleeping with the woman next door, what have I got to gain. That is going to be my liking, that is going to bring me happiness. Everything that so far brought to myself, attached myself to, have only brought me suffering. So why should I go after anything that brings me suffering. My purpose in life is to be happy but the things I'm bringing towards me, the things I'm going and attaching myself to, is bringing me pain, discomfort, agony, mental anxiety, mental vexation and stress. So why should I do that. That can only happen, when you really begin to realize the reality of things. When you begin to realize that *‘Yes, everything is aniccha, dukkha, anatta.’* So, once you've listened to the Dhamma and once you begin to realize *‘yes, the entire world and everything I've attached myself to so far, has only been aniccha, dukkha, anatta’* that has been the reality of life. Then you don't have to make a choice about whether you go and kill or not kill. It comes from your inside; it comes automatically why should I kill? What have I got to gain by killing? You don't have to think, *‘Oh well I'm not going to steal this thing,’* you don't have to even think about it, there's going to be an answer that comes from within. What have I got to gain, why do I have to get this by stealing, what have I got to gain by lying, what have I got to gain by sleeping with the woman next door? These thoughts and these sentiments are going to start coming inside you and this is what we call **avyàpàda sankalpanà**. The translation that we have in text is the “right thoughts”. Right thoughts don't necessarily translate this accurately into English but what you need to understand is, **you previously used to have thoughts of anger, thoughts of desire and thoughts of delusion, thoughts of attaching but now having listened to the Dhamma, having practiced the Dhamma, having made it part of your life, the thoughts that come from within you is, ‘what point is there in going and attaching to things that's only going to bring me unhappiness’. ‘What is the point in going and fighting with people when all it's going to do is, bring me unhappiness’.**

Avyàpàda Sankalpanà - Example

I'll give you a really simple example. I remember when I used to be employed in the UK, in the office we had to book our desks to go and sit in the office because there was a desk sharing system. So, every day of the week, you would have to have a desk booked in advance and then you go into the office and you sit there. Now on some days, when I went into work, I realized that someone else was sat at my desk and when I say my desk, that was the desk that I had booked. So, what I would do at that point is just look around, just scan the room to see if there was another desk that was free. It didn't bother me one bit where I would sit as long

as I had a seat to sit, I had a computer to work on. It didn't matter to me whether it was the seat I had booked but just another spare seat.

The nature of a Prutajjana

However, there were other people who would say, *"Hey don't do that, that's your seat, you've booked that, kick that guy out, ask him to go and find another seat, you go and sit where you've booked, fight for your rights,"* was what people said. 'Kick the other guy out' and then I would ask myself why, I mean there are plenty of other seats as long as I can go and sit in another seat, why does it matter where I sit. See these thoughts start appearing to you, without you having even think about it. But what worldly people will always tell you, what *prutajjanas* will always tell you is, fight for it, argue with people, go fight for it, steal, shout at them, yell at them, kill them. It doesn't matter what you have to do, take what belongs to you. This is the nature of a *prutajjana*.

An indicator to show that you are on the right path - Moving away from avyàpàda sankalpanà

So, if you are feeling that you've moved away from those kinds of sentiments, then you should know that you're practicing the right path. You're on the right path because the fire of anger, the fire of desire and the fire of delusion is not outside, it's inside you. You know when you're angry. How do you know when you're angry? You can feel the fire inside you; you can feel a fire burning inside you when you're angry. You can feel a fire inside you when you're feeling desirous of something. If you are attracted to a really pretty woman and she appears in front of you, now you can start feeling the fire inside you. It's burning you from within. If someone you dislike walk in, now there's another fire, the fire of aversion, the fire of anger if someone comes and shouts at you, how would you react now, compared to when you first started listen to these sermons? Do you react differently when people come and shout at you? Think about at your workplace. If you are still in employment and if someone comes and says *"Hey, why have you done that, this is not what I asked you to do."* Your initial reaction before you listened to this Dhamma would have been *"No, this is what you asked me to do"* and I'm going to fight for it, I'm going to defend myself and it doesn't matter what I have to tell you, I'm going to fight for my place. But now you are a lot more flexible, you're willing to listen, you're willing to take a step back and you're even willing to realize that you're beginning to feel, 'I feel sorry for you that you're feeling so stressed out' rather than trying to defend yourself, you're thinking, how can I help you right now because I can see that there's a fire burning inside you, how can I help you. Whereas before you were like 'no, I don't care what you say, I'm right, you're wrong.' These are indicators for you to realize if you are going on the right path.

An indicator to show that you are on the right path - Beginning to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* around you

The other indicator that you can also use is, are you beginning to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in the world around you. What do I mean by that? Again, I'll give you an example. I remember when we were at the airport once, and I was with someone else, we were in Heathrow and they were flying back to Sri Lanka and I was with these people. I was pushing the trolley that had their luggage and this person told me, "*Wait a bit, I need to go and check something out and I'll be right back.*" Now he thought that I didn't know how to operate the trolley. You know obviously, if you've pushed a trolley at the airport, for as long as you have suppressed the lever it keeps moving, as long as you stop you know you let go, then the trolley stops moving. That's the braking mechanism for the trolley. So, he says,

"Let go and it will stop,"

and then I said,

"Isn't that what we are all trying to do, you let go, then you stop."

So, what I'm trying to say is, why can't you see Nibbàna in a trolley, why can't you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in a trolley? Are you trying to tell me that there is no *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in this laptop? Why can't you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in a falling leaf from a tree. Every single thing you can see around you, can teach you *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. Every single thing that is around you, whether it's a tap dripping water, one drops every second, you can see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*, whether it's a chair or a handkerchief. You know you're working in the kitchen and chopping a carrot; you can see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. But of course, you can only do that if you understand *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* properly. This is why the state of *Sòtāpanna* is often described as "***Dahàsak nayin pratimanditha***" the meaning of that in English is, if I try and translate, **you are endowed with the ability to see the world according to the theory that you've just learnt, according to the philosophy. What philosophy is this, that we are talking about, the philosophy of *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*.** So, once you begin to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* you can look at the entire world, you can look at the entire universe and everywhere you look, there's going to be a teacher.

This is why, of course we were discussing on the way to the temple, to practice this path you don't need to be anywhere special, you don't need to be in a monastery, you don't need to be in a temple, you don't need to be a recluse, you don't need to run away from the world because if you run away from the world, what are you going to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in. If it's the world that we are attached to and it's the world that we need to see as *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*, if you run away from the world, now what are you going to look at, whose *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* are you going to look at? It's the world you need to look at as being *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. This is what you need to realize.

An indicator to show that you are on the right path – Realizing life is nothing but give and take (Example 1)

Even when I'm in the monastery, very often there are times when I need to reflect on *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta* on things that I do on a day-to-day basis, the way I react to certain situations. I mean, I'll give you a really simple example. Yesterday, the day before and the day before that we were in Mātara. We went there for a series of sermons and we went on alms for food. So, every day when we went for alms, we took a different route. So, the first day people were really nice to us. They were so happy that they had monks visiting them for alms and people would; you know, some people, they were running to catch a bus to get to work, they would abandon that journey and they would come back and run home, so that they could get some food and serve the monks, offer some alms to the monks. But the following day there was a different story. There was one of my associate monks who went on alms and he came back and said, today was a really interesting experience. I asked him what happened and he said, when I went for alms, there was this elderly lady whose voice he could hear, she was bedridden apparently, she couldn't even come out from her home because she was very poorly as she was bedridden. She was looking out the window and having seen my associate monk was shouting at him saying, *"What have you come here for, why don't you just go away, we have nothing to offer you, just go away, why should we feed you,"* shouting out things like that. So, he just carried on but what he came back and said was,

"That was a really good experiment for me to check, how do I respond when people shout at me, how do I respond when I get insulted, when people come and say bad things about me, when people come and lie to me and then I find out that people are actually lying to me."

These are all experiments for you to do on yourself. Now you think being a monk is, the world's going to be, all a bed of roses. That's why everyone wants to be a monk. People see a monk going on alms with an alms bowl. You know very calm, very cool, very collected and people think, *'Oh! what a lovely lifestyle that is, I'd love to be a monk'*. Well, you've got to be a monk to see, what being a monk is like. You know sometimes when you go on alms, you're a beggar, when you are going on alms. You know people can do whatever they like. If they want, they could put soil in your alms bowl. Could they not? What would you do in that situation, if someone came and put mud into your alms bowl, what would you do? How would you react to that? Would you start shouting at them, would you hit them, would you slap them or would you just accept whatever has been offered, walk a few hundred yards, turn the bowl upside down, dispose of the things you can't eat and then continue. How you react in that situation is how you can determine, how far you've gone on the path? Because at that point, if you start shouting at that person or even for us, one single moment, if for one second you feel, how could that person do like that to me, you still need to practice the path.

An indicator to show that you are on the right path – Realizing life is nothing but give and take (Example 2)

Remember, an *Arahant* would not worry for one tiny bit, for one microsecond, for one millisecond going to be upset for what happened, if that was what happened when he went round on alms. Now, the reason I want to share this story with you is, this monk who then continued and because what he did was really great. So he went pass this house and then as he went again about another 200 meters, there was another man who came out in a wheelchair and all he did was, he pointed at, (so apparently when you were walking down the street you could take the left and then there would be a small alley which you can go up and there will be more houses that way), so this man on a wheelchair he points at my associate monk and he says, this is where you need to be going. He didn't speak at that point, so he continues on that path and takes the alley and then goes and you know what this guy did after that, he starts shouting at the top of his voice, *"There's a monk coming around for alms, please offer him whatever you guys have, this is a great opportunity for all of us in our village, please offer whatever you have to this venerable monk."* So, he shouts, he starts shouting this, he's on a wheelchair, he can't do anything else but he did the best he could. And I think it's even fair to say, of all the people that would have gathered merits on that day, it's possibly true that it was that person that acquired the most merits, just by doing that, just by giving the message to everyone, 'there's a monk approaching, offer what you have' and so this monk goes up, he takes alms and then on his way back he comes across that old lady's house again and you know what he did at that point, he walks up to that woman's window where she's on the bed and she can see him from there. He looks at her and says, *"May the Noble triple gem bless you; may you attain the supreme bliss of Nibbàna,"* he says, *"Nibbàna parama sukhayen sukhitatara wethwa."* He wishes her well and then she just stares at the monk, she brings her hands together and say *"sadhu, sadhu."* That monk was able to transform that woman's life just by being collected, by being calm, by not retaliating to what the woman said but rather by looking at his own mind and saying, *"Do I fight with her or do I be kind, do I be generous to her, do I realize that this is nothing but cause and effect."* The reason that, that woman acted in that way would have been because he would have done the same thing. The reason that, that man came in his wheelchair and gave this monk the directions whatever, it was because there would have been a time when this monk would have done the same thing to that man. Showed him the right path, this is where you need to go for alms for food, or whatever.

An indicator to show that you are on the right path – Realizing life is nothing but give and take (Example 3)

There was another monk that we went with and when we were at the temple, there was his dog, who was at the temple and often he would come to us and stare at us and then start barking and then go away. This dog used to do this several times and then this monk asks me

“Why is that dog acting like that, he's always coming, staring at us and then barking”

and then I said,

“Well, why did you do that to the dog many life's times ago, you tell me the answer to that and then you will find the answer to your question.”

This life that we live is nothing but give and take. You get what you've given. It's just a give and take, which we call *Sasara ganudenu*.

I think in a future sermon we will give more examples and discuss this in more detail. but the reason I brought this story here is to show you, how do you know if you're on the right path and also to reiterate the point, you don't need to let go of lay life and become a monk to start practicing the path or to continue practicing the path. Practice the path wherever you are right now at this moment in time. The path becomes your teacher and the path becomes your facilitator. The Dhamma is what will help you get to where you need to go as long as you're practicing *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* because that's all the Buddha taught us to do. He didn't say, do anything else, he just said practice *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. He didn't say, once you become a *Sòtàpanna* and now go and read the *Tripitakaya* and now study the *saptha sambojjanga*, now study the *sattis bòdhipàkshika* dharma. He didn't say any of that and He didn't say, now go and study *Abidhamma*. He didn't say any of that but that's what people are trying to do these days. All the things that the Buddha said to do, people don't do. All the things that the Buddha didn't advise to do that's what people want to do. They want to find a new way to attain Nibbàna.

Keep the path to Nibbàna simple

Let's not complicate things, let's keep it simple, isn't life complicated enough, why do we try to complicate the path to happiness, the path to Nibbàna as well. Isn't why you're trying to move away from life and attain Nibbàna is because life is complicated already? So, worry if you now complicate the path to Nibbàna as well. Where have you got to go after that? You either have to live in this world or you have to get out of this world. To get out of this world you have to practice the path to Nibbàna. You're trying to do that because the path in life, the path to 'Happiness' in life is really complicated and you realize that it's not happiness that I'm ever going to get. This is why you choose the path to Nibbàna and now you complicate that as well. Now what have you got left, nothing, you have no alternative. So, keep it simple.

How ego hinders the path

When you begin to see the world around you and you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. Now this is why I'm being careful; what sometimes people do is you know, remember we all have this sense of ego in us, right, '*mànaya*' For as long as we have ego within us, we always want to compare ourselves to somebody to see, am I their equal, am I better than them, or am I lower than them. You're always comparing. This is always what we're doing, until you become an *Arahant*. Now I'm not saying, therefore you know if you're comparing yourself then you know you should be locked up in a cell. That's not what I'm saying because this is the nature of this disease, ego is a disease. As long as we accept that, let's treat that disease, let's accept that we have a problem and let's treat that problem. There's no point in running away from the problem because then you're never treating it. So as long as we accept that we have this ego that we are fighting with, then we've got to accept that what we are always doing is measuring ourselves with somebody else. What happens is, when you listen to a sermon that teaches you, this is how you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in a trolley. This is how you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in a falling leaf from a tree. This is how you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in a dripping tap. Then people listen to this, they learn this and what happens then is, they go to their fellow mates and tell, "Hey I know how to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*" in this, that and the other. Then they are also unable to really know, whether they've understood the problem because what happens is, what they've done is, they've asked the teacher to solve a hundred problems for them, a hundred different problems for them. You memorize all the 100 problems. Now you go around telling everyone, hey I know how to solve problem number 56, I know how to solve problem number 25, I also know how to solve, problem number 98. What happens when you get, given problem 101? Now you're stuck.

There are so many things you see on a day to day basis around you. I mean you see vehicles come and go, you see people crossing the road, you see the sun rise, you see the sunset, you see something cooking on the fire, okay, you see your furniture, you see plants growing up and the animals around you. So, if whoever comes to you and says, "Here's how you see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in everything that they see around them," people are going to fall into this deception that, "Yes, I am now a *Sòtàpanna*." I can't tell you how many times I've had people like that who come up to me and say, "I can see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in everything," how do you know and then they say, "Well I can see this, I can see that, I can see this" and then I ask him "What about this, can you tell me *aniccha, dukkha, anatta* in that?" "Ahaaaa, I'll come back later."

See the problem is, not that they don't know how to see *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*, the problem is they think they've become a *Sòtàpanna* and then what does someone do once they become a *Sòtàpanna*? Now they go and start meditating and they think I no longer need to listen to the Dhamma, this is the problem. Then because you listen to these sermons and these sermons say, the only way to become a *Sòtàpanna* is to listen to Dhamma and then once you become a *Sòtàpanna*, now you go and practice the Dhamma by practicing meditation and so

on and so forth. So again because of this ego, it's very easy to fall into that trap where people think I am now a *Sòtāpanna*, I no longer need to listen to Dhamma. What a waste, what a shame, when they could have just continued listening to Dhamma and if they hadn't become a *Sòtāpanna* they could have. One more sermon, two more sermons, maybe three more sermons but they don't do that. They stop, three sermons short and what happens, they don't attain that fruit. This is such a shame.

"I prefer listening to the Dhamma" Ven. Amadassana Thero

Yesterday when I was at a sermon, I said, "I don't like preaching, I like listening." My favourite pastime is not preaching the Dhamma, it's listening to the Dhamma and this is why, up until the day I become an Arahant, I will always listen to the Dhamma and that'll be the thing I like most. Because in preaching, you are preaching what you know, you are preaching what you can understand. In listening, you can listen, you can learn new things, you can listen to things that you've never heard before. Someone else has done the hard work, all you have to do is go and pluck their fruits from the tree. Someone else has planted the seed, they've watered the tree, they've added fertilizer, all you have to do is pluck the fruit. Whereas when you're preaching, you have to plant the seed, you have to water, you have to put the fertilizer and you have to wait for it to grow and then go and pluck the fruit. So, this is what you need to be careful about.

Your measuring stick to evaluate the state of *Sòtāpanna*

Having said, that this is how one can check if they have become a *Sòtāpanna* but your measuring sticks should always be, how much desire, aversion and delusion, *rāga*, *dwèsha*, *Moha* do I have today, compared to yesterday, compared to last week, compared to last month, compared to last year. The only way to do that is, by putting it into, everyday life examples. So, don't run away from life, keep practicing and keep applying the theory until one day comes, when no matter what happens, you are not shaken.

Say when you go home today and you find that someone had come over and they had completely destroyed your place, turn the entire place upside down, you had robbers, you had burglars, how are you going to feel at that point, will you be ready to accept that? If not, then there's still more you need to do. But the same thing happened two years ago, you would react differently. You would feel an intense urge of anger inside your heart, in your minds but today that might not be so bad. You might begin to think, "I'm sure, I would have done something similar to that person but you know at some point in *sansàra*, this is now payback time, I've just got to accept whatever happens to me."

See just being able to look at world, the world is like that, you are at peace within yourself. Isn't that what we're looking for, happiness and peace within ourselves. So as long as you can find that happiness and peace within yourself you know that this is the Dhamma that help you get there. This is the teacher that gave me the Dhamma to help me get there and here's the *Maha Sangha* who are practicing that path and who has taken the message from the Buddha and are preaching that Dhamma on a day-to-day basis. So, this is what we need to think about.

We've had a few questions come through; everyone here are eager to achieve at least the status of *Sòtàpanna* and how can we do that? Is that by following the way of Dhamma? So, my question is what should we do to follow the way of Dhamma? So how can we know that we are correctly following the way of Dhamma and what is actually meant by practicing *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. So isn't fate more or less similar to Karma. In a previous sermon, the time allotted there was a monk who had learned Buddhism since three Lord Buddha's before but not achieved at least the state of *Sòtàpanna*. To follow the way of Dhamma we have to study the lessons of Buddhism. So, my question is just by studying the lessons of Dhamma can we one day achieve the state of *Sòtàpanna*? Okay. So, let's take a few of those questions together because quite a lot of them are interrelated and then before we conclude, I think there was another question that was posted a few days ago and depending on time, we will go back to that as well.

So, everyone here are so eager to achieve at least the state of *Sòtàpanna*. How can we do that, is that following the way of Dhamma? What should we do to follow the way of Dhamma? Okay, so what do we mean by the way of Dhamma?

Following the way of Dhamma - The Four Noble Truths

What do you mean by following the way of Dhamma? See when the Buddha describes, the Four Noble Truths which is which encapsulates everything we need to attain *Sòtàpanna, Sakurdàgàmi, Anàgàmi* and *Arihath*. To attain the supreme bliss of *Nibbàna* that's all we need, the Four Noble Truths. Remember He gives us a path, He says,

understand the first noble truth of *dukkha*,

understand the second noble truth of the cause for suffering - *dukkha samudaya*,

understand that it's eradicating attachment, that is the cessation of suffering, the third noble truth

and finally,

the path to eradicating the cause of suffering which is attachment and He teaches us the eight-fold path "*Àryashtàngikamàrgaya*."

So *Àryashtàngika màrgaya* is the way of the Dhamma. For as long as you are practicing the *Àryashtàngikamàrgaya*, the Noble Eightfold Path, then you are practicing what you need to

become a *Sòtāpanna*, you are practicing the path that's going to get you to become a *Sakurdàgāmi*, you're practicing the path to become an *Anàgāmi* and you're practicing the path to become an Arahant. There is nothing else you need to do; it's just practicing that path. Now where does this path begin? It begins with *Sammā Ditti*.

So, in fact why don't we discuss the Noble Eightfold Path a little bit. What is *Sammā Ditti*? Remember '*sammā*' comes from joining of the two words '*san*' and '*ma*'. Now I'll need to use the science of etymology and use the *Sinhala* and *Pali* meanings of these two words that make up this phrase. '*San*' is *avidyā* and *trushnā*, *avidyā* being delusion or ignorance and *trushnā* being attachment. Coming together of attachment and ignorance and the result of ignorance and attachment which is kick-starting the *Paticca Samuppāda* process - the dependent origination process is where *dukkha* comes out. Whatever you put into *Paticca Samuppāda*, the outcome is going to be *jarā, marana, shōka, paridēva, dukkha, dōmanassa, upāyāsā sambhavanti, ēva mētassa kēvalassa dukkhakkandhassa samudayō hoti*. This is in *Pāli*. Whatever you put through *Paticca Samuppāda* process, this is what you're going to get. So, the *Paticca Samuppāda* process is like a machine. Imagine there's a machine, whatever you put into it, out comes *jarā, marana, shoka, paridēva, dukkha, dōmanassa, upāyāsā sambhavanti*. Outcome is suffering. Let's take suffering as a collective word for all that *shōka, paridēva, dukkha, dōmanassa, upāyāsā sambhavanti* and so on.

Why are we still in Sansàra?

Let's take suffering, we can describe these terms later, more broadly. I always want to try and keep these sermons simple. The reason I want to keep it simple is, let's not try to overcomplicate this, because if you try to overcomplicate this then the path becomes very difficult. This is what we've been doing all this time in *sansàra*, over complicating it. Remember it's been 2650 years since the Lord Buddha's *parinibbāna*. The Lord Buddha came past about five hundred thousand Lord Buddhas and what about you and I. Did we not come past all of them as well? What about the Buddhas before that? So, we came past all this and we have come such a long time in *sansàra*. It would be wrong for us to think that we have not sat in front of a Buddha and listened to this Dhamma. I'm sure and I can absolutely guarantee that we will all have sat in front of the Buddha, listened to his Dhamma but gone away and not done what He asked us to do. You would've done everything else but what He asked us to do.

Transform your Dhamma knowledge into your understanding - Example of Tuccha

Pòtila

This is why and in fact I'll pick up another question that was posted here in the previous sermon. 'At the previous sermon it was said that at the time of Lord Buddha there was a monk who had learned Buddhism since three Lord Buddha's before but not achieved at least the state of *Sòtàpanna*'. So, he's talking about the monk Pòtila and even said to follow the way of Dhamma, we have to study the lessons of Buddhism. You see studying and learning is one thing, applying it into your lives and understanding, it is something else. If you don't practice, if you don't understand, then learning is not going to help you. Of course, you have to learn, you have to learn but you have to learn to understand. If you don't learn, if you learn for the sake of learning then it's just going to be knowledge. It's not going to be understanding. Knowledge is one, understanding is something else. So, to come to an understanding, first you learn, what you learnt becomes knowledge. When you apply knowledge into your lives, then it becomes understanding. Where we stop is at knowledge, that's the problem because as the Buddha says, "***Sabba rasan Dhamma rasan jinàthi***," of all the tastes that there is, of all the delicacies there is, of all the taste would be the most literal translation but I'm trying to think of a more appropriate term of, "all the pleasures", let's take it that way. **Of all the pleasures there is, the pleasure of learning the Dhamma, the pleasure of associating the Dhamma is the utmost pleasure.** So, the Buddha says that, it's both a blessing and a warning, remember He gives us a warning as well. What is the warning? If you simply listen to the Dhamma to understand to acquire knowledge but not to apply it, there's a problem. This is why when the monk Pòtila came to the Buddha and said, "Venerable Lord Buddha, in the time of three Lord Buddhas before you and now as well, I have listened to the Dhamma, I have learned the Dhamma and I have a lot of knowledge about the Dhamma, in fact I have complete knowledge in the full *Tripitakaya*" and then he waits for a response from the Buddha. He repeats this because the Buddha does not respond, the Buddha remains silent and he repeats it and he says, "Lord Buddha as I just said before, in the *sansàra* oftentimes, I have come past Buddhas and I have learnt their Dhamma and I have lots of knowledge about the Buddha's teaching." He says it a second time and he says it the third time, and having not received a response from the Buddha, he gets up and starts to walk away and this is when the Buddha says, "*Tuccha Pòtila*." So, you know, *tuccha* being a word of insult. He uses this word to get Pòtila to reflect on what it is that he has been doing up until this point in *sansàra*. Because remember where he stopped, where Pòtila stopped was listening to the Dhamma, learning Dhamma, acquiring knowledge but not applying it into his life and therefore not turning knowledge into understanding. Because he didn't do that, he couldn't attain the state of *Sòtàpanna*. To attain the state of *Sòtàpanna*, at least the state of *Sòtàpanna*, remember *yònisò manasikàraya* is absolutely essential. *Yònisò manasikàraya* is nothing but applying the Dhamma into your own lives.

So, it doesn't matter what age you are, whether you're 14, 15 or 11 or whether you're 45 or 30. You have certain experiences in life, you will have a collection of examples and your own personal experiences. You know things that you have seen, things that you've heard, things that you've tasted, you felt, how you've transacted with other people that you've come across, how you've dealt with them. All of these situations you have to apply the Dhamma and see what outcome you get from them. Unless you do that, it's only going to be knowledge, it's not going to be an understanding. In fact I will repeat the Buddha's warning at this point which is, what we do sometimes is, when we begin to feel that this Buddha's Dhamma is so delicious, it's so pleasurable, I enjoy learning the Buddha Dhamma, what can happen is, people start taking detours instead of doing what the Buddha asked which is practice *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, you start taking detours, you go learning the Abhidhamma, you go learning about how the *rùpas* come into being, how the mind comes into being, how the mind starts, how the mind continues, how the mind stops. You start looking at kind of really deep concepts in Buddhism like Abhidhamma for example. There's nothing wrong with that but the problem is that's not going to help you attain Nibbàna.

Panca Upàdànakandà Dukkha

You can only attain *Nibbàna* by..... think of it this way; why are we still in *sansàra*? It's because of our attachment and our ignorance, *avidyà* and *tanhà*. Because of attachment and ignorance, we are still in *sansàra*. Do we have an attachment to *citta viti*, do we have an attachment to how the *rùpas* come into being, do we have an attachment to how the objects work? No, our attachments are to the sights we see, our attachments are to the things that we hear with our ears, the things that we see with our eyes, to the things that we feel, our five senses and the *rùpa*, *vèdanà*, *sannà*, *sankàra*, *vinnàna* that we collect through our five senses and through our mind. These are the things that we are attached to. That's why the Buddha says, "*Panca upàdànakandà dukkhà*". These are the things that we cling on to, the five aggregates, the five clinging aggregates that bring us suffering. So, if these are the things that bring us suffering, then what brings suffering? Attachment brings suffering. That's why it's called the *dukkha samudaya*. These are the things that bring us suffering. Then where do we need to focus on to remove, to eradicate that suffering? It's looking at the attachment that we have to the things that we are attached to which is the *panca upàdànakandà*.

So, this is what we need to analyze, this is what we need to focus on, why, because our life is limited. We don't know when our last breath is going to be, we don't know how much longer we are going to be alive for. So, while yes, we have the Dhamma, while yes, we have the *Abhidhamma*, while yes, we have eighty-four thousand different suttas that teach us how to attain *Nibbàna*. If you understood *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta* then before your heart beats for the last time which could be today, which could be in the next hour, which could be this hour, which could be before you wake, before you get up from wherever you sat down right now

and listen to this sermon. For me it could be before end of this sermon, right. Before that happens, what we need to do is apply *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. That's all we need to attain *Nibbàna*.

The Buddha's wisdom was infinite. There was no limit to his wisdom. This is why the Buddha was able to talk about everything there was in this Universe. You could talk to us about other planets, other solar systems, other universes, other galaxies. He could teach us about *Karma vipàka*, He could teach us about this world, He could teach us about how people are born and how people die and He could teach us about all of these things. He could even teach us at a really subtle level, how the *cittas* work, how the *caitasikas* work, how the *rùpas* work, all of these things. He says, all of that and finally says, what you only need to do is, eradicate *ràga, dwèsha, mòha*. To what? The *panca upadànaskanda*. If you do that and that alone, that's enough to attain *Nibbàna*.

Sammà Ditti – Right View

So, practicing the path is practicing the Noble Eightfold Path. When someone gets into *sammà ditti* which is '*sam/san*' being *avidyà, trushnà* as I said before attachment and delusion and '*ma*' is to remove yourself from that or to distance yourself from that process. Then you come into this view, this right view that eradicating attachment and delusion is what's going to bring me happiness, is what's going to bring me relief and cessation from the *dukkha*.

Sammà Sankappa – Right Thoughts

When you have *sammà ditti*, then what you do from that point forward is *sammà sankappa*, **right thoughts** and that's the right thoughts that we discussed a few moments ago. Before you used to have thoughts of anger, you used to have thoughts of desire, you used to have thoughts of attachment to the world. But now because you have *sammà ditti* which is ignorance and attachment is what brings me suffering. Well, if you want relief from suffering, then you know that what you need to do is eradicate attachment and delusion. So now that's what you're working towards and you also understand that no matter what, whatever resulted from the process of *avidyà, trushnà*, only gave you *dukkha-dukkha, viparinàma dukkha and sankàra dukkha*. Once you understand this fundamental view, this fundamental philosophy, then automatically the thoughts that you have are thoughts about letting go of this world, thoughts about letting go of attachment and thoughts about letting go of desire and letting go of anger. So that is *sammà sankappa*.

Sammà V`c`c` – Right Speech

Then you move onto *sammà v`c`c`* which is **right speech**. Right speech is about abstaining from lying, abstaining from slander, abstaining from harsh speech. So previously when you thought this world was such a pleasurable place to be, you wanted to be the best in this world and you didn't care what happened to other people. It didn't matter what you had to do to get to that point. So, you were readily available to lie, you were happy to lie to people.

Just take a simple example. You go to the shop to buy something. In fact, this happened to us when we were on the expressway going towards M`tara. As we approached the toll gates, which are those gates where they charge you a fee on the expressway, so as we were taking the exit at M`tara, we hand over this chit on which it says where we entered so that they can charge us the fee having calculated how far we've travelled. So, we gave this chit to the person that's operating the gates and we are now waiting for him to tell us, what the cost is. He gives us this chit again with a 50 rupee note. We haven't even paid in yet and we are wondering, why are you giving us money, we owe you money. So, we had to pay him I think it was 450 rupees for the distance that we travelled from Horana to M`tara. So, 450 rupees was the charge for that but this guy he gives the chit back with a 50 rupee note. In his mind he's thinking we've already paid him 500 rupees, right, when we haven't. Now if we didn't have this Dhamma what do you think we would have done. We would have happily taken the 50-rupee note taking the chit and said thank you very much, goodbye and then driven away. Now that man is 450 rupees at a loss. When he counts his money at the end of the day, he's going to find his 450 rupees short and then he's going to have to put that money in there. That 450 rupees that he could have taken home, given to his family, helped someone else's family or paid his rent or paid mortgage or paid water, electricity, whatever, right. Well, because that's what most people would do unfortunately. That is the reality, that's what most people would do. It doesn't matter whether that money is yours or not, you are happy, you're willing to take it. So, when we said, "No, actually we didn't pay you, here's the money that we need to pay you." So, he's asking "Are you sure, because I thought you paid us money" and then we said "Yes we are absolutely sure, we didn't pay you money, please accept this." Second time he is asking us "Are you sure, you didn't pay us?" We could have easily said, "Actually yes, we are mistaken, we did pay you and you gave us change, thank you, let's go." That would be lying, lying for what, to save 450 rupees. Well with the 50 rupees given us, now it's 500 rupees. To save 500 rupees, I'm lying to that person. But when you understand rupees and cents are not really all that, why do I steal from this person when that person is suffering so much. You know why is he doing that job, wherever he is at the toll gates, you know they don't have air conditioners that you might have a small pedestal fan or something, you know he's in the burning heat there, he's waiting you know ,vehicles coming and going, that's all. Yes, that's his job, how could you even do something like that to someone like that.

But for that, you need to have thoughts of letting go, you need to have *sammà sankappa* to get to *sammà v`c`c`*. Otherwise, what you normally do is lie to people, you use words of slander

which is backbiting - you know he said this about you, she said this about you, that sort of thing '*kèlam*' and then you have harsh words, words that make another person feel bad, words that hurt another person's feelings, *sammà vācā*.

Sammà Kammanta – Right Action

Then you move to *sammà kammanta*, the things that you do. So, you refrain from killing, you refrain from stealing and you refrain from sensual misconduct. So, when you practice refraining from stealing, refraining from killing and refraining from sensual misconduct, what you're practicing is *sammà kammanta*. So *sammà ditti*, *sammà sankappa*, *sammà vācā*, *sammà kammanta*, *sammà vāyāma*.

Sammà Vāyāma - Right Effort

So *sammà vāyāma* is right effort. Right effort for what? So, the Buddha talks about four different types of right effort.

- **Any good things you've done in the past repeat them.**

Make effort to repeat them.

- **good deeds you haven't done in the past, make effort to do them.**

New good deeds you haven't done in the past do them. So, if you haven't given *dāna*, if you haven't offered food to the monks ever in your past then find time to go and do it. If you never worshipped the Buddha, find time to do that, if you never practiced meditation find time to do that make an effort to do that because all of these things are good deeds. If you've never been able to attain the first *jhāna* then make effort to do that. If you've not attained the *Sòtāpanna* state, make effort to do that. So, you are making effort to do things, the good deeds you haven't done so far.

- **Any bad deeds you've done in the past, you abstain from them.**

So, if you've stolen in the past, then again don't worry about the past, what you need to worry about what you are doing now. Who you were in the past is gone, you can't bring that past, no matter what you do, right? Just like that man who came and spoke to me at the end of the sermon two weeks ago, no matter how much I talked with him, I can't change what happened in the past, I don't know what bad deeds he might have done but he can't change who he was in the past. The only thing you can change is what happens in the future. You can either choose to continue to do what you did in the past or be a completely different person.

But now as you're practicing the Noble Eightfold Path, you're practicing right view, you're practicing right thoughts, you're practicing right speech, you're practicing right action and you're practicing right effort.

- **Any bad deeds you've not done in the past, you make sure not to do that**

Sammà Ājīwa – Right Target

Then *Sammà Ājīwa*. *Sammà Ājīwa* is about dedicating your life to eradicating *rāga*, *dwēsha*, *mōha*. For as long as you do that, which is constantly checking your thoughts, your actions and your efforts and your speech, you're constantly checking all of these. It's like a radar. How was my speech today, what sort of things did I do today, you can do this when you wake up in the morning, you can do this just before you get to bed, how did I conduct my speech, how did I conduct my actions, how did I conduct my thoughts today. Did I do bad things, did I do good things and constantly being aware of that and constantly making sure you're aiming at the right target, that's *sammà ājīwa*.

Sammà Sati - Right Mindfulness

Then *sammà sati* is having right mindfulness, which is constantly focusing your mind on the right things. This is to listen to the Dhamma to purifying your mind, to practicing the path, practicing meditation and also the *satara satipattāna*, that is right mindfulness which is where you're constantly aware of your thoughts, why am I going somewhere, why am I talking, why am I walking, why am I speaking, why am I lifting my arm up, why am I sitting down, why am I getting up? You know 24/7 you can focus. So, you know this is what practicing the path is. When someone wants to know how do you become a Sōtāpanna and how do you follow the way of Dhamma, this is exactly what you need to be doing 24/7, 365 days a year. Always focus on your mind, what is your mind doing.

If *Nibbāna* is *raghakkaya*, *dwēshakkaya*, *Mōhakkaya* - eradicating desire, eradication aversion and eradicating delusion, that is *Nibbāna*. Not, if that is *Nibbāna*. That is *Nibbāna*. According to whom, according to the Buddha. Because that is *Nibbāna*, then constantly and always regularly focusing your mind on what's going on in your mind right now. Because where does *rāga*, *dwēsha*, *mōha* happen, in your body, it happens in your mind right, it's nothing to do with the body, it's the mind, that is responsible for *rāga*, *dwēsha*, *mōha*. So, as long as you focus on your mind and check every moment, these thoughts that I'm having now, are they to do with *rāga*, are they to do with *dwēsha*, are they to do with *mōha*. Constantly focus on

that and remove the *ràga, dwèsha, mòha* from your mind. Then you are walking the path to *Nibbàna*.

Sammà Samàdhi - Right Concentration

Then finally, *sammà samàdhi*. So, when you practice this path, you are now able to concentrate and practice **right concentration** because previously your mind was always running everywhere. Your mind was running towards the bad things. You know when something happened that you didn't like, your mind was always ready to fight, your mind was always ready to get into an argument, your mind was always ready to get into a conflict with somebody else. But now think about yourselves, when you're in the monastery, think about the things that happen, think about other fellow monks who might do things you like or might do things you don't like. What about when you go for alms? If you get served food that you really like, how is your mind working at that point. Are you not a security guard for the things that come through your eyes, your ears, your nose, your tongue? What do normal people do, they are security guards, for objects in the world. But what do *àryans* do? They are security guards for their minds. See we're both doing the same thing but worldly people are security guards for all these physical things in the outside world whereas *àryans* are security guards for the things that go on in their mind. Constantly focusing on what goes on in the mind. So, when you are able to focus on what goes on in your mind and when you are able to watch your mind like a watchman and whenever desire comes in - fight, whenever anger comes in - fight, whenever delusion comes in - fight. Fight and fight until you win, don't give up. You never give up and you keep fighting. When you are able to now settle your mind unlike before where you sat down for meditation. For example, think about two, three years ago if you ever had a chance to practice meditation, when you sit down to meditate what are the things that came into your mind? It would sometimes be the things you like to eat, it would be things that you like to watch, like watching movies, it would be things that you used to speak with your friends, things you used to do with your friends, playing games, computer games or watching TV. These are the things that always came into your mind. So, you are never able to concentrate, your mind was always running like a monkey jumping from one tree to another. But now that you have practiced this path of right view, right mindfulness, right actions, right speech then with everything you are doing, you're trying to eradicate *ràga, dwèsha, mòha*. The thoughts that come into your mind now are less to do with *ràga, dwèsha, mòha* and more to do with eradicating *ràga*, eradicating *dwèsha*, eradicating *mòha*. So, they're to do with *pragnà* or wisdom and therefore when you sit down to meditate, for instance you don't have to sit down with it, by the way whenever you are trying to focus your mind, those thoughts are going to be about *vitàràga, vitadwèsha, vitamòha* which is non-desire, non-anger or non-aversion and non-delusion and that helps you again to come to *sammà ditti*.

The Noble Eightfold Path is like a pizza

This is why it's a wheel, it's not a list. The Noble Eightfold Path is not a list of things, it's a wheel. So, once you go round the wheel, how many times do you do this every day, all the time, you're going round in this wheel. Say for example, you wake up in the morning and someone walks up to you and they start shouting at you. Previously you used to shout back, used to say things to hurt their feelings, that was *miccà v`cà* but now you have *sammà ditti* - right view. So now your response is going to be *sammà v`ca*. You abstain from using bad words, you abstain from lying, you abstain from using harsh words, so the moment you've done that, your *sammà v`cà* becomes greater in power. So now you're filling all of these wheels, it's like a pizza, the Noble Eightfold Path is like a pizza.

Path to Nibbàna in a Pizza

So, think of it this way. You have a pizza; you slice it up into eight as you do. How do you start eating this pizza, is from the inside, out? You start from the middle and you start eating to the outside, okay. But the first bite you take from this slice that's called *sammà ditti*, of course, that's how you always eat the pizza. Right, you take a slice, you pick it up and you start eating from the narrow edge not the wide edge, you eat from the narrow edge not where the sausage is, you start with the cheese that's on the inside. So, this is how you eat it, then narrow edge goes into your mouth. So, you take one bite from *sammà ditti*. Before you took a bite from *sammà ditti*, you are a *putajjana*. Once you've taken a bite from *sammà ditti*, you are an *àrya*. Now you are able to put that slice down, that's okay. Once you've done that, someone comes and shouts at you and previously used to respond with *miccà v`cà*, now you are responding with *sammà v`cà*. What are you doing now is, you are not taking up the second slice, you're picking up *sammà ditti*, *sammà sankappa*, *sammà v`cà*? You're picking out the third slice and eating a bit and you're putting it down again. Then someone comes and says, "Shall we go down and meditate for a little bit," "Yeah sure, let's go and meditate." So now you sat down, practicing meditation. *Sammà sam`dhi* for a little bit, say 15 minutes and you're thinking about what happened when that person came and shouted at you, how did I respond at that time, right, you're thinking about your thoughts. What are you doing now? *Sammà sati* and *sammà sam`dhi*. You are doing both these things and also when the person came and shouted at you, even that time you were focusing on your mind, *sammà sati*. So, you ate a slice from that, you ate up one bit from that slice as well. Now you're practicing meditation, you are eating a piece from that slice as well. So now you should take a step back and look at that pizza. You have four slices from which you have eaten a little bit. Some of the other slices you haven't even touched it. That's okay and then the day continues and then something else happens, then you eat a small piece from another slice and then you listen to some Dhamma. You take a mp3 player or something and you listen to some Dhamma. You listen to this sermon; say you listen for 15 minutes. Now you have even more *sammà*

ditti. You eat another bite from that slice, you put it back down, you listen to another 15 minutes, you eat another bite from that slice, you put it back down. Say, a friend, not a good friend, a bad friend, he says "I've seen something that I think you like, why don't you come and have a look with me". You say, "okay, let's go, have a look" and he's looking at this, let's say there's a nice electronic device that you'd like to have and he's found that there's this device that's lying on a desk doesn't belong to you. He says, "Just take that" and you say "No, hang on, that surely belongs to someone, it's not mine." He says, "No, don't worry, take it, it's okay" and you know that, that's going to be stealing. Now you think, "stealing is not the right thing to do," why, you have *sammà ditti* now. You ate a bite from that slice. Because you ate a bite from that slice, you have *sammà ditti* from the first slice, right. Now you are looking at this situation and you go back into, you think, "What was the taste of that slice?" Equally you are looking at how much *sammà ditti* do I have right now? And *sammà ditti* is telling you, stealing is a bad thing, if you steal, you're going to cause discomfort, you're going to cause stress and you're going to cause sorrow and sadness to the person you're going to take it from. What a poor guy, why do you put that person in that position? You know he's going to suffer as soon as he realizes his device's gone missing because the same would happen to you as well. So, you realize "No, I shouldn't be doing that" and you tell him "No, I'm not going to do that, that's wrong." Now what were you doing there, you were looking at your mind *sammà sati*. Now you eat another bite from that slice. Then you abstain from stealing. Now you're eating a bite from *sammà kammantha* and you put it back down.

See like this, over the course of a day, over the course of a week, over the course of a month you practice this path, you eat bits of this pizza, a bite from each slice all the while and then ultimately a day is going to come when you have eaten the entire pizza, right. You will have eaten bits from each slice and one day you have completely eaten all of this pizza and then that day you can say, I have finished my pizza. What happens then, you get a new pizza. First you had an eight-inch pizza, what's the smallest size pizza, six inches, okay. Let's say, it's a small size pizza, a personal thing, so you finish your personal pizza, now they bring you a medium size pizza. So, this medium size pizza is what, the path to practice to become a *Sakurdàgàmi*. Because once you've eaten your personal pizza, you're *Sòtápanna*. You see how that happens and then you are now eating the second size pizza, the medium size pizza, you are a *Sakurdàgàmi*. Once you finish eating that pizza being a large pizza, now you are an *Anàgàmi*. Once you finish that pizza, they are giving you another pizza, an extra-large pizza. Once you finish that you're an Arahant.

Now tell me how can you say, eating pizza doesn't help you practice the path of *Nibbàna*. This is how pizza can help you to attain *Nibbàna*. See, did I not tell you a few minutes ago, Dhamma teachers are everywhere. Everywhere you look, you can find Dhamma. You can find *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*. When you begin to see the world like this, you know examples keep coming into your head out of nowhere, I've never heard this before, this is the first time I've listened to this. How can you look at a pizza and realize, this is how it can help you attain

Nibbàna? So, this is what practicing the path is. This is what following the way of the Dhamma is by practicing the Noble Eightfold path. This is the only thing you need to do. Practice the Noble Eightfold Path. you don't need to do anything else

Are we correctly following the way of Dhamma? (continued...)

Just going back to the questions again, how can we know that we are correctly following the way of Dhamma. The way to know if you are correctly following the way of Dhamma is by introspection, looking at your own mind. Compare what you're doing right now to what you would have done in the past. Are your thoughts to do with *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta*? Are your thoughts to do with letting go of desire or this *avivhinsà sankalpanà*, *nekkhamma sankalpanà* and *avyàpàda sankalpanà*? Is that what your thoughts are right now? Are your actions abstaining from wrong actions? Is your livelihood abstaining from... and checking constantly using that radar to check what are my thoughts now, what are my actions now, what is my speech now, is that what you're always doing? If you are doing these things in your practice in the path, you're on the right path. Now there will be times when you are practicing the path and someone might come and tell you, "Actually no, practicing the path to *Nibbàna* is to sit down for meditation and then you're going to start to see lights of all colours, you are going to see yellow colour and blue colour and red colour and green colour. When you've seen all these four colours, you are an *Arahant*." What should you do now?

Whatever you've heard, you put it into the Dhamma, you put into the *sùtta*, you put in to the discipline – *dhamma*, *sùtra* and *vinaya* and check, does this make sense? So, you put it in to *paticca samuppàda*, you put it into the *àrya ashtàngika màrgaya*, the Noble Eightfold Path. Where in the Noble Eightfold Path does it say, to become an *Arahant*, you have to see lights of four different colours? If it does say that seeing four different coloured lights is the path to *Nibbàna* then that is not the Dhamma. That is not the Buddha's Dhamma.

Aniccha Dukkha Anatta

See, very simple, why complicate things, keep it simple and what is actually meant by practicing *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta* is to look at the world as being *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. So, we've done a sermon, I think we've had several sermons on this subject of *aniccha*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. So, I would encourage the listener to go and listen to these sermons. They're on the YouTube playlist. But in brief, *aniccha* is the fact that nothing in the world is to my liking. Your liking has nothing to do with what the outcome is, as long as there are conditions, you get the output, the result and if that is the nature of the world, if you attach to something that is *aniccha* then, you're going to get the *dukkha dukkha*, *viparinàma dukkha* and *sankàra dukkha*. You're always going to have to suffer, worry, 'is what I'm attached to going to be the

way it is forever, is it going to break, is someone going to steal it from me, is it going to be destroyed at some point,' you always have to keep thinking about it and then no matter how much you protect it, it's going to break, it's going to fall apart, it's going to be destroyed and then when that happens, you're going to suffer from *viparinàma dukkha* and then to either delay or to stop *dukkha dukkha* and *viparinàma dukkha* you have to do *abhisankàra dukkha*. Actually, having to do something to protect it, to put it back together when it falls apart that is *abhisankàra dukkha* and then dedicating your life to doing that is *anatta*. It is essence-less, it's meaningless to do that thing. This is why you need to stop doing that. This is why the Buddha says "***Anicchan kayattèna, dukkhan bhayattèna, anattan asàrakattènan.***"

Fate, more or less similar to karma – Examples

So, isn't fate more or less similar to *karma*? You can take fate as being *karma* but generally I think the meaning of fate is taken as something that is bound to happen, this is how normally someone would say. If someone says, 'I lost my job' and someone might say, 'Oh that's my fate', because what they think is well that is what was bound to happen. That is the only way it could have happened and no other way. That's not necessarily true. The reason that someone would have lost his job is because that were the conditions that were in play at that point in time. You might have done something for someone else to have lost their job in the past, that would have been a *karma* but what if you also gave someone a job or something or you helped someone find a job. So, at that point, you can't tell which *karma* is going to come and give result. Sometimes it could be the *karma* that you did to make someone lose their job or it could be the *karma* that you did to help someone get a job. I use this example, where say, you are driving on the road and as you are driving someone else pulls up in front of you in their car, now you're angry. You are really angry because you didn't want that, you didn't like that to happen. But five or ten seconds later, as you go into a four-way Junction another car comes racing and it hits the car in front of you. The reason you slowed down is because this guy pulled in front of you. Now how can you tell whether there was a good *karma* or a bad *karma*? Well, the guy pulled in front of you, you had to brake. Now that could have been the result of a bad *karma* but what about the fact that because he did that, he was the one who was subject to the accident and you were saved. Wasn't that a good *karma*? It could have been. We can't tell which one is good or bad. This is why you know we can't judge the world; we can't tell whether what's happening in the world is good or bad.

Compared to Nibbàna everything is pointless, compared to Nibbàna everything is meaningless because Nibbàna is the only ultimate reality. It is the only ultimate happiness. But in the conventional world, we can't be a judge, we can't say this is good, that's bad, because we don't know if something bad happened. Say you're walking on the road and you trip and fall and you might say, "Oh, that was my bad karma that happened to me." True it could be your

bad karma but what if you walked another two steps and there was construction going on and then there was a huge load of concrete blocks that was dropped from some height and you know two seconds after you fell, these concrete blocks fell in front of you and crashed. Wouldn't you be thankful for the fact that you fell on the road, because otherwise that concrete blocks would have crashed on your head? Two seconds and your life were saved. You go on YouTube you'll find lots of these examples, saved by a split second. So, this is how you know good karma bad karma, so how can you say this is my fate, okay this is the problem.

Distinction between learning & understanding the Dhamma

Just by starting to listen to the Dhamma, can we one day achieve the state of *Sòtàpanna*? Absolutely, if you practice, again I repeat, Learn the Dhamma, understand it and then practice it and then that becomes understanding. So, learn the Dhamma to acquire knowledge but then practice it and then that becomes understanding. Unless you understand the Dhamma, you cannot attain *Sotàpanna*. Learning the Dhamma is not enough to attain *Sòtàpanna*. Acquiring knowledge is not enough to attain *Sòtàpanna*, you have to understand it. To understand it, you have to do *yònisò manasikàra* which is putting into practice what you have learnt.

Sabba rasan Dhamma rasan jinàti

Thank you for posting those questions and for bringing them back up as I requested. I think the *paticca samuppàda* and the *citta viti* questions, it's best if we cover at a separate sermon. Because I think today's sermon, we focused a lot about how does one know when they become a *Sòtàpanna*, how do we know what is the path we need to practice, how do we know you're on the right path. We covered a few of these topics and I think particularly these questions about, thought moments and *avyàkrutha paticca samuppàdaya* etc. You know these are quite deep concepts, these are good for someone who is looking to learn the Dhamma, to preach the Dhamma, to help other people to practice the Dhamma. As I said and I have repeated myself several times on this sermon, you don't need any of this to attain *Sòtàpanna*, *Sakurdàgàmi*, *Anàgàmi*, or *Arahanth*. Remember, when *Assaji mahà rahatan wahansè* met Upatissa, he said, "I don't know much, the only thing I do know is, ***yè Dhammà hètuppabawà thèsanhètu tathàgatòàha.***" That was enough for Upatissa to become *Sòtàpanna*. Remember when the Buddha was going on alms and met *Dàrucìriya* and *Dàrucìriya* said, "Please preach me the Dhamma, so I can become an *Arahanth* quickly" and he said, "***Dittèwa dīta mattan, suthèwa sutha mattan, mutè muta mattan, vinnàtè vinnàta mattan***" which is, what you see is nothing but a sight moment, what you hear is nothing but a speech or a sound moment, what you feel is nothing but a sense moment, what you think is nothing but a thought moment. He's not talking about the *citta viti*, he's not talking

about *paticca samuppàda*. I mean, he is, but he's not going into any detail there. You know that was enough for him to become an *Arahant*.

This is what I'm saying, when we go and study *Abhidhamma*, it's easy to get lost in *Abhidhamma* because *Abhidhamma* is like the laboratory. I'm not saying we should discard the *Abhidhamma* or disregard the *Abhidhamma*. The *Abhidhamma* is important, it's very important. It's important for when we are not sure which one's right or wrong. It's like say, you have some chemical in a body and you don't know what type of chemical this is. You can go into the lab and do some experiments and by doing these experiments, you can work out whether it's chemical type 1, its chemical type 2, its chemical type 3 and so on and so forth. *Abhidhamma* is the laboratory but when you have the chemicals labeled this is sodium hydroxide, this is calcium carbonate and this is something else, etc. etc. you can accept that this is what it is. Because someone else has done all the experiments, why worry about doing those experiments in the laboratory because we don't have the luxury of time to do all of these things. What we need to do is focus on what we have and make use of what we have and get the result that we need. Once you become an *Arahant*, go and study all *Abhidhamma* you like. No problem, because you've done what you need to do. Now your life is not precious to you anymore because you don't need your life anymore, once you become an *Arahant*. But until you become an *Arahant*, be careful about how you practice this Dhamma. This is why I said when you learn the Dhamma, when you listen to the dhamma, remember, **"*Sabba rasan Dhamma rasan jinàti*" - there is nothing more pleasurable than the pleasure and the taste of Dhamma.**" So, when you start learning the Dhamma you want to know more and you then begin to look into *Abhidhamma* books you go ahead and read *sùttas* and you read all of these and you want to explore the Dhamma. It's like walking into a rain forest. When you walk into a rain forest for the first time, you look around and you see the green trees and you hear birds chirping and you see the wildlife, you think, 'Oh my god I want to walk into this, more and more, I want to explore this further, I want to walk deep into the forest.' Sometimes without you knowing, you walk deeper and deeper into the forest and then you get lost in the forest. Remember you entered the forest when it was daylight, now it's evening and then it becomes night. Once it gets dark once it's nightfall you can't find your way back out. Now you are lost in the forest and there's no one to save you.

So especially, if you are practicing, if you're trying to walk this forest, make sure you've got a good teacher with you, otherwise you can get lost. The reason I used the first example is because say, you wanted to get from town A to town B, they are two paths; one path is a straight road but there's nothing to look, you know it's just a normal road and then someone says, you can take a scenic route, another route which is you can go through the forest. If you go through the forest, you are going to see wildlife, you are going to see animals and you are going to see birds and you are going to see, all types of greenery, etc. okay. But that path is not very clear. You are going to have to find the path yourself a little bit and you're going to have to clear the path because people usually take this straight path. So, there will be other

kinds of forest and there will be undergrowth that has covered the path. So, you have to be careful where you go. Most people take the straight path because it's easier and because people walk all the time, it is the path that is most clear. But if you choose the other path you have to go with someone who has been there before, otherwise you can get lost. It's a very thick forest.

Citta viti, thought moments, you and I will never be able to see. These are things we can learn; we can acquire knowledge about but never things we can understand. Why, because only a Buddha can see thought moments, thought moments are *citta viti*, thought cycles. Only a Buddha can see *citta viti*. So, whatever we learn about *citta viti*, we can only take by faith, it's never going to be conviction but what about *panca upàdanaskhandaya*, that we can take by conviction because we experience that. If I tell you, what you see with your eyes, what you hear with your ears, what you smell with your nose, what you taste with your tongue and what you sense with your body is *aniccha, dukkha, anatta*, you can relate to that, why? Because you can think about it and it can make sense to you. But if I start talking to you about how your mind works and all those thought moments, about how your mind changes billion times, every second, you are not sensitive to that. So, you can't respond to that, you can't see that, so you are going to have to just believe me because I'm saying it. So, I could tell you anything I like and you're going to have to accept it. So, this is why you have to be careful.

Now, that's again not to say, don't study the *Abhidhamma*. Of course, you know there's value in doing that, especially if you are interested in teaching someone else and if perhaps you know you are interested in, no harm in that. But I think this is something we should probably do at another time and in a smaller audience where we have just the people who are interested. Because if I start talking about *citta viti* now, everyone's going to fall asleep and people are just going to switch off their computers and they're going to walk away because 99% of people will not be able to understand it, 99% of people will not be interested in it. Why, because they just want to take the short path, why because they have no trust, they don't believe that their life is going to be limitless, they have no idea when they're going to die. So, they just want to get this done as soon as possible. So, you are going to take the short path right.



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