

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 2018-03-25. 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.**

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KEY WORDS

Purpose

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Asath Purusha Sèvanaya

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Today is your last day

Out of all of us I am probably the most unsure and uncertain about life, when my last moment alive is going to be. Because this is the reality that I face every day. Every morning I wake up and think to myself,

'Is today going to be the last day'?

In fact, now I just tell myself this is the last day that I'm going to be alive and then I ask myself,

'How are you going to live the next 24 hours'?

Do you ask yourselves how do you want to live the next 24 hours, if that is the last 24 hours you are going to be alive? That is the reality that we all have to face one day. And the reason we are doing all of these, is to stop that process of rebirth and death. Dying is not fun. But we've all got to face that eventually. That's the reality of living. The reality of living is that living has to come to an end.

As a layperson, I dedicated my life to serving the needs and wants of others in a very material sense. Of course, this sermon right now serves the needs and wants of others, that is the honest truth but it is me doing something that also serves my wants and my needs. What do I mean by that? Well, if you think about it; if you have jobs or you are planning on doing a job one day perhaps, you are at school right now or you are still going through education, then the purpose of going through all that is to one day find yourself a job, and earn a living. To do that, you expend your time and energy on serving the needs and wants of other people; your employer. And yet, sometimes the things that you do are not necessarily things that you enjoy. But you are alive, therefore, you need to make a living and have to do the things that puts bread on your table, a roof over your head, clothes around your body and gets you medicine when you are sick, the resources that help you send your kids to school. All these things we have to do because we are alive and to earn ourselves the means and the resources to do that, we go and serve someone else's wants and needs. It's quite funny when you actually think about it, when we do a job what we are actually doing is, helping someone else out or doing something that another guy does not

like to do, does not want to do. He pays me money, gives me a salary and says, why don't you do it, because I don't really fancy doing that. And I am happily willing to accept that therefore, I dedicate my life to doing the things that someone else does not like doing.

Purpose of your life

Don't you feel that there is something fundamentally wrong with that? Is that the purpose of life? And often we know we keep coming back to this point; **what is the purpose of life?** Because, for me it is about being happy. I always talk about happiness. Happiness is always my number one point of discussion. Because if the things we do, don't lead us to happiness; if our ventures and our exercise does not lead us to happiness, then there is something wrong. And that is why I spent a lifetime trying to be happy. Did all those things that we've talked about in the past, and then discovered they weren't really the things that were making me happy. And as soon as I realized this is all but a delusion, it didn't take me long to renounce that and find true happiness in life.

Are you really happy?

So, I've been thinking, *'how can people actually be happy'*? Because it is becoming more and more obvious to me, that the happiness people look for in life, is very subjective. What do I mean by that? One guy does one thing to be happy, another guy does something entirely different to be happy. Therefore, it's very subjective. It depends on whom you ask. So, you couldn't make a broad assumption about anything; any individual, any occurrence that you can see, hear, taste, smell, touch, etc. that, *'X' makes everyone happy'*, that is entirely untrue. Because it depends on what it is that people like. You'll know from your own experiences, you like one thing one day and then the next day you don't quite fancy that. Or, there's something that you didn't like at some point in life, that you liked later on. When you were a kid your mother wanted to feed you greens or say, Broccoli. Which kid likes to eat Broccoli? But as you grow up you begin to understand that these are things you need, it's got all these nutrients. But none of those things made any sense when you were a kid. It certainly didn't make sense to me when I was a kid. It was just stuff that my mom wanted to shove through my mouth and I had no idea how that made her so happy. And for her happiness I had to sacrifice mine. That didn't seem like a fair world to me. But then,

kids grow up and then you begin to understand that these foods that your parents have been forcing you to eat are nutritious and therefore you have to consume them. And the same food that you didn't enjoy, that didn't make you happy, now makes you happy. And you go seeking them, in fact, you buy them and feed your kids. So, if one says that, '*my kids are my most precious possession*', and if parents try to feed their kids Broccoli, then surely it must be a good thing.

Happiness of letting go

So, it's very subjective, we keep moving the goalposts. By moving the goal-posts, we decide whether we are happy or unhappy. That just seems to me like a very subjective and a very unreal way of being happy. This is why, the only true happiness that anyone can experience, is the happiness in letting go. Because that is ultimate, that is absolute. It's not subjective, it is purely objective. The more you let go, the happier you are. Because, then you don't have the *dukka-dukkha*, the *viparinàma-dukkha*, the *sankàra dukka*, that you have to experience and you have to go through, that you have to undergo to maintain that level of happiness with subjective things.

I use this introduction, because there was a great question that came through on Skype. It was about removing *miccà ditti* and how that helps us walk the path to becoming a Sòtāpanna, and how that helps us? And what is it that we need to do to remove *miccà ditti*.

Samma Ditti & Miccà Ditti

What is *miccà ditti*? Let's keep it simple. I am a great advocate of two things;

1. be happy
2. keep it simple

Because if you are not happy, you are not doing the right thing; you are not serving the purpose of your life. If you are making it overly complicated, if you are making it really complex, then, that will not make you happy. Because happiness should be something, that is simple. The more complicated it is, the more things that start breaking, more things that you have to keep putting together, more things that other people have a vested interest in. This is why, letting go is really simple. There are no moving parts in letting go. There are absolutely no parts in letting go at all.

It is just letting go whatever it is you are holding onto. And that process itself makes you happy. This is why, letting go is the number one way to be happy. But don't take my word for it. You should only accept what makes sense to you.

So, what is *miccà ditti*? **'Wrong view'** is the direct translation of that. But it's also the opposite of *sammà ditti*. *'Sammà'* is an etymology. (Etymology is how words are formed. It's a science that is used in English. If you Google, 'etymology', it'll come up with how words are formed in the English language). In Sinhala, we call this *'pada nirukti'*. *'Pada'* meaning 'word' and *nirukti* meaning the 'etymology'. So, *'sammà'* has a meaning; *'san'* is the *avidyà* and *trushnà*. What does that mean? *'Avidyà'* being ignorance and *'trushnà'* being attachment. **The combination of attachment and ignorance is, 'san'.**

The three types of Dukka

As a simple example, we talk about *sansàra*. When we use these terms, I am giving you the etymology in Sinhala or Pàli. Because these are not English terms. So, *'sammà'*; *'mà'* is to distance oneself from something, to remove something, to keep away or to discard. The meaning of *'ma'*; as in, m-a- is how you pronounce it and *'s-a-m-m-a-'* is how you will probably see *sammà ditti*. This is one of the parts of the Noble Eightfold Path. So, *sammà* is how do you discard, how do you remove, how do you get rid of ignorance and attachment. *'Ditti'* is view. It is how you look at something. What is this 'something' we talk about? How do you look at Dhamma? How do you look at yourself? How do you look at life? If we come to the understanding that happiness is in letting go and if you are ready to accept that, not because I say it, but because it makes sense to you. How is that? It is how, every single item, every little thing you attach to; every person, every occurrence you attach yourself to, bring you *dukkha-dukkha*, *sankàra-dukkha*, *viparinàma dukka*.

Every time we attach ourselves to anything, that is the source of three kinds of suffering. The more I attach to them, the more suffering I bring towards me. Therefore, the more I distance myself from something, the less suffering it brings me. Isn't that simple? If that is not simple, I don't know what is. The more you attach yourself to something, that brings with it, these three

parts which are *dukka-dukkā*, *sankāra-dukkā*, *viparināma dukka*. *Dukka* is suffering. The more you attach yourself to it, you bring closer to you, more suffering. The more you distance yourself from it, the more you are walking away from *dukka*. If the purpose of our lives is to be happy; well, guess what we need to do? Move away from suffering. So, *sammā ditti* is coming to that understanding. It is coming to the realization that, that is how I can attain the Supreme Bliss of Nibbāna. It is by discarding my attachment. I am not talking about physically letting go of things. Remember an Arahant makes use of all kinds of physical objects, all kinds of material things. He has a robe, he's got an alms bowl, he lives in a monastery and he's probably got a 'kutiya' or a chalet, he's probably got a bed. He's got all the necessities; the basic requisites. He has got all of that, but he's not attached to any of it. I am talking about mental attachment, not physical. He can be physically attached to it. 'Attached' in the sense, you are making use of these things. An Arahant doesn't say,

"Hey, I'm no longer attached to my alms bowl, so just put some food on my hands and I'm going to eat it on my palm".

This person is not an Arahant.

If someone says,

"look at me, I'm really simple, I live a very simple life. I don't have any attachments at all and I eat my food on my palm"...

when they have also got an alms bowl. The teaching that the Lord Buddha has given me, tells me that, he is not an Arahant. Someone else might say that he is an Arahant, but that is not The Lord Buddha's definition of one. It is about being realistic, it is about being practical. There is nothing more realistic or nothing more practical than The Buddha's Dhamma.

The world we build

So, *sammā ditti* is to come to the view; to the understanding - to the perspective that, it's letting go that's going to make me happy. This doesn't happen all at once. When you begin your journey on the Noble Eightfold Path, then you practice it by developing elements of *sammā ditti*. For example, you have five percent *sammā ditti*, what do you have 95 percent of? *Miccā ditti*. If you have ten percent *sammā ditti*, what do you have 90 percent of? *Miccā ditti*. Then one day you are going to have 95 percent of *sammā ditti*. Then what do you have five percent of? *Miccā ditti*. And

then, one day you can have one hundred percent of *sammà ditti*. What do you have zero percent of? Well, you've got the answer. Zero *miccà ditti*. And when that happens, you are an Arahant. That is when you have absolutely the right view about all the things that you attached yourself to before, that you used to create and build this world around you. Again, I am not talking about the physical world here. The world that we are talking about is the world we build in our minds. When I was a layman, my wife and I liked to go to restaurants every now and then. Why are we talking about this? Because in practicing Buddhism, in practicing Buddhist teaching, if it is not practical, it is not going to work. It has to be practical. Therefore, we have to use practical examples from our day-to-day lives. So, when we had this thought, '*why don't we go out to eat tonight? Let's go to a restaurant*', one of the things I find myself doing is, going online and reading reviews about restaurants. Which restaurant serves the best food and you generally come across various ways of describing a restaurant. If you have read restaurant reviews, then I am sure you will have come across these plenty times. What are some of the words they use;

...This restaurant has an excellent ambience.

What does that mean? I'm not going to the restaurant to eat 'ambience'. Or, they say,

.... The manager is very friendly, the waiters and waitresses are very attentive and there's an excellent mood in the restaurant. They play some beautiful music and the interior decorations are brilliant; they are outstanding.

These are some of the things people say when they talk about a restaurant. Or they say,

They've got a fine wine list and there's food that's laid out ever so nicely and ever so delicately, it's fine dining, etc...

And I sat there reading the review and thinking, '*I'm going to a restaurant because I'm hungry and that's because I need to put something in my tummy, so I don't feel hunger anymore and none of these things are about feeding my hunger*'. Have you never thought about this? An excellent ambience; how does that feed my hunger? Or,

It's got beautiful music and the interior decor sets an excellent mood, that is perfect for a night out with your best friends or your loved ones.

How does that help satiate my hunger? I don't get it. So, do you not realize, that when people go to a restaurant - I wouldn't say blanket for all people, but most of the time and this is what generally marketed - this is how people lure you into a restaurant. They are not necessarily talking

about the food or the quantity of the food that is being laid out. Because ultimately, why do we eat? I would say there are three reasons. One; because you are hungry, two; because you are going to be hungry, so you don't want to be hungry in a few hours time, so, if you eat now, then you can get on and do whatever it is you need to do. And thirdly; you need to get all the nutrients you need into your body, so you are not going to fall ill. And you can keep away all the diseases and have a good immune system.

But, is that why people actually eat? When you go into a restaurant how often do, they say, 'we've got good portion sizes and these foods will fill you up'? How many different types of food do you need, to put out your hunger? You just need one type of food! Why do you need ten different types of food? Why do they have seven-course meals and ten course dinners? I don't get it, I really don't get it. So, all these things are notions that the world - when I say the 'world', it is the people who live in the world - people make a living out of your suffering, out of your agony, out of your pain and out of your vexation. Does that make sense? People make a living out of your suffering. How does that work? Well, think about it. If you were entirely satisfied with just eating whatever was served on your plate at home; that could just be rice with one curry, or if you like to eat pol sambol and rice; if you could be happy with eating that and you could just repeatedly eat that every day, why would you need to go to a restaurant? How restaurants make their money is, by giving you this idea that you need a new experience. Restaurants can only make money if you are unhappy. Shop owners can only make money, if you are unhappy. Shoe designers; think about it - if you were happy just wearing a pair of flip-flops, and you could wear them to work, you could wear them to school, you could wear them absolutely anywhere and everywhere, then what do you think is going to happen to the shoe designers? They will be out of their jobs.

Let me give you another example. Think about a leisure park. If a kid was perfectly happy at home playing with toys that he may have at home or playing with his brother or sister or just doing whatever it is that kids do these days at home, then how would the people who operate Leisure World, how would people who operate these entertainment attractions make their money? They wouldn't. They wouldn't be able to make a living. They wouldn't be able to quench their hunger.

They wouldn't be able to put a roof over their heads. They won't be able to feed themselves or send their kids to school and they wouldn't be able to cure themselves if they were ill, why? Because, they need to make money and they make money because you are suffering.

Do others make you happy?

People in this world make a living, because, you are suffering. Now, here's the most interesting thing. If that is the case, why do you go after them expecting them to make you happy? Why do you go to Leisure World, expecting them to make you happy, when actually, if you were entirely happy, they wouldn't be able to make a living? They would have to shut down. So, do you think they would like for you to be happy? Do you think they want you to be really happy? Think about it, because if you were entirely happy, if you didn't need anything else to be happy and you were self-sufficient; you had everything you need to be happy right with you, then they would have to shut down. You are going there and asking them to make you happy and yet they don't want you to be entirely happy. If they do, then they would have to shut down. Why do you think they would want to make you entirely happy? What is their interest in trying to make you happy? Do you not see that there's a conflict of interest here? We need to think about these things, because otherwise we just keep doing what everyone's been doing time and again, over and over again.

Can others give you permanent happiness?

So, *micca ditti* is really not spending the time, not being able to reflect and not being able to realize that, this is the reality of the world that we live in. It has a meaning in relation to our journey in sansàra. This is why we continue to travel in sansàra. Because we continue to fool ourselves into thinking that this world can make me happy; the people outside who serve me or who run these entertainment attractions, holiday operators and the tour operators etc.

Another example; think about tour operators. I have nothing against these people and long may they be able to run their businesses, making money out of it and may their businesses be as successful as they can ever imagine. But that does not change the truth. That does not change

the reality one bit, because if you and I were entirely happy with where we are right now, would we ever need to go on holiday? Isn't the reason we go on holiday because we are unhappy, because we are unsatisfied, because we are unfulfilled and then we go to a tour operator or holiday operator and ask him,

"Hey, can you make me happy"?

And he says; *"well, of course, I can make you happy. I can make you absolutely happy"*.

Why would he want to do that? Because if he is able to give me permanent happiness, then he would have to shut down his business, do you see? This is what I want you to think about. Think about this.

Asath Purusha Sèvanaya

Going back to that restaurant where we used to read reviews and in reading comments, what I used to do was, to fill my mind up with all the things that other people in this world thought about that restaurant. As every review I read told me that this is such a great restaurant, is really from my very supra mundane perspective and not talking about worldly existence here. So, we need to take this with wisdom. I am not talking about our existence in this world and continuing it. Clearly that is not our aim or our objective. How do we go beyond what we seek, that is what we are trying to find? Every review I read is really someone telling me, why this great restaurant is such a great place. Why I should go down there. Isn't that really association with immoral and ignoble people? In Sinhala is that not what we call, '**asath purusha sèvanaya**'? If you think about the real reason why you go out to eat or whether you eat at home; well, we've gone one step beyond. You are now at the restaurant, you've gone beyond the, '*I need to feed my hunger*'. In any case, the real reason you are there is to feed your hunger. You are hungry; yes, your stomach is telling you, '*I'm in pain, please help me*'. You have travelled all that way, to not only feed your hunger, but you are feeding your eyes, you are feeding your ears, you are feeding your nose, you are feeding all these other organs which are also in vexation.

Only physical pain is actually real

But that's not real. What do I mean by that? It is only physical pain that is actually real. Does that make sense? It is only physical sensations that are real. There are good physical sensations; pleasurable physical sensations and then there are painful or unpleasurable physical sensations. These two things are very real. There is no doubt about that. If someone comes and hits you, that will hurt whether you are an Arahant or a Prutajjana (a worldly mundane person). It doesn't matter what your mental state is, you will feel that pain. If someone hits you or you knock yourself against something and now someone is applying ointment, in the process of that application, you are feeling good. That is a pleasurable physical sensation. When your mother used to pat you on the head and say, '*you are such a good boy*', that was a pleasurable physical sensation. If you did that to an Arahant, he will feel the same. He will feel the pleasurable physical sensation and he will feel the dis-pleasurable, painful physical sensation.

Manasikàra

What about your eyes? Is that real? If one guy looks at a picture of faeces, he begins to gripe; you can see it in his face that he's really not enjoying this and he wants to look away, but you forced him to look at it. He finds that dis-pleasurable. He finds that painful. And then you show him a picture of someone whom they like or a picture of a holiday that they have been on; their favourite holiday. They are now feeling really happy, looking at the picture. Why is this difference? Is that for real though? What is the eye seeing, except for colour? The eye is not sensitive to anything else other than light. And what does light bring into your eyes? Colour. That is all the eyes are seeing. Everything else that you are actually seeing or looking at, is a product of your mind. Your mind is picking up all these visual sensations, as in colour, and then it's interpreting what it is looking at, by doing all these weird and wonderful things in your mind. This is what we call, '*manasikàra*'. It is doing *manasikàra* in the mind and produces the images which you either like or dislike and that's very subjective. Why does one guy like one girl and the other guy does not like the look of her? Clearly, that is subjective. But if you hit both guys with a stick, it is going to hurt them. There is no question about that. If you've got a bad tooth, doesn't matter whether you are an Arahant or whether you are black or white, tall or short, whether you are Asian or Caucasian, that will hurt you. There is no question about that. But what the girl you want

to get married to looks like; that is very subjective. What kind of house do you like to live in? That's very subjective. What kind of clothes do you like to wear? What is your favourite colour? These are very subjective.

Just take a sunset you look at. That's not really bringing you any kind of pleasurable or displeasurable sensation. Where do we create this pleasurable or dis-pleasurable sensation? We create it in our minds. The same goes for sounds. There are sounds and songs people like, there are songs that people don't like. How is that the case? Some people like rock music, others like classical music, right? So, how is that the case? Because ultimately, all what the ears are picking up is sound, just raw sound. It is picking up frequencies, so it picks up, 'do'- it picks up, 're'- it picks up, 'me'- it picks up, 'fa'- 'so'- 'la' - 'ti' - 'do'. It picks up those frequencies. But it doesn't pick up a song, it doesn't pick up rock music, it doesn't pick up classical music. Rock music and classical music are products of your mind. When that happens, if there is a guy who likes rock music, he's attached to that, and he says;

"Hey, this rock music I like, I like listening to this. And I take pleasurable sensation from this".

The guy who doesn't like to listen to rock music says;

"I don't like this, this doesn't bring me a pleasurable feeling. In fact, it brings me un-pleasurable feeling. Please, could you switch off that music? Have you not got any classical music? Because I really like listening to that".

How can that be the case? Because, if pleasure existed in the object, it shouldn't matter who is looking at it. It shouldn't matter; I'm talking about sight here. If pleasure is in the colour or is in the sight, then it shouldn't matter who is looking at it. It shouldn't be subjective, it should be objective. The reason it's objective is, because it's a function of our minds. It's a function of *ràga*, *dvèsha*, *mòha*; desire, aversion and delusion. In fact, to keep it really simple, it's a function of delusion. As long as we have delusion in our minds, there are things that we like and there are things that we don't like.

Going back to our restaurant, when you go in there, your stomach is telling you that it's hungry, which is very real. Because that is a physical sensation. Does it matter what colour cushions they

have? Can you think of how much pain and effort, the restaurant owner has gone to make sure, that all the cushions match the colour of the tablecloth and the colour of the furniture, the walls and the decor that they have in the restaurant? So, what is that feeding? Is that feeding your hunger? No! It's feeding your eyes. It is known as feeding your eyes, but it's actually feeding your mind. That's what it's feeding and it has got nothing to do with what a restaurant is at all, in the first place. But our minds are asking for this.

Sets of five

What the mind does is, it is taking a set of five *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna* and then discarding it immediately afterwards. Picking up a new set of *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna* and then discarding it immediately afterwards. How long does it keep it? For about one billionth of a second. That's all the mind is doing. So, you are at the restaurant, you order your favourite meal, you had your meal, you looked at the sights, you looked at the sounds, you've smelt all the smells, you've touched all the things you wanted to touch, and you've tasted all the tastes; even taste - ultimately there is no pleasurable taste or an un-pleasurable taste. There is just taste. One guy likes pineapple pizza, the other guy likes cheese and onion pizza. So, how is it that one guy likes one, whereas the other likes another?

What do you think suffering in the hell is like? You are probably thinking, why I am talking about the hells all of a sudden; you'll see the connection in a minute. How do they make you suffer in the hells? Do they take you to the hells and then show you pictures that you don't like? Do they make you listen to songs that you don't like? I mean, you like rock songs and therefore what do they do? They make you listen to classical music - is that how they make you suffer in the hells? Or perhaps, do they make you take in foul smells? Is that how they make you suffer in the hells? What they actually do is, inflict pain on the body by cutting you up, chopping you up, cutting off your fingers, your limbs or by dropping you into a cauldron of fire. Isn't that how they inflict pain in the hells? So, do you see that they can only inflict pain on you by inflicting it on your physical body? If you think about it, if they showed you pictures of faeces; then to stop that suffering all you would have to do is, come to the agreement in your own mind, accept that, '*actually I do*

quite like looking at pictures of faeces. I don't mind that actually, I quite like looking at pictures of faeces', and all of a sudden you are not suffering.

Or perhaps, if in the hells, the way they inflict pain on you is by making you listen to classical music when you enjoy rock music, then the only thing you'd have to do is, just go, '*hey, actually classical music isn't all that bad after all, I quite like classical music*'. And now what happens? Then all that pain will go away, just like that. One guy likes rock music and he is made to listen to classical music. Then that pain is only felt in the mind. That frustration is only felt in the mind and therefore it's not real. It's just a dream. It's like a dream that you wake up from. When you come out of that restaurant what are you left with? Think about it really. You have food in your stomach that is real. You went in hungry and you have come out full. You've eaten your share. So that is very real but what about the sights that you saw? Is any of that left as leftovers - were you able to pack any of that up? What about the sounds that you heard, is any of that left? What about the smells that you were able to take in - do you have any of that left? So, ultimately you are only coming out with the food that you've eaten and less money in your pocket.

Now think about this. If you are coming out with food in your stomach and less money in your pocket, if you are able to do exactly the same thing - which is come out with food in your tummy but with less money lost in the restaurant; what do I mean by that? Let's take an example. You go to restaurant A, which is a really fancy restaurant; all the bells and whistles of fine dining and it's got all that interior decorations and managers who are only too eager to come and talk to you. If they could, they would even come and feed you. Then there are the waiters and waitresses who are so attentive, that you think they might come and walk you home. So, you have got all that and ultimately, when you come out of that restaurant, all you have left is food in your stomach, right? There's no question about that. The sights you saw, the sounds, all that chitchat, you had none of that left. It's all gone. It's like, gone in the wind. But you have the food in the stomach. You went into this fancy restaurant with \$100 and you come out with \$50. So, you have spent \$50 in the restaurant.

Then you go into another restaurant; restaurant B, which is just a usual box standard restaurant. Yes, you had food, it's very clean and the food very healthy. The manager minds his own business. Perhaps it's self-service. So, they don't really have lots of waiters and waitresses, you need to get your own food and they don't have the bells and whistles. It's just plain coloured walls, plain table cloth, plain furniture and they don't really play any music in the restaurant. What do you come out of that restaurant with? Do you still not come out with food in your stomach, but more money left in your pocket? You went to restaurant A with a Hundred Dollars. You came back with 50 Dollars. Restaurant B - which was just a box standard one, you went in with a Hundred Dollars, you come back with \$80; you only lost \$20. And yet you've come out the same way that you went into restaurant A. To earn that hundred units of money, you had to work hard. You worked hard, you toiled, you exerted your body, you exerted energy, you went places, you had to travel on a bus, you had to go on a train, you had to drive there, you had to do all that. And then you had to do what your boss said -you didn't particularly enjoy doing that. You do this to make your boss happy because it's the thing that he doesn't like doing. Therefore, he makes you do it and he pays you money to do it.

Seeking pleasure to please the mind

You have done all these things, so that you could go into restaurant A and come out, in fact, worse off than if you went into restaurant B. Why? Because you've got less money in your pocket. But you've come out with exactly the same result. Who do you think is more successful? Who do you think could be happier? Why do we not think about these things? I used the example of a restaurant, how many other things can you actually relate this to. What about houses? The houses that people build and the houses people like living in these days. Some are almost palaces. I have seen houses that are virtually palaces- six, seven, eight, nine, ten bedrooms. There are only two people living in the house; husband and wife. How many bedrooms? 10 bedrooms. How many bedrooms can you sleep in one night? Why do you need five bedrooms, then? But what about all the hard work that you had to do, to buy or build that house? Did you not sacrifice? The only thing real was the physical sensations. They are real, physical, painful sensations. They are not fake, they are not a dream, you can feel it. If you cut yourself that's going to hurt you. It's

going to hurt you until it heals. But, if you see a picture that you don't like, you move your head away. The mind might still be suffering, but that is the mind suffering. It's not your eyes suffering. This is why, an Arahant doesn't suffer when you show him a picture. They don't have pictures that they like or don't like; it's just a picture. To him, that's all it is.

So, building a 10-bedroom house or buying a 10 roomed house; that requires a lot of energy and effort. Sometimes that is the money that they have earned all their life. Some people take out huge mortgages and they spend a lifetime paying it back. Why? So that they could live in a 10-bedroom house and drive a Mercedes, when the requirement is to get from A to B, which you can do in a Maruti car. You don't need a Mercedes-Benz to do that. And a bed, so you could crash for the night, so you could rest your head on, you could rest your body and just go to sleep, that's all you need. But what about all the pain that you had to suffer, all the pain that you had to endure to get yourself and maintain and keep that 10-bed roomed house? You see, have you not sacrificed the only thing that was real? As in, pleasurable physical comfort of not having to exert your body, not having to inflict pain on your body, just sitting down and relaxing, not having to do anything; did you not sacrifice that to buy a 10 bedroomed house? And yet, what you have now is nothing but a dream. Yes, it's a 10 bedroomed house. But you can only sleep in one bedroom. You can only sleep on one bed. You are not actually satisfying any part of your body by having a 10 bedroomed house. The fact that you have a 10 bedroomed house is nothing but a mental satisfaction. So, why don't you just build yourself a hut and then imagine it is a 10 bedroomed house? You would be happier - you would be a hundred times happier. Just build yourself a mud hut, get yourself a bed; sleep on it and then think to yourself, '*I live in a 10 bedroomed house*'. Get into your Maruti, drive wherever you want to go. Get out of your car and get out as if you're getting out of a Mercedes-Benz. Why can't you do that? Because, ultimately it is just the mind. It is only the physical sensations that are real. Your eyes, your ears, your nose; as in smell and your taste, these four organs and these four sensations whether it's pleasurable or un-pleasurable, are purely subjective. And yet people sacrifice a lot to please the mind by using these organs, by seeking these sensations.

Say, you are asleep and you are seeing a dream. It is a nice dream where you see the person you are in love with. Or you are playing with a toy that you really like or riding the bike that you always wanted your dad to get you. What happens when you wake up? What happened to all those things? Gone! Never to come back. Aren't we all living a dream? Aren't we all sacrificing real happiness for a dream? Isn't this life but a dream?

You see, the other day I was speaking with one of our monks in the monastery and I was saying how sometimes in prisons the kind of punishment that they give, by actually locking people up in a dark room. What they do is, if that's the punishment that fits the crime, they lock up the convict in a prison cell. But unlike normal prison cells, there is no daylight in this cell. In fact, there is no light at all. There is no light bulb. So, it's absolute darkness and there are no sounds. These walls are several meters thick therefore you can't feel any vibrations. You can't put your ear to the wall and hear anything. The only kind of sensations that you receive is what you can feel. Why? Because it's real. You can feel the walls. And then, whenever it's meal time, they put some food on a plate but you can't see the food, because there is no light, so you just take whatever that it is being served. You can't talk with anybody. Sometimes this can be for days or weeks or even months or maybe years.

We are all prisoners

Do you know what this does to people? It makes them go crazy, makes people go mad. There are plenty of stories where people locked up in dark rooms went mad. Just do a quick Google search, to see how people who were locked up in these cells went mad. Why does that happen? The mind is always looking to take in new sensations. The mind is looking for what? You should know this now. It is looking for *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*. Mind is looking for this and the mind wants to take in *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*; the five aggregates, from the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue and the body. Well obviously, you can't take away sensations from the body unless you put someone in a coma and that's when they stop feeling sensations on their body. So, you need to keep them awake but take away all the sights, sounds, smells and take away taste; you get taste when you eat the food but I think the food that is served is also very

bland. It's enough to keep you going, it's got all the nutrients and it's nourishing, but it's very bland food. So, there's no variety in the taste that you can experience there. This is the kind of pain that they give you. This is the punishment they inflict upon you.

When I was talking about this with a monk in the monastery, I was telling them, they'd better not invite us to this prison to give these people a talk. They'd better not invite any monk or any layperson who understands this Dhamma; the fact that the mind is nothing but a machine, nothing but just taking in *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*; one set of five, the second set of five and next set of five, the next set of five, they better not bring anyone who preaches that this is all that existence is. The moment we go into a prison, we can only tell them the truth and nothing but the truth. So, if I were to go and speak at a prison, my sermon to them would be,

'what you do in a prison and what I do outside is exactly the same. There's nothing different. Why do you think you're locked up in a prison? You know your mind's doing exactly the same thing. Taking in sets of five. You think I am NOT in a prison and I am a free man? What am I doing? Taking sets of five'.

And also locked up in that dark room, it's only the body that is feeling real sensations. So, whether I am in a dark room or not I am feeling bodily sensations. The prisoner locked up in a dark room is feeling sensations. Now, the things that they see... well they obviously don't see, because there is no light in the dark room; that is the form of the punishment. If I had the opportunity to speak to someone like that I would just say,

'well, whatever you see, whatever you hear, whatever you taste, whatever you smell is only a dream. The next moment that sight or that sound or that taste or that smell is taken away from you. It's just gone in the wind. So why bother working hard'?

In fact, aren't you and I working harder than that man in the prison? How is that? Because you and I are taking in input from our eyes, we are taking in sounds through our ears, we are taking in taste through our tongue, we are taking in smells through our noses and we are also taking in physical sensations. Between us and the person imprisoned in a dark room, they are taking in taste when they are being fed and then they are taking physical sensations because they can feel. They can touch and they can feel. But three things; sights, sounds and smells they are not taking.

So, the mind does not have to work hard to interpret those signals. We are working harder than them.

Disillusioned mind

Thinking about that, I think I feel more imprisoned than the man in the prison cell. I feel that I am stuck in a cage and not the man in a dark room. He has got it better than I have. He has got it better than we all have, does he not? Aren't we all really stuck in a cage? In this cage, where the punishment that we have to endure is, we have to take in sights, we have to take in sounds, we have to take tastes and smells and we have to take the physical sensations, because our mind is functioning, our bodies are functioning. Our minds are not able to interpret sights and sounds at a very fundamental level. Think about a TV screen; if you walk up to a TV screen really up close, you'll be able to see pixels on it. Or on your computer monitor, if you're sitting in front of one. If you move your head really close to your screen, you will see that there are pixels. There are red, green and blue pixels. So, what the mind is actually receiving or what your eyes are actually doing is, picking up tiny figments, tiny fractions of light and then sending them through your brain to make a mental snapshot on your mind. And the mind takes one mental snapshot and it tries to interpret what it's looking at. It's not able to interpret it. Therefore, it takes in a second mental snapshot. What is the second mental snapshot? The second bit of light that came through your eyes and then the third bit of light that came through your eyes, the fourth bit of light that came to the eyes, and then, guess what happens? Your ears start hearing something as well. Now your mind has to stop seeing and it's got to divert its attention to listening. Now it takes in one bit of sound, the second bit of sound, the third bit of sound and then all of a sudden you are tasting something or smelling something and now the mind needs to stop hearing and got to start smelling.

Aren't you really stressing your mind out? You are really making me work hard, none of which the guy stuck in a prison has to do. Between that guy and you and I, who is actually suffering? Who is actually experiencing real pain? Who is being punished? Don't you see that actually it's we who are being punished, not the guy in the prison? The only reason that he feels he's being

punished and why conventionally that we say it's him who is being punished, is because the mind is looking. The mind is only satisfied when it takes in the five aggregates. And to take in the five aggregates; to produce these five aggregates, it is constantly looking for sights, sounds, smells, tastes and physical sensations. But that is because the mind is restless. That is because the mind is ignorant. That is because the mind is disillusioned and therefore if that imprisoned man were to understand this Dhamma, if I were able to have one moment with that man, I would explain to him;

'Hey, Mr. Prisoner, you don't realize do you, that you are actually a free man. You are actually suffering less than all of us outside in the world. What is your problem? You thought you had a problem? What about all the sights that I have to see?'

What is Niròdha Samàpatti?

Why does an Arahant observe *Niròdha-Samàpatti*? Think about it. Why does an Arahant try to stop the mind that takes in the five aggregates? It's because it's a very taxing, it's a very painful, it's an arduous thing - you have to do it, you can't stop doing it. This is what you need to understand. The point we were discussing is that, the only pain that is real, is a pain that we feel in our physical body. Everything else is very subjective. It is a subjective pain and it is a subjective pleasure as well, that is the other side of the coin. It's because you established the two sides of the coin, so you now have the good side and the bad side. You only got heads and tails because you've got the coin in the first place. If you didn't have a coin, you'd have no heads and you'd have no tails. Likewise, if you didn't have an expectation, if you didn't have a desire on anything, then it wouldn't really matter what colour the world is. If you didn't have a favourite colour, then you wouldn't be happy or sad when someone shows you a colour. If you didn't have a favourite kind of music, then you wouldn't be happy or sad when someone either allows or not allow you to listen to a music. If you didn't have a favourite smell, say a perfume, then you wouldn't be happy or sad because of an external factor.

Anicca world

The reason we are talking about this is, because people live life expecting that happiness is outside. Therefore, they want to experience happiness from the outside world. In trying to do so, they establish happiness and unhappiness. And the moment you do that, remember, the world is 'anicca'; the world is not to your liking. Whether you like rock music or classical music is not a factor that determines what kind of music you are going to hear next. Whether you like red or blue is not a factor that determines what colour you are going to be seeing next. What colour you see next is dependent on the causes that give rise to the result or the effect. What music you are going to hear next is preconditioned. What smells you are going to take the next, is preconditioned. It's all preconditioned. Because its conditions that give you the result. Of course, what physical sensations you are going to take in next, is also preconditioned. But whether it's to be painful or pleasurable is not subjective. It doesn't matter if someone hits me or hits you or hits anyone else, we will all feel pain in exactly the same way. So, in trying to attain Nibbàna, one could ask a question, *'well, the sights that I see and whether that's pleasurable or painful is a function of what I determined to be painful or pleasurable, right? I can determine whether I choose black or white, whether I choose red or blue, okay? I can make a choice about whether I like rock music or classical music. If I like rock music and someone plays classical music then I don't like it, right, I get all of that'*. And then you are probably thinking, if physical pain is real where do I go? What can I do about that? Well, that is why we talk about Nibbàna. That is why we say, we have to attain Nibbana. This is why we talk about the *Sòtàpanna palaya*; the fruit of *Sòtàpanna*, Why? Because if you attain the fruit of *Sòtàpanna*, where do you not go after that? The hells.

Seeking pleasure in the outside world

Take a dog in the 'Thirisan lòkaya', 'Thirascàna yoni'; In the animal hell. When we talk about a dog and we talk about how a dog suffers, what are some of the examples that we use? Think about when a dog's feeling hungry, when a dog gets a headache. Don't dogs get headaches? Of course, they do. How many times have you taken a pet to the vet and said?

"what's wrong with my pet? It keeps crying from time to time every day, can you please let me know what's wrong with it"?

and they examine the animal head to tail and go,

"absolutely nothing, there's nothing wrong with this animal."

So, it's feeling something that a vet can't observe. Animals feel pain. There's no question about that. And then sometimes we talk about how an animal has wounds; wounds that are infested. Do you ever hear people say, 'well, I saw a dog and it was really suffering'? Why? Because it was being shown pictures that he didn't like. Or do you ever hear someone saying, 'well, I saw this dog and I could tell that it was really suffering'. Why? Because it was made to listen to sounds that it didn't like? No! the pain that an animal experiences, whether as a human or a four-legged animal is; if it's real pain, if it's real discomfort, if it's real un-pleasurable sensations, then it's those that are received through the body. What we are trying to establish here is the fact that everything else, all the other sensations that we, in our own minds determined to be pleasurable or un-pleasurable, these are the sights, the sounds, the smells and the tastes are products of our own imagination and our minds. It's our minds that determine whether a sight is pleasurable or not, whether a sound is pleasurable or not, whether a taste or a smell is pleasurable or not. The point is to give your eyes pleasure or to give your mind pleasure through your eyes, to give your mind pleasure through your ears, to give your mind pleasure through your nose, to give your mind pleasure through your tongue.

Think for a moment about how far you've gone? How much pain did you inflict on yourself? How hard did you work? How many hours did you labour? How many hours did you sit in a plane unable to turn left or right, so you could go and look at all these pictures? How many hours have you travelled in a car when you go on holiday? Say, you want to go to a beach that is 50 kilometres away. You got to sit in a car and travel there. Have you never felt the pain on your back? What about when you are at the movies? In the cinema? You've got your eyes wide open, you are looking at some pictures on a screen; you are listening to the sounds coming from the speakers. What about your body? Sometimes you are watching a movie and you don't want to get up. Your mother says, '*Son, come and eat*', and you are starving right now, but you are not prepared to get up. Why? Because your eyes want to see these pictures. Your eyes and ears want to enjoy,

want to take pleasure from the things you are seeing and hearing on television, when ultimately, all that is but a dream.

Renunciation

Why do you do this to yourself? Are you trying to be happy? Do you not want to be happy? Then why pursue happiness in a dream? What about the life that I live then, as a monk? Having renounced now, trying to cure my madness; Isn't a life where you are prepared to sacrifice physical comfort to gain pleasure, is nothing but a dream? Isn't that the life of a lunatic? Isn't that the life of a madman? Isn't that the life of a crazy person? When I understood that, that's what I wanted to cure. I realized I'm mad, I realized I was a lunatic, I realized I was a crazy person. That's what I'm trying to cure now. That's what I'm trying to treat now.

Do you not live a dream?

So, think about it. You might be living a comfortable lay life right now. You might have a 60 inch or 70-inch television. You might have yourself a PS4. You might have yourself a Hi-Fi audio system and the latest computers and gadgets. Because of all these things you have to endure *dukkha-dukkha, sankhàra-dukkha, viparinàma-dukkha*. Put all that to a side, even if you forgot all of that for a moment, do you not realize that the reason you are using all these devices, the reason you bring all these things home and keeping them with you is, so that you can please your eyes, you can please your ears. Am I not right? Do you not live a dream? Are you not living a dream, I mean if you think about it, really, how many hours do you sleep in a day? Do you think you sleep for six hours? Some people sleep for 4 hours, 6 hours, 8 hours, 10 hours, but I would argue that you are actually sleeping 24 hours a day. You are all sleeping 24 hours a day, just like I was sleeping 24 hours a day. How come? Because, when I was actually sleeping on my bed I was dreaming and when I was awake all the things that I was doing trying to please my eyes, my ears, my nose, my tongue, I was dreaming, why? Because all those things I took in were nothing but *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. It lasted one flash, it lasted one moment and then disappeared, never to come back again. When you wake up from your dream, all that's left is a memory of the dream

that you had. Can you see that dream again? Never! Can you live that dream again? Never! Why? Because it's just a memory.

Well, what about the life that you live? What about the hours that you stay awake after you've woken up from sleep? Isn't that a dream? If so, how many hours do you sleep in a day? When someone asks you, '*how many hours do you sleep in a day*'? shouldn't your answer be, '*actually thinking about it, I sleep all day*'. This is why I realized that this precious life that I've got I can't be spending sleeping all day. When my physical body wants sleep, it's for real. Body needs sleep because it needs to repair itself, because the body needs to excrete the things that it doesn't need; the waste - all those biochemical processes that happen inside the body. It does all of that. It repairs itself and rejuvenates itself, while I'm asleep. Fair enough, it needs a certain amount of sleep and that's the body telling you that it needs sleep, no question. Physical pain, physical pleasure is for real. But everything else?

The four requisites

The Buddha talks about the four requisites. The four things that a monk needs; food, shelter, clothing; as in robes and medicines. All these four things are to cure what? Is it the eye? Is it the ear? Is it the nose? Is it the tongue? No! It's to satisfy physical discomfort. Why? Because physical discomfort is what is real. What about all the other discomforts? What about the sights that makes me unhappy? What about the sounds that makes me unhappy? What about the tastes and the smells that make me unhappy? Well, The Buddha with his infinite compassion, gave me something to cure those frustrations and pains as well. What was that? The Dhamma. He gave us the Dhamma. He said these four requisites are to cure real pains and real illnesses. And the Dhamma? That's to cure your madness. You are a lunatic, you are a crazy person, you are a mad person, He told me. Here is the Dhamma, now go treat yourself.

Think about this. Let's say you are a construction worker. And the job pays you a Hundred Dollars for every hour that you work. If you work ten hours in real life you get a Thousand Dollars. How many hours do you need to work in your dream world to earn the same amount of money? 10 hours? 12, 50, a hundred hours? Are you ever going to earn that money? No matter how many

hours you build in your dream world, you are not going to earn anything. Why? Because it's a dream. This is why the happiness that you are trying to seek in your lives, if it's all but a dream, then you are never going to be happy doing that. You are never going to achieve true happiness by doing that.

Wake up from your dream

This is why I'm making a plea to you. Open your eyes, wake up from your dreams, realize that you are living a dream, realize that the happiness you are trying to pursue, the happiness that you are trying to reach, is one that you are trying to do in your dreams. The sights you try to see, that you think will give you happiness, is nothing but a dream. It was just a flash that gave you *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna* and that was it, it was gone. To continue to get *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*, what you have to do is, to keep looking at that object. And yet, ultimately it doesn't matter whether you look at a picture that you like or you look at a picture that you don't like. What your mind's doing is purely, *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna*. Even if that *vèdanà* is a '*sukka vèdanà*', which is a good feeling, a good sensation, that only lasts one flash of a moment. What about the next moment? It's gone!

You are living a dream (Example)

Let's take the example, where there are two pictures; one is a picture of faeces and the other is a picture of a flower you really like. If you were forced to look at the picture of faeces for an hour, how long do you have to keep looking at the picture of the flower before you feel that you no longer have the displeasure? You are looking at the picture of the faeces and that is a painful sensation, why? Because the mind has a notion that looking at faeces is painful;

'I don't like that, that's painful.'

Okay. If you've been staring at that picture for one hour, how long then do you have to keep looking at the picture of the flower before you feel that,

'Okay, I'm all right now'.

That pain has now gone. I no longer feel the pain of looking at the picture of the faeces'? Well of course, you realize that you only saw that picture of whatever you didn't like for as long as the picture was in front of you. Your eyes were open and your mind was sending signals from your eyes to your brain, perceiving that you are looking at this picture. the moment that picture was taken away or you close your eyes, your minds goes into a coma; then you're no longer seeing that picture and therefore you can come to the conclusion that, all my mind did was taking in *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*. When I was looking at that picture of the faeces, it was producing *dukka vèdana*; as in painful *vèdanà* or painful sensations. When I was looking at the picture of the flower that was giving me *sukka vèdanà* or pleasurable sensations. The two don't go into an equation. I can't give my mind more of one to take away the pain of the other. I can't take in more of the pleasurable, so that the pain of having looked at the picture that I didn't like goes away. It doesn't work like that. The reason it doesn't work like that is, because when you were looking at the picture of the faeces or the picture you didn't like, it was nothing but a flash. It didn't leave anything, there was nothing left over. And yet, we dedicate our lives to look at pictures, to listen to sounds, to take in smells and tastes that we like. Ultimately, the mind is only interested in *rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankhàra, vinnàna*, which lasts for one flash of a second and then it's gone.

You are living a dream

Isn't this life, but a dream? Do you want to live a dream? You are working so hard, you are investing your time; precious time, time that you will never get back. Every moment of life that passes away, you are not getting it back. Doesn't matter what age you are. Doesn't matter how healthy you are, whether you are young or old, whether you are black or white, every moment of life that passes away is a precious moment of life that is never ever going to come back. And yet you are freely, and readily throwing away these precious moments living a dream. Should we not take a moment to understand what is it that we are doing? All these moments that you live, whether it is a dream or awake, 24/7 you are living a dream. 24/7 X 365 days a year, you are living a dream. I ask you to wake up. I tell you to open your eyes and look. I tell you to go and look in a mirror, not look through the window. I tell you to point your finger at the person in the mirror,

not at the person in the window and I ask you to have a conversation with that person. I ask you to have an honest and open conversation with that person.

Saddhammò Parama Durlabò

The Buddha says;

Durlabanca manussattèna – Buddhòtpàda dullaban

Durlaban khana sampatti – Saddhammò parama durlabò

What does He mean by that?

He says; It's very rare to be born a human, it's very rare to be born in the era of a Sammà Sambuddha. The birth of a Sammà Sambuddha is very rare. And to be born in an era where the Sammà Sambuddha is alive and his Dhamma is alive is very rare. And then he says, what is extremely rare is the Dhamma itself. '*Saddhammò parama durlabò*'. Tell me do you not have all of these things? Have you not been born a human? Do you not feel fortunate? Do you not feel that what you have today; this human birth is priceless? Do you not have The Buddha's Dhamma? Have you not been born in an era of The Gautama Sammà Sambuddha? Do you not realize how fortunate you are? Have you not received the Dhamma? Do you not receive the association of a *kalyàna mitra*; a noble person; a noble friend? Yes, perhaps you don't get to meet *kalyàna mitras* face-to-face. But at least you get to listen to them, whether it's on the television or the radio or the Internet. A few years ago, this Dhamma was not available in other languages other than Sinhala. But today, there are monks who preach in English. And Dhamma that helps you attain Nibbàna is available online and on popular media. Do you not realize how lucky you are? If you've been so fortunate, how precious do you think every moment of your life is? Why do you think a consultant doctor is paid more than a standard doctor who has just passed with a MBBS? A consultant specialist doctor gets paid more because they are rarer. Why do you think gold is more expensive than iron? It's because gold is rarer. Why do you think diamonds are the most expensive? Because, diamonds are the rarest. So, if The Buddha says, '*manussattèna durlaban*'- being born a human is rare; if He says, the birth of a Sammà Sambuddha is rare; if He says, '*durlabanca kana sampatti*' - to be born in the era of Gautama Sammà Sambuddha is rare and if He says, '*Saddammò parama durlabò*', the Dhamma which helps you attain Nibbàna is extremely rare, to have received all four of these things, how precious do you think your life is? Think about

this, please. These precious moments of life that you can dedicate towards enlightening yourself. The precious moments of life that you have, that you can use to rid yourself of the causes that have been taking you to the hells for all this time in sansàra.

Remember, The Buddha says that, the four hells are where most animals, 99.999% of them, spend the most time in sansàra. But today you are born a human. You've got a chance; you really have the chance. This most unique and most precious opportunity. Your life is precious, your life is priceless. Think about it. Think about what you want to do with this life. Don't just live someone else's agenda. As I said at the beginning, the world is not trying to make you happy. You think it's trying to make you happy, it's a delusion that they put into your head. It's fake. The reason they do that is because, for as long as you are unhappy, for as long as you remain unsatisfied, disappointed and frustrated with your lives; guess what the world can do? Make money *off* you.

Taking Refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha

Restaurants are open today, because you are not happy just eating whatever you can find at home. Entertainment attractions are open today, because you are not happy just sitting at home; you want to go and see movies, go to a musical concert, go to a play centre, right? This is why the world is operating; this is why the world is running. For as long as you are unhappy, the world is going to be happy. So, for you to think that, *'I can go to the world and expect the world to make me happy'*, don't you think something's wrong there? Because, if you were really happy, the world would have to shut down. Think about the funeral directors. I know this might sound like a crude example. But this is the truth. We can only talk the truth. How do you think a funeral director can be happy? Is a funeral director happy when everyone in your family is happy or when everyone in your family is unhappy? He is happy because you've just lost your most beloved family member. That's how they make their money, when people die. Then, is the world any different? Doesn't the world make money off, of your suffering? Isn't the whole world full of funeral directors? Think about this. Ultimately no one comes to your salvation. It's not the money that you've earned that's going to save you or liberate you. It's not the number of properties you have or the cars you have. It's not how much money you have in your bank account that's going

to save you. That's not what's going to give you the salvation that you look for. The only salvation you have, the only refuge you have is The Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. That is why when we worship the Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha we say,

'Nattimè saranan annan - Buddhò mè saranan waran'

There is no one else who can be my refuge, other than The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. We've talked about the meaning of the word Saranan. In fact, there's a sermon on YouTube, so I would encourage you to go and listen to it, if you haven't already. 'Saranan'; the loose translation is, 'refuge'. But it has a much deeper meaning, a much more profound meaning. This is the only way we can free ourselves from the shackles of sansàra. So, let us all strive to do that. In this opportunity that we have, where we have all been born human; where we all have been born in the time of The Buddha, remember this is a '*Buddhòtpàda kàlaya*' as in, this an era where a Buddha was born and where His Dhamma prevails. The Buddha claimed that His Dhamma will last 5,000 years. So, if a Buddha has claimed that His Dhamma will last 5,000 years, it's not going to last a day after 5,000 years. His word is final. We have already consumed two thousand six hundred and fifty of those years. This is the last chance we have; this is the last lot that we have left.

Remember diamonds were precious because they are rare. When we had five thousand years left, every year is precious. But now you only have 2,350 years left. How much more rare do you think every year is? How much more rarer do you think every month is? How much more rarer and precious do you think every day is? Every hour, every minute, every second? Do you want to spend that time sleeping? Do you want to spend that time dreaming? Or is it time to wake up? Is it time to open your eyes, understand that the happiness you are looking for in this world is all but a dream? Then do something about it; it's time to act. If you don't do it now you will lose this human birth, you will lose the time of The Buddha's era and you will lose the Dhamma. And when that happens nothing or no one will come to save you. Don't wait for that day to come. Act today!

Gaining merit

There was once a man, who goes to The Buddha and asks,

"Venerable Sir, how much merits can someone gain by offering alms"?

and the Buddha replies,

"if you offer alms to a lay person or a worldly mundane person who is not at all virtuous, that is a hundred times better than offering food to an animal. If you offer the same amount of food to someone who is virtuous, but this is not someone who is an Àrya-. remember a Non Àrya is someone who is virtuous. A virtuous human being is a thousand times better, he acquires thousand times more merit than offering the same food to someone who is not virtuous. And then, if you offer that food to someone who is on the path to becoming a Sòtàpanna, that is a million times greater in merit; a million times greater in merit than offering the same thing to a virtuous person. And then if you offer the same food to someone who is Sòtàpanna, then that is a million times more merit than offering it to someone who is on the path to becoming a Sòtàpanna. So, you get the idea. And He continues that and says, ultimately if you offer food to an Arahant, then that is a million times more meritorious than offering that to someone who is on the path to become an Arahant".

And then He says,

"if you offer food to a Paccèka Buddha that is a million times more meritorious than offering food to an Arahant. If you offer that food to a Sammà Sambuddha, that is a million times more meritorious than offering the same food to a Paccèka Buddha. If you offer the same food to the Mahà Sangha; not thinking about one person or not offering the food to a Sammà Sambuddha, but actually offering it to the Mahà Sangha, which includes the Sammà Sambuddha and all the monks, Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis and the upàsaka-upàsikas. If you bear all of them in mind and offer a meal or anything really, that is a part of the four requisites to the Mahà Sangha, then that is a million times more meritorious than offering it to a Sammà Sambuddha".

and then He says,

"if you practice Àrya Maithriya; that is the noble compassion; for the time it takes for someone to sniff a flower, that is a million times more meritorious than offering

alms to the Mahà Sangha. If you practice anicca, dukka, anatta for one flash of a second, one split second, the time it takes for a bolt of lightning to hit the earth; if you practice anicca, dukka, anatta for just one tiny moment, the merit that you acquire is a million times more than practicing noble compassion".

And then he stops there. Is there anything that is more meritorious than practicing *anicca, dukka, anatta*? How can one practice *anicca, dukka, anatta* without understanding what it is? Therefore, if you help someone or if you encourage someone to do that, if you contribute in some way shape or form to help someone learn about *anicca, dukka, anatta* and practice it, are you not contributing to that meritorious deed? Don't you feel that you are going to benefit from that as well? How much merit do you think you will acquire from that? Because you help them to practice the most meritorious deed ever. People help other people to offer alms at the temple. I'm sure you all have done that at some point. You go to the temple; it's your friend who is offering alms or your brother, your sister or another family and you go with them. You help them, help prepare the food or sometimes you just help serve the dishes, you help with washing up or perhaps sweeping the temple at the end of it. Because you understand it acquires merit.

Spread the Dhamma

What about if you help someone to practice *anicca, dukka, anatta*? In The Buddha's words, this is the most meritorious thing that anyone can ever do. This is why we say, do whatever you can, to spread this Dhamma, to disseminate this Dhamma. If you understand this Dhamma, then please speak to other people. Talk and preach what you know. Don't talk about what you don't know. Don't talk about what you don't understand fully. But talk about what you know, preach what you know, help other people understand what you know. And then they might ask you questions and you'll think,

'actually, I don't quite understand this',

Then excellent! Great! Because you've just realized that there are gaps in your understanding. What do you do then? You go and speak with someone who can help you uncover that. You can go and speak to a monk at your temple or you can forward a question to us and we can pick those

things up. All these things will help you attain Nibbàna. So, don't let go of those opportunities easily. Make the most of it.



- 00.00.06 Paying homage to the Lord Buddha
- 00.01.20 Inviting all beings to rejoice in this meritorious deed
- 00.04.36 Seeking forgiveness from the Àryas
- 00.06.35 Start
- 00.10.27 Today is your last day
- 00.14.35 The purpose of your life
- 00.15.40 Are you really happy?
- 00.20.15 Happiness is subjective
- 00.22.40 Happiness of letting go
- 00.24.02 Samma Ditti & Miccà Ditti
- 00.26.40 The three types of Dukka
- 00.31.17 The world we build
- 00.41.59 Do others make you happy?
- 00.43.23 Can others give you permanent happiness?
- 00.45.25 Asath Purusha Senanayake
- 00.46.12 Only physical pain is actually real
- 00.50.00 Manasikàra
- 00.57.05 Sets of five
- 01.06.07 Seeking pleasure to please the mind
- 01.15.58 We are all prisoners
- 01.21.10 Disillusioned mind
- 01.25.43 What is Niròdha Samàpatti?
- 01.27.48 Anicca world
- 01.31.07 Seeking pleasure in the outside world
- 01.36.05 Renunciation
- 01.37.08 Do you not live a dream?
- 01.41.20 The four requisites
- 01.46.04 Wake up from your dream
- 01.47.12 You are living a dream (Example)
- 01.50.40 You are living a dream

01.59.45 Saddhammò Parama Durlabò
02.05.40 Taking Refuge in Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha
02.14.46 Gaining merit
02.20.00 Spread the Dhamma

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