

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 2018-06-17. 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

Flashes of light

Meditation

Sunàtha

Dhàrètha

Charàtha

Damsak pevathum sùtta

Jhanas

Samma ditti / stream enterer

The noble eightfold path

Rash

Scratch

Ointment

Medum pilivetha

Majjima patipada

Meditation postures

Stanza / gatha

Asàrè sàra mathinò

Nekkhamma

Four

Tsunamis

MEDITATION - WHERE SHOULD I START?

17 June 2018

Kin Saccha Gavèsi

Remember, The Bòdhisattva on his quest in sansàra came through that infinitely long journey looking for just one thing. *Kin saccha gavèsi*. It wasn't *kin Nibbàna gavèsi*. It wasn't *kin Arahatta gavèsi*. It was *kin saccha gavèsi*. You are all Bòdhisattvas, each and every one of you. Do you not want to become an Arahant one day? If not, what is the purpose of listening to these sermons? Because, we don't talk about the path to heaven. So, if that is your aim, then these sermons are quite literally useless to you. Whenever I sit on this seat, I talk to you about the essence-less nature of existence. Wherever in these 31 realms of existence, be that in the Brahma worlds, the dèva worlds, the human world; well, clearly you don't need any detailing about the Prètha worlds and the Asura worlds and the hells, or the *thiras jàna yòni*, the animal worlds. But it's quite easy for people to set expectations and want to be born again in the human world.

Dèva & Brahma Worlds

I can guarantee, beings in the Dèva worlds do exactly the same thing. They want to be born again and again in the Dèva worlds. Beings in the Brahma worlds do exactly the same thing. They want to be born again and again in the Brahma worlds. Now because you know of the Dèva worlds, you know of the Brahma worlds, and you've been told as a young student of the Dhamma, as a young scholar, that there is less suffering in the Dèva worlds, much less suffering in the Brahma worlds. Well, you want all those people around you to be with you and also be born in the Dèva worlds and also to be born in the Brahma worlds. So, humans try to be Dèvas, Dèvas try to be Brahmas. And if you go speak to the Brahmas what do they want to do? Actually, they want to attain Nibbàna.

So, we've kind of taken the long way around. But regardless of what it is that you might have set your hopes and goals on, if you come to listen to one of these sermons, I am NOT going to talk to you and praise about the Dèva worlds. Because of that in my opinion it's pointless. According to my masters teaching, the Lord Buddha, there is no place in this universe, in these 31 realms of existence, where He said, *'if you go there you can be happy and that happiness is everlasting'*.

Sunàtha Dhàrètha Charàtha

This is about how you act, how you conduct yourself, your thoughts, your speech and your actions. Because if you don't do that, then listening to sermons itself is not going to do much - *sunàtha dhàrètha charàtha* - "Monks, listen! listen carefully. Seek my advice, bear what is that I tell you. Remember what it is that I teach you. Now go forth and act. Put what you've learnt into action". Because if it was enough for you to just listen, The Buddha would have just said *'sunàtha, off you go'*. But He didn't say that, did He? If it was enough for you to just listen and bear, He would have said "*sunàtha dârètha*", *'off you go'*. He didn't say that, did He? He said *sunàtha, dârètha charàtha*; listen, bear and act. Because only if you do all three of these things can you actually begin to see a change in your lives.

Seeing flashes of light in meditation

Now, I know that from speaking to a lot of you, because you know you come and speak to me at the end of sermons from time to time. You share your experiences with me. Sometimes you send through emails to the organizers. And they sometimes share what you send thorough to them with me. It's great to see that you are doing all these three things. What I'm beginning to see over the last few weeks is, I'm beginning to get quite a few questions about meditation. Because I understand that you listen, you bear and now you want to act. And the conventional way of acting in The Buddha's dispensation according to what most people think is, you listen to a sermon, now you go somewhere sit under a tree or in your bedroom, wherever the case might be, you sit cross-legged and now you start meditating. Because we're all so keen to do that because that's what we've known Buddhism to be. You know when someone says Buddhism, what picture comes into your mind generally? It could be The Buddha. Well, if not, it will be a monk who sits in the meditation posture. Isn't that the

case? Because, this is what we've learned Buddhism to be. To put into action what you've learnt, we take today as to be sitting cross-legged and starting meditation. Now I've got nothing against that by the way. It's a good thing to do. And for those of you who practice meditation will be able to share, I'm sure with me, experiences that you might have had, most of which will be quite positive, which is great. And you'll come and tell me;

"You know Swàminwahansa, I don't get angry like I used to, thanks to the meditation that I do."

"I'm able to control myself unlike the way I used to be, when people come and shout at me."

"I'm able to control myself when people come and try to instigate ràga, dwèsha, mòha in me,"

which is great.

But from time-to-time people come and tell me,

"Swàminwahansa, I'm beginning to see certain flashes of light. I'm beginning to see various colours."

You get the full spectrum, which is fascinating, especially to listen to and share those experiences. By the way, I'm not having a go at anybody. I'm being very forthright with you. Because I want to make sure that you travel the right path. I want to make sure that this investment of time that you do here is worthwhile. We all came to the conclusion that what we want to achieve is not become Arahants. We don't want to attain Nibbàna. We just want to see the truth. And you all agree with me on that point. So, if you all want to see the truth, do you have to meditate for that? Is meditation what you want to do, or is it seeing the truth that you want to do?

I am heading towards Nibbàna taught by Lord Buddha

Last week a lady came and spoke with me at another venue. She said,

"I've been taking meditation lessons from several monks, and I've been going through to several programs" and she says, "so I'm beginning to see these flashes of light. What do I do now? I'm seeing yellow flashes of light from time to time then blue and sometimes red. Now I'm not sure where do I go from here."

So, when you ask me that question, and if you are planning on asking me that question, I'll answer you right now and straightaway. I don't know. If you come and ask me "I'm starting to see flashes of light. What do I do now?" I'm sorry, I really don't know what you should do right now. If that is the case, if you are starting to see flashes of light, then you will have to go and

Speak to whoever who gave you advice to practice that kind of meditation which resulted in you seeing flashes of light. Because the only Dhamma that I have permission to speak when I sit on this Dharmàsanaya, when I sit on this chair, which belongs to The Lord Buddha, is what appears in the Tripitakaya, what The Buddha taught in the Tripitakaya. In my study of the Tripitakaya, I have not come across any teaching where He speaks of flashes of light when you start practicing meditation; the yellow light, blue light, red light, green light, I've not come across that. I'm sorry, please understand. I'm not trying to ridicule any of you. That's not my intention. I mean, why do I have to bother doing that coming all this way? What I'm here to do is to try and help you see the same Nibbàna that I saw. If that's the same Nibbàna that you want to see, the Nibbàna that I'm heading towards, then you are welcome to come along. If you want a different type of Nibbàna, sorry, I can't help you. Because the Nibbàna that I'm travelling towards is the Nibbàna that The Lord Buddha taught me, which appears in the Tèravàda Tripitakaya. And it talks about *ràgakkayò*, *dvèshakkayò*, *mòhakkayò*, *Nibbànam*. So, that's the Nibbàna I'm trying to head towards. That's the Nibbàna that has become clear to me and that's the Nibbàna I'm heading towards.

Getting into meditation

Before you start practicing meditation, again, I emphasize meditation is not a bad thing. It's a very good thing to do, provided you know what you're doing. If you know what you're doing then meditation is great. See, when they hire soldiers to the Army, what would they do for the first six, seven, eight months? Do they let them out into warfare? You know, "Here's a weapon, now go start shooting". Do they do that? No, because that would be crazy. Why would that be crazy? You wouldn't know your friends from your foes. You've got a weapon, and it's loaded. What are you going to do now? Start firing. You pull the trigger and bullet after bullet you are just shooting away. It doesn't matter who stands in front of you, friend or foe, whoever it may be. Sometimes you are the cause of your own destruction. You are killing people of your own team, those from your own side. Getting into meditation without knowing what to do with meditation is very much like a soldier being armed with a weapon. And now set forth without prior training, without prior proper training.

Damsak Pevathum Sùtta

What was the first discourse that The Lord Buddha gave after He attained Nibbàna? After He became the Buddha? Damsak pevatum sùtta. Dhamma chakkam pavattana sùtraya. The discourse which set forth the wheel of Dhamma, right?

Idan dukkan - ariya sacchan - nattimè bhikkawè - pubbè ananussètu dhammèsu, chakkun udapàdi - gnànan udapàdi - pangnà udapàdi - vidyà udapàdi - àlòkò udapàdi.

I have understood what the *dukka àrya satya* is. *Idan dukka, ariya sacchan, parineyyanti bhikkawe, pubbè ananussètu dhammèsu, chakkun udapàdi, gnànan udapàdi, pangnà udapàdi, vidyà udapàdi, `alòkò udapàdi. Parinneyanti bhikkawè*; what does that mean? The Sinhala term for that is '*pirisinda deka gannawa*'. Now I'm going to have to refer to a few terms in Sinhala here, because it's for your own good. But I will give you the English translation as well. *Pirisinda deka gannawà*. What is *piri*? *Piri* is *priya*; *priya bawa*, that which looks pleasurable on the surface. *Piri sinda*. What is *sinda*? To penetrate, to look within. *Dekagannawà* is to see. So that which looks pleasurable on the surface, you need to penetrate through it, and begin to look what lies underneath. So ***idan dukkan, ariya sacchan, parinneyanti bhikkawè pubbè ananussètu dhammèsu***, you've got to penetrate what looks pleasurable on the surface, to be able to see the *Dukka Àrya Satya*.

You see, until you are able to do that, the problem is; remember how do we find happiness in our lives? We've talked about these for several weeks now.

If you follow The Buddha's teaching you cannot go wrong

I said last week, remember, to achieve happiness you need to have one quality with you and that is desire. That is liking. So, the only things you like, the only things you desire, are the things that bring you pleasure. Where do you see this pleasure? On the surface. So, if you are not able to penetrate that and look underneath, lift the bonnet and see under the covers, you're going to get attached to that. So, He didn't say start meditation. He didn't say, "right monks, you don't sit now". The five ascetics sat in front of Him. "Everyone go off and start meditation". That's not what He said. You see, if you want to see the same Nibbàna that The

Buddha did, you've got to follow His instructions. If you are aiming for a different kind of Nibbàna, well, great! Good luck! But if you want to head towards the same Nibbàna that The Buddha gave us, then you have to follow His instructions. Otherwise, we're all trying to be Sammà Samduddhas ourselves. Again, good luck! I told you last week that is not my aim. So, I'm a student of The Buddha. I will do only what He said. I will follow His words to the letter. Because, if only I do that, His teaching is complete. There is not one place where you could point and say actually, 'you know He didn't cover this bit. Oh, He got that bit wrong'. Or, 'He missed out this bit. He should have covered that. What was He thinking? There is not one bit in the Dhamma that is flawed. Everything is flawless. It's perfect. This is why it's timeless; the past, the present, or the future. No matter where you are on the path, if you follow The Buddha's teaching you cannot go wrong, ladies and gentlemen. You cannot go wrong. If you follow His teaching to the letter you cannot go wrong. Every time I went wrong in my life, was because I stayed away from His teaching. I did the things that He said not to do. I did the things that He said bring you suffering. And I thought, "what do you know?" And guess where it ended me?

What is Nekkhamma?

So, you have to be able to penetrate, what looks pleasurable on the surface to see what's lying underneath. Until you are able to do that, you don't begin to realize the second Noble Truth. *Idan dukke samudaya ariya saccham*, the cause for suffering - *samudaya ariya saccham* - remember it's always *ariya saccha*, not just any old *saccha*. Again, we've covered this in the past. What is this truth? How is the truth different from an *àrya* truth or a Noble Truth? You know these are not just words. What is 'truth? Why are there certain things called '**truths**', and then there are certain things called '**Noble Truths**'?

Bhàvithà not bhàvanà

So anyway, coming back to what we were talking. You know, The Buddha talks about the '*dukkha samudaya àrya satya*. Then He talks about the *dukkha niròdha àrya satya*, *saccika thabbanti bhikkawè* - *sàkshàth kara gatha yuthui*. What is *sàkshàth kara gatha yuthui*? *Sàkshàth* is a Sinhala term. It is to achieve. You have to achieve the eradication of suffering.

And then finally He says, *dukkha niròdha gàmini patipadà ariya saccham. Bhavithà thabbanthi mè bhikkawè. Bhàvithà* not *bhàvanà*. What, did He get it wrong? No. He says *bhàvithà* not *bhàvanà*.

Cultivating Jhànas

Meditation has been given a wrong meaning. That's the problem here. I mean, it's not that meditation has been given wrong meaning, because meditation existed long before The Buddha came into this world. What did the likes of Àlàra Kàlàma and Uddaka Ràmaputra do? What did Asita, the ascetic who came to visit the young prince when he was born; remember he came and cried at the ceremony when he came to bless this young child. Why did he cry? He cried because he was not going to be alive, he was not going to be around when this Prince becomes a Buddha. But the same ascetic, do you know where he went on holiday? He went to the Brahma worlds on holiday. From time to time when he wanted to take a break that was where he went - to the Brahma world. So, he had cultivated the Jhànas to be able to do that, to go to the Brahma worlds. *Nèva Sangnà, Nà Sangnà*, which is the highest you can go in terms of developing Jhànas. And then the one after that is *Niròdha Samàpattiya*. So *Niròdha Samàpattiya* is something that only an Arahant can do, where you stop the rising of the *cittas*. So *cittas* stop arising and passing away for the duration that you are in that absorptive state of mind. So, even the acetic Asita was able to do that. But had he attained Nibbàna? No, he had not attained Nibbàna. He had not attained Nibbàna because he didn't follow the path the Buddha had taught. Because, well, he wasn't around in the time of the previous Buddha, and the reason he cried was because he was not going to be around when this young prince was going to become a Buddha. So, Nibbàna is only something that you can achieve by practicing what a Sammà Sambuddha teaches. If you find another way to achieve that, it's either not Nibbàna or you have just become a Sammà Sambuddha. It's only one of these two things. If you have found a way to attain Nibbàna without following the teaching of a Sammà Sambuddha, either what you have attained is not Nibbàna or you have just become a Sammà Sambuddha or a Paccèka Buddha. These are the only three options. These are the only three things that could happen, one of these three.

Who is a Stream Enterer?

Once you have attained *sammà ditti* - and we spoke about *sammà ditti* previously. Once you have attained the first step, once you have achieved the first step in the Noble Eightfold Path, which is *sammà ditti*, what it is that you need to do now? Someone who has entered the stream, which is why they call it the '**stream enterer**'. Once you've entered the stream, you are only going to flow one way. The water is only going to take you one way and that is downstream. That is why we say a stream enterer ends on becoming an Arahant. Ends at completing this journey by becoming an Arahant, by attaining Enlightenment. Whether you like it or not you are going to become an Arahant. So, if you don't want to become an Arahant, then make sure you don't become a Sòtāpanna.

What is Sammà Ditti?

I mean all of this is meritorious of course. But as soon as you become a Sòtāpanna you will not wait for the next Supreme Buddha to come to become an Arahant. You will become an Arahant before the advent of the next Buddha. Before the Maithri Budurajānanwahansè comes in you are all going to become Arahants if you become a Sòtāpanna in the era of The Gauthama Sammà Sambuddha. That's provided we are talking about the human realm. There are Anāgāmis and those beings in the Brahma worlds. So, we're talking about the human world. But anyway, putting all of that to aside, once you have stepped into this stream, once you have entered the Noble Eightfold Path, which is *Sammà Ditti* - see in the *Saccha Vibhanga Sutra* which is delivered by Venerable, The Great Elder Sàriputta, he asks,

"kata màcāvusò sammà ditti

Dukkè gnānam.

Now he says, *dukka satya*.

Dukka ariya satya. gnānan

Dukka samudaya ariya satya gnānan

Dukka niròda ariya satya gnānan

Dukka niròda gāmini patipadāya ariya satya gnānan.

Ayan uccatāvusò sammà ditti.

So, it's crystal clear to us what *sammà ditti* is. It's understanding. It's a comprehension of the Four Noble Truths. So, once you have understood the Four Noble Truths, then there's no

question. Then you have entered the Noble Eightfold Path. And that path only leads you one-way. It's a one-way street. There is no going back and forth there. It's a one-way street. This stream, again, this is why it's called a stream enterer. You are a Sòtapanna. You become a stream enterer once you've entered the stream. You're only going to flow in one direction. You're going to flow towards the ocean. All streams flow towards the ocean, and the ocean is Nibbàna.

You know, doing what feels right is not going to get us towards Nibbàna. Well, let alone Nibbàna, it's not going to help you heal your wound either. You've got to do the right thing. Not what feels like the right thing. This is why you need the guidance of someone. You need the guidance of a Lord Buddha, a Sammà Sambuddha or someone who has learned the Dhamma from Him. This is why you need the association of a Noble person, an Àrya. To become a Sòtapanna yourself; you know, again think back into your own lives. I always tell you this. Your lives are the best labs to put what you learn into practice. That's where your theory becomes real theory.

Suffering

So, the society never shows you that it's attachment that brings you suffering. Why? Because, for as long as you are blind to that truth, the world can make a living out of you. This is how the world survives, the world continues to exist. So, the Buddha comes along and says it's attachment that brings you suffering, its desire that brings you suffering, *parinneiyanti mè bhikkawè, piri sinda dakinna*. Look underneath the covers, then you're going to see, how, what looks pleasurable, how, what looks satisfactory on the surface, actually is a whole heap of suffering underneath. And as soon as you attach yourself to that, you are now subject to *dukkha dukka, sankàra dukka, viparinàma dukka*. We've covered some of this in the past.

So, blind to all this what do you do to find happiness in your life is, you go and acquire more, you gain more, you build more. Last week remember I asked you this question. Well, most of you would have gone to Dhamma school (Daham Pàsal). You would have listened to sermons and what did the monks tell you? Let go, let go, let go. What did you really do? You collected, you gathered, you built. You did exactly what he said 'don't do'. You did exactly what the

monks at your temple said 'don't do'. And then you come and ask, "why is it I'm still suffering?". So, you have to be able to penetrate, what looks pleasurable on the surface to see what lies underneath. When you are able to do these two things, ladies and gentlemen, now you understand what it is you need to do, to eradicate this suffering.

The Noble Eightfold Path

So, going back to the analogy I gave you about the rash on your arm, you've been scratching it all along whenever you felt an itch. One fine day you take off your shirt and now you see this festering wound underneath. If someone came and asked you before you took off your shirt, "when you feel an itch, what is it that you're supposed to do?", what you are going to say before you took off your shirt? "Scratch it". That's the advice you're going to give. "Whenever you feel an itch, scratch it. I've done it and it works for me, so just keep doing it". Now one day, you take off the shirt, and now you see this wound. It's a big wound that's on your arm. And you realize that it's become so big, it's gone so bad, because you've scratched it every time you felt an itch. Now someone comes and asks you, "hey, I'm feeling this itch, what do you think I'm supposed to do?" Are you going to say, 'go ahead and scratch it'? No. You are not going to say that anymore. Why? Now do you need someone to come and tell you again, "hey, don't scratch yourself". No, because you know exactly that, that is the wrong cure. That is the wrong way to go about it. That's not the right thing to do. Then you go and try to understand, "how can I treat this wound?" Do I look for a cream of some sort? Some ointment? Some kind of medication? Once you've got yourself the medication, once you understood what the cream is, and again for that you need to go and see a doctor. I mean you need the doctor to give you all four of these things. By the way, you also need the doctor to tell you that this itch that you're feeling is really a wound underneath your shirt, so please take off your shirt and then you will see the real cause. You don't know this by yourself. All you know is when it feels like it's itching go ahead and scratch. That's what society told us. But a teacher who is someone who's gone through the same experience, someone who felt that itch himself and then took off his shirt and then found out, "hey, I've got this big festering wound on my arm, now what should I do?" And then he went and tried all sorts of different medicines. He tried everything in the book and then he found one medicine. He found this medicine cures my problem. And then from that point forward he goes on telling other people, he goes on teaching other people, "hey, if you've got an itch, try this cream, it works".

This is the cream that's going to help you. Until you come across that teacher, you are going to keep scratching yourself. Now one day, you're going to take off this shirt, you're going to see that wound and now your teacher is going to tell you, "here's the cream that you need, that's going to heal that wound". Once you have been given that cream what do you need to do next? Keep going back to the teacher? Do you have to keep going back to the doctor? No. What do you do now you've got yourself the cream? Apply it. That is what meditation means. Once you've got yourselves the medicine, application of that medicine is what meditation is. That's why he says, *bhàvithà thabbanthi mè bhikkawè*. Use it. Use what? The medicine. **The Noble Eightfold Path**. Use it.

Medum Pilivetha

You see, again people say '*medum pilivetha*'. Not this extreme, not the other extreme, in the middle. Don't drink too much, don't not drink at all, just drink a little bit. Is that '*medum pilivetha*'? You think The Buddha would have said that? "Hey monks, come here, you know this alcohol? Don't take too much of it. Do not, not take it either. Just take a little bit, you know, once in a while just take a few sips. That'll be good for you." You think The Buddha would have said that? No, He doesn't talk about that. It's not the center line, it's not the center point. He talks about '*majjima patipadà*. *madjima* is *màdya*, medium. *Patipadàya* is *prathipadàwa*, is the practice - you practice the medium. You practice the medium that's going to cure your problem. And the application of that medicine is practicing the medium and that is the Noble Eightfold Path.

So, how can you start traversing the Noble Eightfold Path, if you haven't arrived at *sammà ditti*, when *sammà ditti*, is nothing but *dukkè gnànan - dukka samudayè gnànan - dukka nirodha gnànan - dukka nirodha gàminì patipadàya ariya gnànan*? For as long as you're blind to what it is that actually causes you suffering, how can you actually practice it? But once you understand the real problem, now, you don't need a teacher after that. That's why a *Sòtàpanna* does not need a teacher. Once you are a *Sòtàpanna* you don't need instructions. You don't need guidance. Because you now have the Dhamma. Dham-saka, Dhamma chakraya starts turning inside you, in your mind.

The Four Noble Truths

That's why His first discourse is the Dhamma Chakka Pavattana Sùtraya. He set in motion this wheel of Dhamma. It's not just the meaning behind that, is not just giving a dispensation that talks about the Four Noble Truths. What he speaks is, about;

- **the problem**
- **the cause for the problem**
- **the eradication of the problem**
- **the pathway to eradicate that problem**

These are the four steps, '*The Four Noble Truths*' that you need to instil in yourself.

This is like installing new software. You don't change the hardware. There you have the same bodies. But your software needs to be upgraded. So, The Buddha comes and installs this software. You see, it's the 21st century, so you have to give examples from the 21st century. So, you have to now go and install the software. You can't download it off Internet. You need to download it off another Àrya, either from a Sammà Sambudhdha, or someone who has become an Àrya, by listening to His teaching. You can download it off him or her and that can either be a Bhikku, Bhikkunì, Upàsaka or Upàsikà. It doesn't have to be a monk, it doesn't have to be a nun, it can be a lay person. There are plenty of lay people and there'll be people among your friends who preach the Dhamma. There may be classes that they do. Again, please don't take it the wrong way. You know, go along to these classes, but make sure that you're trying to cure the right problem and always check yourself against this path - *ràgakkayò - dwèshakkayò - mòhakkayaò - nibbanam*. Nothing else is going to be Nibbàna. If you're finding something else is Nibbàna, if you're thinking flashes of light is Nibbàna, then that's not the Nibbàna The Buddha talks of. So, you start this meditation after you have become a Sòtapanna.

Meditation Postures

Like I explained to that lady for three hours, I sat on this seat for meditation. You don't have to be in a cross-legged posture to practice meditation. You can be walking, you can be standing, you can be sitting you can be lying on the bed, you can be showering, you can be gardening, you can be cooking, you can be cleaning, you can be washing your car, you can be washing your dog. You can do any of these things and yet be meditating. Because, what you are doing when you are meditating is, applying that medicine. It's the application of medicine. Now yes, it helps if you sit somewhere where there are no disturbances, because then you know people don't come and say "hey excuse me Dad, I've got this thing, you need to sign for me", or "excuse me mother, what's for lunch?" Right? You don't have those interferences, you don't have that disruption. Then in those circumstances, yes, finding some kind of retreat or going on a retreat or being a recluse even helps. But you can do that 24x7. Anytime you are not asleep, you can be meditating.

So, each and every one of you are meditating right now. If you've got your eyes open, if your ears are wide open, you are wide awake. If you fall asleep then don't think you're meditating right now. But if you're paying attention to what it is, I'm saying, if these words you're grasping, you are taking in, you are applying into your lives and it's doing the job of *ràgakkayò - dwèshakkayò - mōhakkayaò*. What is *ràgakkayò - dwèshakkayò - mōhakkayaò*? **Kshaya karanawà is to eradicate** *ràga, dwèsha, mōha*. Because, it's *ràga, dwèsha, mōha* that are the defilements that keep us from Nibbàna. Once you eradicate the *ràga, dwèsha, mōha*, you are an Arahant. That's it, full stop.

So, these are the defilements that stop you, that keeps you away from Nibbàna. Then that's where you need to apply your medicine. So, you know a very popular form of meditation is breathing meditation. So, you sit somewhere in a comfortable posture, close your eyes, you take a short breath in and a short breath out, then you take a medium breath in and a medium breath out, then you take a long breath in and a long breath out. I mean I've been to these lessons & classes myself. So, I know sometimes what they say is, after a little while you're going to start feeling the air that you breathe, you are going to feel sensations from the top

part of your leg and then after a while it's going to be in nostrils. After a little while it's going to be the top of your nose, after a little while it's going to be your forehead. At the time it gets there, then you are a Sòtàpanna. Then when it hits the top of your head, now you are a Sakurdàgàmi. Then at the back of your head, you are an Anàgmi. The question I have is, well, where does it have to hit before I become an Arahant? What, my bottom? Where does The Buddha say, where does The Buddha give this kind of description?

Indriya-parò-pari-attineiya-gnànaya

I'm informed by people, that I speak with, that there are places where they give certificates out to people - you are now a Sòtàpanna. We certify that you are a Sòtàpanna. Even Venerable Sàriputta couldn't do that. How is it that people nowadays are able to do that? What God-given power do people possess these days to be able to certify someone else's Noble Attainments? Only The Buddha can do that. Only The Buddha had this faculty called the *Indriya-parò-pari-attineiya-gnànaya*; to be able to penetrate through one's mind and to see how much *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha* they have and where it's come down to a zero, zero...

He says, "*and now you are an Arahant.*" And He looks at the *dasa sanyòjana*, "*how far have you removed these defilements, these cankers, if you remove sakkàya ditti, wiccikicà, sàlabbata paràmàsa*", He says, "*You are a Sòtàpanna.*"

But how can someone else give me that certificate? The reason I'm sharing this with you is, please don't fall for these traps. People do this kind of thing. And sometimes they charge you a fee for it. I don't know where this kind of Buddhism comes from. Where in the Tripitakaya does it say you can do that, judge someone else's noble attainment? I mean, you go to a teacher, you learn something from him, let's say it's calculus. You go to a teacher, you learn calculus from the teacher, you ask the teacher, "do I now understand calculus"? How can the teacher give you an answer to that question? He's going to say, "How do I know? I've taught you what I know. Only you will know whether you know it or not. By the way here are some examples, here are some exercises go and do them and if you can solve all these problems

then most likely you've understood it, you've grasped it". So that's something only you know. Either you know or the The Samma Sambuddha knows.

Am I ready to start meditating?

Now, sometimes people ask me, and it's a very valid question, *"You see Venerable Sir, you say don't start meditating until you become a Sòtàpanna. So, I need to know if I'm a Sòtàpanna."* In other words, when do I start meditation, I mean how do I know when I am ready to start meditating? And I have the perfect answer for that question, because The Buddha has given the answer to that question 2500 years ago. One person went and asked Him,

"Venerable Sir, Lord Buddha, what is it that a Prutajjana, a mundane, worldly person needs to do to become Sòtàpanna?"

And He said,

"Practice anicca, dukka, anatta."

What is *anicca, dukka, anatta*? It's just the reality, it is the truth. I think now that we have a growing listener base who comes along to these sermons, I think in one of the future sermons, I will detail it. Because we did this in one of the previous sermons, but I think it's probably time again to revisit that topic, to give in full detail what *anicca* is, what *dukkha* is, what *anatta* is. We've been practicing the path ourselves, so what you understand today as *anicca, dukka, anatta* and after you've been practicing the Dhamma for another ten years, your understanding of the *anicca, dukka, anatta*, will become even greater. This is why The Buddha says, to become a Sotàpanna, all you need to do is practice *anicca, dukka, anatta*. In fact, He says,

"listen to a sermon in which you are taught anicca, dukka, anatta."

Then he asked the question,

"What is it that a Sotàpanna will have to do to become a Sakurdàgàmi?"

And The Buddha says,

"Practice anicca, dukka, anatta."

What is it a Sakurdàgàmi have to do to become an Anàgàmi? Guess what He says?

"Practice 'anicca, dukka, anatta."

So, what does an Anàgàmi needs to do to become an Arahant?

“Practice, *anicca, dukka, anatta.*”

What does an Arahantunwahansè have to do? What does He say?

“Practice '*anicca, dukka, anatta.*”

Not because He thinks that for him to proceed, there's more that he needs to do, but He says for his own benefit, for you to be able to attain Samàdhi, practice *anicca, dukka, anatta*. This is the instruction that He gives an Arihantunwahansè.

Identifying an Àrya

So thankfully, we really don't need to know where we are on the path, right? Because wherever you are on the path, there is only one thing you need to do. That is to practice *anicca, dukka, anatta*, whether you are a Pruthajjana, whether you're a Sotàpanna, whether you are a Sakurdàgami, whether you are an Anàgàmi or whether you are an Arahant. Even in the time of The Buddha there have been men and women who have not known that they have attained the state of Arahant. On one occasion, I can't recall the name right now, there is this nun who goes and asks,

“Venerable Ananda, you know, my eyes are fully functioning. I can see, but I have no desire to see. I have no desire for sights. My ears are fully functioning and I can hear quite well, but I have no desire to go and get sounds and listen to sounds.”

She goes on about all her five sense organs. And she says,

“You know I have a tongue, I can taste, but I have no special desire to go and taste. What kind of state is this? What kind of mental state is this?”

And Venerable Ananda says,

“I really don't know. I need to go and ask The Buddha.”

So, he goes and asks the Buddha. The Buddha says,

“What she has attained is the state of an Arahant. She is an Arahant.”

So even Venerable Ananda couldn't answer that question and yet today, people give certificates. You are a Sotàpanna, you are a Sakurdàgami. You are an Anagàmi. You are an Arahant.

You see, the reason that a lot of people fall into this trap is because, you know you all are good people, and there is no question about that. Because the reason you are all here today

is, because you want to make a change in your lives. You want to do something good with your lives. You begin to understand that this pointless existence I've been doing for 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years has not got me anywhere. All I've done is built and built and acquired and hung on to things and ultimately, I was looking for happiness. But I have not found that happiness. Yes, I give, I donate things, I give away to poor people, but still, when problems come my way I begin to suffer, I cry and I get angry. Surely there's something that I still haven't tried out. So, you want to make a change in your lives to find your peace and in seeking that inner peace, you know when you have that anxiety in you; again, it's a *peleema*, right? That's the truth.

Remember, we talked about how pleasure is always something that is pleasurable, because you are in agony, you are in anxiety, you are in pain beforehand right? Like putting out your hunger. Food only brings you pleasure, because you're hungry prior to that. A drink can only bring you pleasure, only because you are feeling thirsty before that. Going to the toilet can bring you pleasure, only because you wanted to go to the toilet before that. So, it's always releasing yourself from stress, anxiety and pain that brings you happiness. Likewise, when you begin to analyse your lives and you think, 'hang on a second, I've been doing all these things in my life, trying to find happiness and yet today I'm not happy. I'm not fully satisfied or I'm not fulfilled with my life. What do I have to do?' Then you go looking for cures for your problem and then there's going to be an army of people who are going to come running to you and say, 'hey I've got the answer. I have the perfect answer to your problem'. Among them are going to be travel operators, holiday operators, right. That's what people do. Among them are going to be restaurant owners, among them are going to be leisure park owners, among them are going to be film producers, directors, everyone who has something to offer you, to give you a sense of relief from the pain, the dissatisfaction, this agony, that you're in. And among them the worst kind of all, are people who are going to come and sell you Nibbàna on a piece of paper. They are going to sell you Sotàpanna, they are going to sell you Sakurdàmi, they are going to sell you Anàgàmi, they are going to sell you Arahamthood on a sheet of paper and go, 'here you go, I hereby declare you an Arahant'.

What do I need to do to meditate?

But so, here's what you need to do, if you want to meditate, listen to a sermon whether that's a Sinhala sermon, whether that's an English sermon and if you speak another language, whether it's a Tamil sermon, whether it's a Russian sermon, provided that sermon talks about *ràgakkayò - dwèshakkayò - mòhakkayaò*, and it gives you instructions on how to achieve that, please go ahead and listen to that sermon. That's perfectly fine. And if you're listening to a sermon, then what do you need to do? Whatever you learn, whatever you understood from that sermon, apply into your lives. So, whether you are sitting cross-legged, whether you're walking up and down, whether you're lying on your bed, having trouble falling asleep, you know ... think about something, something that you learnt in a sermon, *dukka àrya satya, tanhàya jàyathì shòkò*, how is that true in my life? Now start applying it into your lives. Think about all the times when you had to suffer, when there was a tear in your eye. Those times when you had a tear in your eye was not because of *tanhàya jàyathì shòkò*. Think, analyse, apply and when you do so, it becomes real, it becomes true for you. And one day it's just going to click. And that click is going to happen when you are in the middle of the sermon. It's not going to happen when you're practicing meditation by yourself. It could be when you are listening to a sermon with your earphones on, or it could be when you're listening to a sermon live, a sermon like this. One day it's going to click. When that click happens, you're not going to hear noises by the way. It's just going to click in a way that you know, 'right, I've got it. It's perfectly true to me. It's perfectly clear to me now'.

Every time I found happiness in my life, it's only because I've been in a state of agony, in a state of pain, in a state of suffering beforehand, and that happiness was a relief from that pain. And you're also going to understand, I mean all you are going to understand is the Four Noble Truths. That's all it is. Because that clicking is, you falling into the Noble Eight Fold Path. That clicking is you entering the stream. That clicking is you becoming a Sòtàpanna.

Miccà Sankappa

When you begin to understand the first Noble Truth of suffering, when you realize that every grain of sand, every person, every object, the stars, the planets, the galaxies, the universe, no matter how far you go, how wide you go, wherever you travel around the globe, anything and everything that you find, if you attach yourself to it, it's going to leave you with nothing but suffering. When that becomes crystal clear, no matter whoever comes and debates with you,

you are not willing to waver. Even if The Buddha came and said, 'I got it wrong, you're still able to go' ... 'Sorry Buddha, you got it wrong. I got it right this time. Attachment brings me suffering. Not because you say so, but because it's perfectly clear to me'. It's perfect understanding. When that happens,

asàrè sàra mathinò

sàrècà sàra dassinò

thè sàran nàdi gaccanti

miccà sankappa gòcara.

This is the Buddha's discourse.

He gives the Dhammapada. When you see something that is *asàra*, something that is essence-less as being full of essence, *asàrè sàra mathinò* - *sàrè chà sàra dassinò*, something where there is no essence, no happiness to be found, no pleasure to be found, you think actually there is pleasure, there is happiness to be found. If that is the case with you, *thè sàran nàdi gaccanti*. You are not able to tell that which is right from wrong. You are not able to distinguish things that are of essence, versus the things that are essence-less. *Sàra* and *asàra* or *anatta* and *atta*. If that is your state of mind, then what you are or the condition that you're in is, *miccà sankappa*. What precedes *miccà sankappa*? *Miccà ditti*. *Sammà ditti, sammà sankappa*. So, *miccà ditti, miccà sankappa*. So, if you are in *miccà sankappa*, if your state of mind is that of *miccà sankappa*, whereby you are able to see things as being essence-full, full of essence, full of meaning, full of happiness, full of satisfaction, no matter what that thing is, whether that's in the *kàma* worlds, *rùpa* worlds or the *arùpa* worlds, if you find that, if you feel that, 'hey, actually, you know that this thing brings me happiness, no matter what the monk says, no matter what The Buddha says, the more I have of this, the more happiness I am going to get. That could be money, that could be wealth, that could be gold, that could be children, that could be houses, property, cars, women, whatever the case may be. Having more of that is only going to bring me happiness'. If you still feel that way, then you are in *miccà sankappa*.

If that is your state of mind, what precedes *miccà sankappa* is *miccà ditti*. So, without a question of a doubt, you are still in *miccà ditti*, and if you are still in *miccà ditti*, then your understanding is, *dukkè agnànàm*. *dukkà samudaya agnànàm, dukka niròdha agnànàm*,

dukka niròdha gàmini patipadàya agnànàm. Therefore, you are not yet a Sotàpanna. See, isn't that how you can check for yourself whether you're a Sotàpanna or not. I mean, The Buddha makes it crystal clear, I mean he makes it so simple for us. Once you get into *sammà ditti*, then *sammà sankappa* will automatically fall into place. *Avihinsà sankappò - nekkamma sankappò - avyàpàda sankappò - ayan uccatàvusò sammà sankappò*. This is not Sinhala by the way. This is Pàli. Pàli from the Tripitakaya. This is pure Pàli from the Tripitakaya. These are Buddha's words. In fact, it's Venerable, the Great Elder Sàriputta's words. It's from the Saccha Vibhanga Sùtta.

What is Nekkhamma?

So, He talks about, if you have thoughts of *nekkama*. What is *nekkama*? *Naish-kamma*; letting go. When you see something, you want to attach yourself to it. Is that how you still feel about objects? Whether they are in the material worlds, whether they are in the rùpa worlds, or whether they are in the arùpa worlds. If you feel like you want to attach yourself to it, if you feel like you want to get more of it, then your thoughts are not based in *nekkhamma*. You want more. You want to build more, you want to acquire more. *Avihinsà sankappò*. What is *vihinsà*? To want to harm, to want to hurt. If you're feeling like you want to hurt someone, to hurt something, you want to destroy something, for the sake of wanting, to get what for the sake of wanting to acquire, for the sake of wanting to acquire what you desire, if you feel like it's worth hurting somebody else, killing somebody else, damaging someone else's property, then you are still in *miccà sankappa*. That is your state of mind. *Avyàpàda sankappò* - if you still have thoughts of anger, thoughts of hatred, when someone comes and shouts at you if you feel that anger burning inside of you, if you feel like you want to fight back, then those are feelings of *miccà sankappa*. Thoughts of *miccà sankappa*. So, if you are still in *miccà sankappa*, then you don't need to go further. Just go one step back. What precedes *miccà sankappa*? *Miccà ditti*. So, if you still feel those thoughts of *miccà sankappa*, then you are still in *miccà ditti*.

Now, let me clarify one point here though. The understanding of a Sòtàpanna is only an understanding and nothing else. It's just an understanding of the Four Noble Truths. It's like you opened the door and it's time to walk the path. But yet you haven't still started to walk the path. You open the door and the path lies straight and clear in front of you. You know

where it's going to lead. You know how to travel the path. But you still haven't started walking the path. Because the moment you set that first step on that path, what are you now? On the path to becoming a Sakurdàgàmi. You have gone beyond the state of Sòtappa. And now you are on the path to become a Sakurdàgàmi. Once you travel a certain distance on that path, now you attain the fruit of becoming a Sakurdàgàmi.

Don't judge a Sòtappa

So therefore, please don't try to judge a Sòtappa by the way they act, by the way they speak, by the way they conduct themselves. Because, that's not something that we can judge. Because, all they have is an understanding. However, having said that, if you hear of someone who has killed their mother, then you can be absolutely guaranteed that, that person is not a Sòtappa. If you hear that someone has killed their father, matricide and patricide, if you hear of that, then, you can be absolutely guaranteed that, that person is not a Sòtappa. If you hear that someone has killed an Arahant or if you see someone doing that, you can be absolutely guaranteed that, that person is not a Sòtappa. If you hear of a monk who has committed the act of schism; Sangha bèdaya, which can only be done by a group of monks who have received higher ordination - Upasampadava. If you hear of monks who have conducted themselves in that way, you can be absolutely guaranteed that they have not attained the state of Sòtappa.

The four Tsunamis

But you know, as lay people then that's generally not something that you are able to gauge. It may be the case, you know, why do we need to bother if someone else is Sotappa? We don't have the time for that, do we? Remember, I told you last week about the tsunamis, how we are stuck in the middle of all these tsunamis that are coming our way, relentlessly? What are these four tsunamis, remember? What are they? *jàti, jarà, vyàdi, marana*; birth, decay disease and death, four tsunamis coming our way relentlessly, not giving up. It's going to destroy you. The first tsunami that hits you is going to destroy you.

Defilements

So, I have to be very careful. I'm not an Arahātunwahansē. I'm not an Arahant. For as long as I'm not an Arahant, I have *rāga, dvēsha, mōha* inside my mind. These defilements I battle with every day. And so, I have to be careful. You are not responsible for my *rāga, dvēsha, mōha*. I'm responsible for my *rāga, dvēsha, mōha*. The answer to that is not asking you all, 'hey stop worshipping me.' That's not the answer. The answer to that is for me to understand who you are worshipping is **not me**. When you worship, you're worshipping, because you see a robe clad around my body. This robe is for you a sign, a representation of The Most Venerable Sāriputta, The Most Venerable Moggallāna, The Great Elder Mahā Kāshyapa. Not me. Who am I? I'm still subject to disease. I'm still subject to decay. I'm still subject to death. And I am still subject to rebirth. I have not won anything. Yet I'm still fighting this battle. I'm still in a war. So, there is no way you could be worshipping someone like me. It's not me that you worship. You worship this robe. You worship who comes into your mind when you see the robe. So, this is what I remind myself. And likewise, you all need to do the same. This is why I give you practical examples from my life. So, you have to do the same in your lives. Be careful. For as long as *Klēsha Māra*, remember, I think there was one of the kids who had question a couple of weeks ago. He was asking about *Māra*. Who should we worry about? *Vasawatti Māra* or *Klēsha Māra*? And I explained, it was *Klēsha Māra*, that we need to be careful or to worry about. *Vasawatti māra* has no business with us. No, don't worry about him. He picks his fights with Sammā Sambuddhas, Bodhisattvas those who want to attain Supreme Enlightenment, Supreme Buddhahood. People like me are small fry. Doesn't care one bit. But *Klēsha Māra*, all over the place.

The only recourse (refuge) is Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha

And then when you say '*nattimē saranam angam, Buddhō mē saranan varan*, that now has a meaning. Otherwise, it's just a set of words. When you understand how much it did for you, and then you recite, '*nattimē saranam angam, Dhammō mē saranan varan*, now you understand, it's because of Him that you have this Dhamma today. '*Nattimē saranan angam, Sanghō mē saranan varan*. Now you understand, it's because of the great elders like Sāriputta, Moggallāna, Mahā Kāshyapa, Badra Kaccāyanā, these Arahant monks and nuns who sacrificed their lives and did everything that they could, so that today you could have this Dhamma. It's thanks to them that we have what we have today. So, when you bring your arms

together to worship The Buddha, The Dhamma and The Sangha, I want you to reflect on that. Otherwise, what's the point?

Don't fall for traps

Remember again, what I've been trying to say throughout this sermon. It's okay to meditate. There's nothing wrong with that. But it's what you do when you think you're meditating, that's where the problem is. Don't fall for people's traps. Everyone's out there to trap you in some way, shape or form, because all the interest is in their self-preservation, not in yours. Ultimately everyone in this world is selfish. That's the truth. Ultimately everyone is selfish. So, you've got to look after yourself. Unless you come across an Arihatun Wahansè who has completely eradicated *ràga*, *dwèsha*, *mòha* and with that this self - '*mama*', when that is completely eradicated, then you have come across someone who is completely selfless. But until such time, everyone is at least a tiny modicum selfish. So, in your own interest make sure, that you don't fall into these traps. Meditate, but in meditation reflect on the Dhamma. Listen to these CDs on YouTube. You know these are available now on the Internet. This is being streamed live and as soon as the sermon ends it's available to listen offline. So, you can do that.

May the Noble Triple Gem Bless you all! Sammà Sambudhu Saranai!



00.10.25 Kin Saccha Gavèsi

00.12.24 Dèva & Brahma Worlds

00.13.13 Everlasting happiness is not found in the 31 realms of existence

00.18.46 Sunàtha Dàrètha Charàtha

00.19.58 Seeing flashes of lights in meditation

00.23.49 I am heading towards Nibbàna taught by Lord Buddha

00.27.00 Getting into meditation

00.28.30 Damsak Pevathum Sùtta
00.31.20 If you follow The Buddha's teaching you cannot go wrong
00.33.45 What is Nekkhamma?
00.38.36 Bhàvithà not bhàvanà
00.41.12 Cultivating Jhànas
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