Link: <https://youtu.be/8q58HTotz2c>

**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 workis a transcription of the sermon held in **2018-02-18**. 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**

Obituary

Aniccawata sankhara

Death

Celebrate

Tsunami

Decease

Decay

Death

Living

Printer

**MAKE YOURSELF AN OBITUARY**

**2018 - 02 - 18**

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**The problem must be absolutely clear**

When the Buddha began to preach His teaching, He started with the *'Dukka Àrya Satya'*; the first noble truth. It was not the cessation of suffering or the path to cessation of suffering. It was suffering in itself; the noble truth of suffering and the cause for the noble truth of suffering. He starts with the problem. The problem must be absolutely clear. When the first noble truth is crystal clear, the second noble truth becomes perfectly clear as well. When that is clear then the answer to it, which is the cessation of suffering, becomes obvious and the path to that becomes clear as well. The Buddha says, if one understands the first noble truth, then through that knowledge, he begins to understand the second, third and the fourth Noble Truths.

This is a problem you need to solve. It is a problem you need to understand. Then you begin to work through the problem. This is what associating with noble friends is all about. It's exactly the same principle. If you understood what the problem is or at least you try to understand what the problem is, then you go and listen to, you speak with and you associate with people who can help you to get there. These are the noble friends. These are the noble people, the '*kalyànamitras*'. At one-point Venerable Ananda approaches The Lord Buddha, and says,

“*Venerable Sir, according to my understanding I believe half of your ministry, (ministry being the Buddha sàsanaya), prevails because of noble people, noble associates. Is that true sir”?*

To which The Lord Buddha replies;

*“You are mistaken. You are very much mistaken. Not half, but the entirety of my ministry prevails because of noble associates. For as long as noble people continue to prevail, for as long as my dhamma and the discipline, 'dharmaya' and 'vinaya' continue to flourish and prevail in the world, there will always be sòtàpannas, sakurdàgàmis, anàgamis* and *arhants".*

**This is an era where we have the** **Dhamma and Vinaya**

This is why we should all realize that this day and time that we live in, this era that we live in is a very unique opportunity for all of us. Very often when we've come into this world as human beings or dèvas or brahmas, we have come at times when we have not had the *dhamma and vinaya`.* We've not had the dhamma and the discipline and as a result we have not had the opportunity to associate with the *sòtàpannas, sakurdàgàmis, anàgamis* and *arhants.* What has that done to us? It has either influenced us and persuaded us to commit sins, unmeritorious deeds, the consequences of which have led us to lives in the hells, either as '*pretas'* or animals or as '*äsuras'* or in the hells with unimaginable suffering in the infernos, or we have spent many eons where we have continued to be born in the blissful plane by doing meritorious deeds and having been born as humans and dèvas and brahmas, but never really finding the true liberation from *sansàra.* What we need to remind ourselves day-in day-out, every single day of your lives is, what you should do is wake up in the morning and ask yourselves how fortunate I am to be born today, in this era where we have the '*dhamma'* and the *'vinaya*'. Without this I have spent many times, many incalculable, uncountable times being born as humans. Without the '*dhamma' and 'vinaya*' I have spent many eons at a time, having been born a dèva or a Brahma, but to what gain? I spent very long periods of time enjoying the sensual pleasures, having anything in everything that I could demand at my fingertips at a mere wish. All that was required and everything I wanted just appeared in front of me, but yet, today I am born a human being. Today I just opened my eyes to look around and I can see animals which suffer tremendously. I know of the dèvas, prètas, asuras and I know of the hells, the infernos where beings suffer continuously, perpetually being born in those worlds for many eons. Yet all of those beings would have had the opportunity to cycle in the dèva worlds and the brahma worlds and yet what have they attained? What have they achieved? You've got to ask yourself this question. If every morning you wake up, you work really hard and at the end of the day you are told,

*'well, actually, nothing that you've done today is of any value, you are not going to benefit from it, your friends, your family are not going to benefit from it, the world is not going to benefit from it, not one modicum, not one inch, not one zilch, no one's going to benefit from this'*. It's not long before you realize, *'well, I should probably start doing something else. I should be doing something different'.*

**An obituary notice, one for every three kilometres**

Recently, while I was visiting another temple about 30 kilometres away from our monastery, I counted the number of obituary notices that I went past. An obituary is a notice that is put outside a home for the public to note that someone has died or passed away. For the 30 kilometres that we came past, there were at least 10 obituary notices, that's one for every three kilometres. All of these people are now dead. These people may have been your friends, might have been someone in your family, your fathers, brothers and if they were not, they were most certainly someone's brother, someone's sister, someone's aunt or uncle, someone's father or mother, someone's grandfather, grandmother or a relation. The only difference is perhaps they were not yours. Well, not yet. One day they are going to be yours. One day you are going to have to put up an obituary notice or someone is going to have to put up your obituary notice. It's just a matter of time. No one needs to doubt that. That day is coming for all of us. Well, if you think differently, then sorry to say that you are deeply mistaken. You've not yet realized that the deepest pain of loss is yet to come. The deepest kind of sorrow, the deepest kind of grief is yet to come.

**Aniccàwata Sankàra (Obituary)**

Wake up every morning and do what I just said and then look around you, the people at home, your mother, your father, people you live with, your closest family, your loved ones. Can you imagine their face on an obituary notice? Can you picture it? On the top it will say '*aniccàwata sankàra*', the meaning of which we discussed in one of the sermons in the past. If you miss that, then I encourage you to listen to it. Below that line will be the date of their birth, the day that they died. In the center will be a picture of their face. On the bottom of it will be the details of the funeral. Now, if that day is coming to all of us and there's no doubt about that, why wait? You might as well go and prepare your obituary notice already. In fact, there is only one bit of information that you are uncertain of. Everything else is predetermined, is it not? The sentence on the top, *'aniccàwata sankàra*', well, there is no change there. You know the date of birth, so get it printed in black and white. Where is your funeral going to be held? Most families have a family crematorium and you can get the details from your parents or your grandparents. Just get that address and put that on your obituary. Then you might as well just take a picture. Prepare your obituary notice and just leave one bit of detail blank. What bit of detail is that? Your date of death. That is one point that you need to reflect on.

Unfortunately, this is what we are all afraid of. This is what we are all thinking is never going to come to us. But we need to remind ourselves, this day is coming. As we all know, that day is most certainly coming. The only bit of detail that we don't know is, the expiry date. We don't have it etched on our foreheads or because when *'màra'* is ready he comes and takes us. We can't say, *“no, I can't come with you,”* we can't say, “*it's not my time yet.”* We can't say, “*hey, not today, come back tomorrow please.*” There's no time, you don't get an opportunity to discuss. When he says, it's time to go, it's time to go. So that day is coming and this is what I reflected on as we were driven from the monastery to that temple. But the reality is, one looks at an obituary notice and tell themselves;

*'Oh! how sad, how sorry I feel, so sorry for that young man, he should have lived a bit longer, how many hopes he might have had, what about his family? I feel so sorry for him. My sincere condolences, my deepest sympathies!*'

**Tsunami of** **decease, decay and death are coming**

Decay, death, old age, disease, these things are coming. It's like a storm that is about to hit. Some of you may live in countries where you are often prone to strong and harsh weather conditions. You might have hailstorms; you might have strong winds and maybe even tsunamis. Sometimes people are keen to watch the weather channel. They watch it because they want to know what's up ahead. They want to know whether there will be hailstorms or strong gales and winds. Why? because, they want to protect themselves from harm, to protect their families and property. Well, the sad reality is people are so keen to do this for their family, for their property and for themselves but what about the tsunami of death that is coming? What about the tsunami of old age that is coming? What about the tsunami of disease and decay that is coming? There's no doubt that these four are on its way. One might watch the weather channel and say,

*'actually, the weather is okay for the next fortnight. Nothing we need to worry about*'.

But, what channel can you watch where they will say that you are okay for the next fortnight? Which channel on TV tells you that you are not going to fall ill in the next two weeks? Which channel is going to tell you that you are not going to die in the next two weeks or decay in the next two weeks? Well, every channel you can think of. I'm talking about the channels that you should be watching. These are the channels of Buddha, dhamma and sangha. If you watch these channels, death is everywhere. The philosophy and the teaching of death is inevitable. Death is just around the corner, disease is just around the corner, decay and illness are just around the corner. It is broadcasted 24/7 - 365 days a year. But because we don't like to listen to this kind of news, we´ve switched off the channel. People sometimes don’t even go to the temple. People don’t go ang talk to a monk because they are scared, worried; I don’t want to hear something, that I don’t like to hear.

**The reality of life**

Whether you like to hear it or not, the tsunami will come and it's going to hit you. It's going to take everything that belongs to you. This is the reality of life. This is what we need to prepare for, because when and not if that day comes, you have to go. When that day comes, someone's going to pick up that obituary that you prepared with your name and your date of birth on it, place of burial, your cemetery or your crematorium. The only bit of detail that they need to insert there is the date of your death. So, go ahead, prepare it. Why not save someone the hassle. It's going to be a good experience. It's going to be an experience that hits you in the face. It's going to be an experience that gets you to think, makes you realize this is what I am battling with. Disease, decay and death are not the only things that The Buddha talked about. Now that you and I are born, we can't do anything to stop it. There is nothing that you can do to stop decay, there is nothing that you can do to stop falling ill, there is nothing that you can do to stop death and old age.

## 

## Àrya Satya

When The Buddha talks about the *'Àrya Satya'*, the Noble Truths, He is not necessarily talking about,

*“this is going to happen to you in this birth. How are you going to fix it? Because, it's too late for that. It's too late; if you've built a house, that house is going to fall one day brick by brick, that house is going to fall but what if you stop building*?"

Likewise, the Buddha’s teaching is not to try and find a place where you can run and hide when the tsunami is coming. His teaching is, it was our mistake in the first place having built this house, having built this cage for ourselves. You think it's not a cage? This thing that you call a body, head to toe, is it not a cage? What is a cage? A cage is where you trap an animal. That's why it's called a cage. Well, what about the cage that you are in right now? This cage that you call your body. Do you really like the eyes that you've got? The head that you've got? The face that you've got? The arms and the legs that you've got? Do you really like them? From head to toe, is there one part that you can point to and say,” yes*, I really like this”*? Is it your eyes that you like or is it looking that you like? Is it your ears that you like or is it hearing or listening to things that you like? What if you are able to look and not have to bother with eyes? Think about all the things that you have to do to protect your eyes? Some people wear glasses when their eyesight deteriorates. Some people have to use eye drops, go to the doctor/ the optician, get themselves checked. Then you have to eat all kinds of food to make sure you get all the nourishment and the nutrients to keep your eyesight. You have to protect your eyes from all kinds of diseases, bacteria, funguses and viruses that are always on the lookout to attack you.

**Old Age**

All this because you've got an organ that is susceptible to disease, decay and death. And then despite whatever you do, old age is always whacking at your eyes, moment after moment. Think about this at least. When did your eyes start to age? Was it when you hit the age of 50? Was it when you reached the age of 30, was it 20, was it 10 or 5? Or was it at the moment that you came into your mother's womb? When you were that little embryo and these little things called organs started to be distinguished - eyes start to come into being - was that not the moment when your eyes started to die? Yet, why do we celebrate birthdays? Is it birthdays that we really should be celebrating or the death? Every day that passes, every moment that passes, every year, every month and every week, what are we nearing? We are nearing death.

**We seem to celebrate the death not birthday**

In fact, here's something I want you to think about. Let's say, NASA is looking to put a spaceship in Mars. It wants the Space Shuttle to go and land on Mars and find out all these interesting things that people won't find out about Mars. They realized that this project is 10 years long. They are looking forward to the day when are able to launch the rocket. They are looking forward to the day when this rocket is going to land on Mars and do all the exploratory work. It's that end day they are looking forward to, the result of all their hard work, the day when their achievements are going to bear fruit. If this project is ten years long, do you think they are going to party harder when the first-year lapses or when the fifth-year lapses? It's on the fifth year. Why? because they are five years closer to their target. They are going to party harder when it's actually the sixth year, and the seventh year, and the eighth year because they know this day is just coming, it's just around the corner now. We are almost there. We can do this and when the tenth year comes, just before they launch, that's going to be a big grand party like no party they've ever seen before. Yet with life, we seem to be doing it completely different. We simply go about the wrong way. We seem to be celebrating death. Well, we may be celebrating birth, but actually all that is happening is, we are getting one year closer to death. We are partying hard. We are partying loud. We are inviting all our friends and family to do what? To tell the world*, 'hey I am one year closer to death, let's party'*…., but that's not what we think we are doing. We think we are celebrating birth or,

'*I have been alive in this planet for twenty years now. How cool is that?' ' I've been alive for thirty years now’, ‘I've been life for 40 years now, how cool is that?'*

Why do you think we do this? The reason we do this and the reason that NASA celebrates the other way around is, because NASA knows when the rocket is going to reach Mars. It's got a date. It knows the date their rocket is going to be launched. The problem with us people, the human beings, is that, we don't know when that date is. Do you think if people knew when they were going to die, they would celebrate their birthdays? Do you really think so? If when the mother gives birth to the child and the doctor comes and says, '*Madam, your child is going to die in 50 years from now, 40 years from now, 30, 20,10, 5, 4 or maybe just next year*', do you think that mother is going to throw a big grand party? All she can think of is how her child is going to die in 10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 years from now.

It just seems that the only problem that we are suffering from, the only reason that we seem to be celebrating birthdays is, because we don't know when we are going. But that day is coming. With every passing moment that day is coming and yet we seem to be celebrating. We seem to be enjoying birthdays. This is not me telling you off, for celebrating birthdays or telling you that you shouldn't celebrate your birthdays or not have birthday parties from here on. That's your business. What I decide to do with my time, with my life, with the time that I have left alive is entirely up to me and that decision I have made very firmly. There's no room for error there is no room for mistakes. I have one path. I have one destination. I have one journey and that journey is what I fulfil day in day out. I don't celebrate a birthday because as far as I'm concerned, today is my last day. I often tell our novice monks in the monastery;

*“when you wake up, remind yourselves and tell yourselves, today is my last day. Today I will die*”.

I speak to the monks and I advise them, instruct them do this daily.

## What is living?

From the moment we are alive or from the moment we are born to the moment we die; we like to say that we are living. It's interesting, that we think this and we tell ourselves that, *“I am living”,* and “*you are living”* or *“you are alive”* and “*he is alive*”, “*she is alive”* or“*they are alive”.* Should we not take a moment to just ask ourselves what we mean by this? What is living? What is it to be alive? When you say that, “*I am living, I'm alive”,* at that moment what do you think you are doing? If you think about it there are one of few things that we are really doing. Yes, one could say, *“well, I'm eating*", “*I'm sleeping”,* “*I'm thinking*” or “*I'm watching TV*”, “*I'm going to the park*”, “*I'm going for a walk*”, “*I am walking my dog*”, “*I'm taking a wash*” or *“I'm preparing my obituary notice*”. It could be any of those things.

**The process of living**

What is it that you do when you think you are living? If we boil it down to the most fundamental, basic things that we do, when we say we are living, we are looking or seeing, listening or hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or thinking. Do we do anything more than this? We use our five senses, our eyes to see, our ears to hear, our nose to smell, our tongue to taste, our body to feel and our mind to think. What else do we think we are doing? Is there anything else that we do that we could say, well, actually there's this as well that I'm doing when I'm alive or is it just a combination of the above six things? In fact, through your eyes and ears and nose and tongue and body you receive sensations, which go through this funnel into your mind, which are then processed and you have thoughts. Thoughts that are associated with seeing or consciousness, eye consciousness or *'chakku vinnàna'* or *'sòtha vinnàna'* or ear consciousness and so on. We don't need to go that far, we don't need to go that deep, let's just think about this at a basic level so, we can all understand what we're talking about here. The Buddha makes it very clear that these are the six things that a being does when they say that they are living. The process of living and I make emphasis on the word process of and I'll come back to that in a moment is about using eyes and ears and the nose and tongue and body and the mind to take *in rùpa, vèdanà, sannà, sankàra, vinnàna* or give rise to these aggregates, the five aggregates and process them to do things with them, to manipulate them in order to process and generate a world that we produce in our own minds.

**The world that exists within our mind**

When we talk about the world, we are not talking about the world that is out there. It's not the world that you see when you open your front door and see your garden and you see your cat chasing a rat and the dog chasing the cat. That's not the world we are talking about. We are talking about the world that exists within our minds. Remember this is the world that The Buddha says, “***dukkò lòkè patittità*”-** 'the world is placed on *“dukka*”'. That world does not exist out there. That world exists in our mind. So, when in the process of creating this world, we use the five senses and the mind. The inputs we take from the five senses are funnelled into the mind and processed.

I made emphasis on the word process because I want you to think, what is living? **What is living life other than the process of taking these inputs and then manipulating them within your mind**? I'll use a few examples or metaphors so you can try and relate these metaphors to what we are just talking about here. Recently I had a chat with one of our monks in the monastery and we were talking about a printer and how we use a printer to do one of several things. If you are thinking of a multifunctional printer, it can do a number of things; it can scan, it can print, it can send faxes, it can send emails or it can copy.

**The process of living (Example of the printer)**

Let's take a printer that can scan, fax, copy, email and print. When this printer is scanning, we can point at the printer and say, 'that printer is scanning'. When this printer is faxing a document, I can point the finger and say, 'that printer is faxing'. When it is printing, I say, 'that machine over there is printing'. But the moment it completes that process and it's just consuming energy, I can point my finger and say, 'there's a machine that's consuming energy'. When I point my finger at a machine and say it's doing something at this moment in time, what's happening is, there is a process that is running within it. If I take the process of printing, there are several things that help that process run. You've got the machinery, you've got the wheels and the cogs that turn, plate that feeds the paper from the in-tray, it sends this paper around the drum - imagine a toner and a laser printer - you've got the toner that is heated up and then it prints on the paper and you've got the output which is the printed document. When these things work together to produce a predefined output, at the moment that this procedure is running, I say it's printing. If I take the process of scanning, I can point at it and say it's scanning. But as soon as that process has come to an end, I cannot say that it is scanning. When it’s not printing, I can't say it's printing. It's just a printer then. I can't point at something and say it's printing, it's scanning or it's faxing. That's pointless. I can only say that's a printer, that's a scanner or that's a fax machine.

Likewise, when I point at a human being and say that human being is living, it's got to be one of those six things that's happening. If none of those six things are happening, what I am pointing at is a dead person; someone whose picture went on an obituary notice. When I point at a person who has got a head, arms and legs, a body, eyes, nose, ear and a tongue and all the rest of it, I can say, *'you are breathing', 'you are seeing', 'you are* hearing'. I mean what is breathing? Breathing is ultimately the feeling of breath coming in. So, it's using the body to take in the sensation of touch and then the mind processing those sensations and sending signals to your brain to do certain things within your body. Now, if you take the most basic being, let's say, bacterium. A bacterium will also be doing at least one of those things. A bacterium may not be able to see it. Photosynthesis occurs in some in bacteria so, these bacteria can be sensitive to light, for instance. Now, one could say, *'well that isn't seen as well'*. Yes, obviously you are not going to get an image there. But that being is sensitive to light. What else is our eyes doing? It's just sensitive to light and it's sensitive to colours. At a very basic level the bacterium is doing the same thing.

**Living is seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or thinking**

From the tiny microscopic beings to massive beasts, all of these beings, including us, if you point at yourself and say, “*I am living”,* what you are doing is either seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or thinking. If you are not doing any of those things you are dead. When I point at myself and say, *“I”* or “*me”,* I am just pointing at a machine. **I am pointing at a machine, that is seeing, that is hearing, that is looking or tasting or feeling or thinking**. I am just pointing at a machine and the things that are used to help run that process, I say, *'my mind'.* If you go back to the case of the printer, I can point at the printer and say “*that's the toner”,* “*that's the paper”,* “*that's the cartridge”,* “*that's the in-tray*”. I'm pointing at the bits that I can touch and can point at, can feel and can see, that helped run the printing process.

Likewise, if you take your index finger and point at yourself, you are simply pointing at or you are touching the bits that help you run the process. If you are touching your eye right now (go ahead and do it), all you are doing is pointing at a bit, that helps that process; the process of seeing, it's not the entire bit, it's just one bit of the process, it's just one thing that help run the process. You can't see when you are smelling. What I mean is, you can't be seeing and smelling at the same time. You can't taste and feel at the same time. Now, you might think,

*'well, of course I'm doing that. When I slice my pizza up and I'm ready to put it in my mouth, I'm smelling it, I'm tasting, I'm looking at it and I'm savouring at the same time'.*

The reason we feel that we are doing it at the same time is because, the thoughts that are involved in running these processes run at a fraction of a billion of a second. Therefore, to you and I, it feels like it's just one non-stop process.

**Body is not a multitasking machine**

Go back to the multifunctional printer, your printer is not scanning, printing, emailing and faxing at the same time. No, it's not. It's doing one thing at any given time. Your computer is the same. It's doing one thing at a time. It's not multitasking. Particularly beings, human beings, dèvas, brahmas, bacteria to whales, none of these beings are multitasking. They are all doing one thing at one time and that's either looking or seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or thinking. What generally happens is, when you see something and there are some thoughts that are involved in the process of seeing, immediately after that you have about a billion thoughts that are involved with the process of thinking. Open your ear to something and you are listening to something. A few thoughts pass by and then you have about another billion that run with thinking because it's your thinking that helps you to process the objects that you've received through your eyes and your ears. So, your five senses are just the gates that bring information from the world. It's the data that comes in from the world. Information is processed within us. For those of you who've studied computer systems you will have learned there's a difference between data and information. Likewise, our senses only bring us data. We create the information within ourselves, depending on why we do that, what we need and what we expect from them. I could come and give you a number. I could go to the next person and give them a number and the third person I give the same number. To each of you it's going to mean a different thing. For someone studying Geology, when I give a number, he may think,

“*is that the circumference of the earth?"*

I give them a really big number,

“is that the circumference of the earth or perhaps the diameter of a planet?"

I give the same number to a Biologist, he will be thinking,

“is that the length of 10 whales, side-by-side? Is that what it is?"

and I give the same number to a Microbiologist and he is going to ask me,

“is that the number of bacteria that's in this square inch?”

So, the same number is just data, but information is different because we are all processing it in different ways.

**The five senses process information**

Likewise, your eyes and ears and your five senses bring in data. You produce information depending on those. It is interesting to think about who this, '*I'* or this '*me'* that we keep talking about? Because if it's not one of these six things, what is the '*me'* and the '*I'* that I am talking about? Where is the *'I*'? Where is this '*me*'? When I say, *'I am watching TV'*, what am I doing? I'm using my eyes to see something and I'm using my ears to hear the noises that come from the TV set and the images that come from the TV that I'm looking at, so I'm seeing it. When I say I'm watching TV, I'm living, watching TV. Your living is simply, using your eyes and your ears and your mind, to take in inputs through the first two and then processing it with the third. Just going back to the printer again, when the printer is not printing, you can't point at it and say, *“you're printing”* or *“it's printing”.* When it's not scanning you can't you can't point at it and say, “*it’s scanning*”. It's just a scanner, it's just a printer. It's just a machine that's running a process. The machine doesn't know it's running a process. The process doesn't know it's being run in a machine. Does the printer know that it's printing? No, it's just printing. Does printing know that it's being done by a printer? No, it's just cause and effect, '*Paticca Sammupàda*'.

**The difference between a dead body and a living one**

In the same way, when you look at a person with the body of a human being, for you to be able to say, it's living, it's got to be doing one of those six things. If it is not doing one of those six things, it's just a body and it should probably be in the mortuary because it's dead. If that body is not doing one of those six things, it's a dead body. The difference between a dead body and a living one is, in a living body one of those six things are happening and a dead body does not do that. If that is the case, then, why are we so keen on naming individuals? What is the big deal about calling someone Adam or Smith or John or Cindy or Samantha? A human body or the physical form of the human body has no idea that it's living. The process of living has no idea that this process of living is happening inside a body. It's '*avidyàva'* (ignorance), that puts the two together and comes to the conclusion, 'I am alive', 'he is alive', 'she is alive', 'Samantha is alive', 'John is alive', and they are living or he is breathing, he is eating or sleeping, drinking, seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or touching, because none of those things are units. It's just a process that is running in a machine.

**Who put the 'I'into living**

We discussed about birth and death and the time between these two events. What is it that you and I have been doing since our birth until the moment we die? Is there anything that we do if not seeing or hearing or tasting or smelling or feeling or thinking? Is it not one of these six things that we do between these two events of birth and death? Do we do anything else other than this? If, when we do one of these things, we point at ourselves and say, I am living. Where does the *'I'* come from? Living is one of these six things. Then where does the *'I am living'* come from?” Where is the *'I'* come from? Who put the *'I'* into living? You've got a printer that's printing, you point at it and say, *“it's printing*” and the objects or the physical things that help run the printing process, are the printer, the toner, the paper and the cogs and the wheels that are inside it. Now, what if you went to a printer and said, *'oh, my printer is called Adam'.* Your friend comes along, he's coming to visit you, and you say,

“*Hey, can you go and fetch that paper from Adam for me, please”,*

He is going to ask,

*“What, who's Adam?*

*“Oh, it is my printer!”*

*“You've named your printer? Are you crazy?”,*

He is going to ask you that. Why? Because, how can you personify a printer?

Likewise, when you look at yourself in the mirror, if you are seeing anything more than the things that help you run one of these six processes, you can ask yourself, where did, whatever your name is, look at the mirror and ask, *'where is (put your name here)?*'. If you are Wally, look in the mirror and ask, *'where is Wally?*' If your name is Sam, where is Sam? Where are these people? Where did they come from? Because all you should be really seeing is just a machine running one of six processes. It's a multifunctional machine. It can see, it can hear, it can taste, it can smell, it can touch or feel the sensation of touch and it can think. None of these processes run at once, only one process at any given time. So, if you're not going to name your printer, if you are not going to name your computer, if you are not going to name your phone, why name yourself? Why look in the mirror and say, *'that is “me”'.* Well, where did the *'me'* come from?

**What is ignorance**

This view that, “*I exist”,* comes from ignorance. What is ignorance? It's not knowing the truth. Not knowing the truth of what? Ignorance of **'dukka satya, dukka samudaya satya, dukka niròdha satya, dukka niròdha gàminì patipadàya satya*'.*** If it is ignorance that's responsible for tying this physical body or object that we are looking at, or seeing in the mirror with the processes that are happening within it and then merging them and saying that is *“me”,* if it's signals that's responsible for that, what happens for as long as ignorance exists? Dukka, suffering. That is the cause for suffering. To eradicate suffering what you should do is eradicate ignorance. As soon as you eradicate ignorance, the *“me”* in you disappear. That's because it’s ignorance that brought the *'me'* here in the first place.

Let's take an example. If you think about a robot, these days robots can do all sorts of weird and wonderful things as you might have seen on media. There are robots that can talk, there are robots that can walk, there are robots that can fly and do various things. You and I know that a robot is artificial, it's not real. Even if someone brought a robot to you and said, *“hey, this is Adam”*, you are not going to walk up to it and say, *“hello, Adam*”. You will not treat it the same way you treat a friend. Because you know very well it is just a robot, it is just a machine, a machine that's running a pre-programmed process. If the robot is able to avoid obstacles and walk from one end of the room to the other, what this it is doing is, taking in light through its eyes, it's able to distinguish objects by looking at the difference in colour and then determining that,

*“I'm looking at one object, I'm looking at another object, I want to get from this end of the room to the other and if this obstacle stands in between me and the other end of the room then I need to avoid this”.*

What is it doing then? It's thinking. It has just taken in input from the mechanical eyes and then it's using those inputs to run a pre-programmed action in its head. By head, I mean a computer chip. And then, when it does that process, it comes to the conclusion, *'I need to avoid this obstacle and then walk past it and then get to the other end of the room'.*

So, from the moment you switch on this robot to the moment you switch it off, having achieved that objective, you look at it and say, *'that's just a robot running a program; running a process'*. How can you look at Adam, when he is trying to walk from one end of the room to the other and say*,” that's Adam trying to walk from one end of the room to the other?”* Where did Adam come from? Where did *“I*” or “*he*” come from? After all, it's just a machine running a process, running lots of different processes to help it get from one end of the room to the other. The reason I want you to think about it this way is because this helps you to ask yourselves whether a *“me”* or an *“I”* exist in this world. Because for as long as I think that I exist, my prime objective will be to preserve myself, will be to take care of myself, to make sure that I continue to exist, to make sure that I have all the things that keep me running.

Do you think a robot loves to walk? No, it doesn't care, it's just a machine. But what about you and I? We love to see, we love to hear, we love to taste and we love to smell and we love to touch and we love to think. Why? Because 'ignorance' tells me that, *“I*” *exist*",” there *is a* *'****me****'* in this picture that came from nowhere. Because we are unable to distinguish that it's just a machine running these processes. I see a *“me”* when I look in the mirror. I see an *'I'*, when I think about myself and think, “*hey, what am I doing right now? I'm looking, I'm seeing, I'm smelling, I'm tasting, I'm feeling. Also, it must be “me”, that's doing this*'. So, there wasn't a *“me”* before, but I've brought in a *“me”* through ignorance. Now, if I'm able to eradicate and treat this disease that is ignorance, treat this problem that is ignorance, once for every bit of ignorance that disappears, that is chipped away, equal amounts of me and I are chipped away, what you are left with ultimately is, just a machine running a process.

## An Arahant doesn't feel the ‘self’

Why do you think then an Arahant has no interest in looking or seeing things? He has no interest in hearing or listening to things, he has no interest in tasting or smelling, no feeling of things because there is no ignorance in him. He has come to a complete and perfect understanding that this is just a machine running six processes. Just like a robot has no interest in looking or smelling or tasting, an Arahant has no interest in looking, tasting, smelling and feeling. But you and I, we love to see, we love to hear, we love to smell, and we love to taste and we love to do all those things. Because there's a *“me*” and an *“I”* that has come into the picture. Remove the “*me”* and the “*I*” and you are left with a machine that's running six processes.

The reason that you and I are so concerned and so worried about the things that help us run this process, why we love our eyes our bodies is because these are the things that help us run that process. So, the difference between the robot and yourself is that, the robot does not have a “me” on an “I”. Whereas you and I, we look at the mirror and go there's*, 'me*' You look at a picture and go, *'that’s me, there'.*  In the picture you have of your school trip with all your friends standing around, the first person you are looking at is, yourself. You scan that picture, “*where's me, where's me, where's me?”* You look at now, “*ah, there's me”.* Where did that *“me”,* come from? All you are really looking at are, if there were 60 of you who went on that trip, 60 machines running six processes each. In fact, they are all looking at the photographer. They've got one process that's running looking at the photographer. 60 machines running the same process. Now where did the *“me”* come from? Where did Andy come from? Where did Wally come from? They are just machines running processes. Now if I took a picture of sixty robots and showed it to you, you are not going to ask, where is Andy? You are not going to ask that, because you know it's a robot. When we name ourselves, when we go to point ourselves a finger and say ‘*this is me’, ‘this is* *I’*, you need to ask yourself, where is the ‘*I’*? I am just touching at something that helps me either see or hear or smell or feel or think. Well clearly, you can't touch your mind, you can only touch your mind, with your mind. You can't point your finger at your mind, but the rest of your body you can and all you are pointing at are bits that help you run a process.

At the beginning I talked about the obituary notices that we saw. These people are now dead. If pointed a finger at yourself and said this is ‘me’, now we know that ‘me’ is nothing but a machine that is looking or seeing or a machine that is hearing, a machine that is smelling or a machine that is tasting and a machine that is running one of those six processes. Where is the *“*me*”* in the next moment? The *‘*me’ that existed at that second is now gone. That ‘me’ is no longer alive.

Let's go back to that printer. You've given the command from your computer to print. Your printer has now started printing. You can hear the paper being fed into it, you can hear the toner starting to kick in and so forth. Say, you've given a command to run two sheets of print. At the moment you hear the printer warming up and making a noise, you point your finger at the printer and say, *'it's printing'* and you keep your finger pointed at the printer and you keep saying, *'it's printing, it's printing, it's printing, it's printing'*. At one point it's going to finish printing but you continue to say it's printing. Can you continue to say it at the moment it stopped printing? No. Now you can't say, it's printing. What if someone sends a fax after it's just printed the two pages and you continue to say it's printing. Now there's a fax that's being received by this printer or this multifunctional device. Or someone sends another command to scan a document. Now it's scanning. But you are saying, *“it's printing”.* Well, the printer died a moment ago. Now it's a scanner. Now you have to say it's scanning. Otherwise, you are wrong. If you are pointing at a machine that is scanning and goes “*it's printing”,* you are mistaken. Just the same as if you are pointing at someone who is watching TV and say, *'he's watching TV, he's watching TV, he's watching TV, he's watching TV*'. And then, they switch off the television, you can no longer point at that person and say, “*you are watching TV”.* Because he is no longer watching TV. That is because one of the conditions that gave rise to the creation of this being watching TV has now ceased. Again, we always keep going back to Dependent Origination. What is watching TV? Watching TV is nothing but a TV being on, your eyes being open, light rays coming from your TV into your eye and your mind being the receptor of these signals or eye consciousness coming from your eyes. For as long as that process keeps running, you are watching TV. Switch off any one of those things, either your eyes, the TV, pull the plug, or whack this person on the head with a stick, so he loses consciousness, but the TV is still on, his eyes are still open, but he is not watching TV. Switch off the TV, his eyes are still open, he is not watching TV. Or keep the eye open and keep the TV on, move something in front of his eyes or close his eyelids, he is not watching TV. So, watching TV is nothing but Dependent Origination; many causes giving rise to a certain process.

## Cause and Effect

Likewise, living is nothing but a number of conditions. Living is nothing but one of these six processes running at any given time. If we know that these six processes are nothing but cause and effect, '*Dependent Origination'* or '*Paticca Sammuppàda'*, if we know that this is nothing but cause and effect or *'hèthu pala',* as soon as one of these causes cease to exist, then that effect ceases to exist. Just the same way, as soon as the printer runs out of toner, whether there's paper or whether the drums are turning, whether the computer is sending commands to print or not, has no effect because one of the important factors for this printer to print has ceased to exist. So, you can't point at the printer and say, *“its printing*”. It's not printing anymore. Why, because the causes that are required to produce that effect has now ceased to exist. When the causes are there, the effect is there. When the causes cease to exist, the effect ceased to exist. This is cause and effect (hèthu-palawàdaya).

This is what you need to see when you look at yourself in the mirror. When you look at yourself in the mirror, at that point in time you are looking at a machine that is looking. Are you not? Because you are looking at the mirror. That’s the reflection you are seeing in the mirror but the moment you say, that is “*me*” that is *“I”*, you are referring to a moment that passed several billionths of a second ago and several billionths of a second later that machine is doing something else.

**Thought Moments**

So, if that is the case then, what we really need to understand is, yes people die, conventional death at 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and so on and then we print an obituary notice. But what if we had to print an obituary notice to this person that you call *“I”?* You would have to print an obituary notice every billionth of a second. Why? Because this 'thing' that you call *“me”* or *“I”* is nothing but a process that's running. And this process is a seeing process, a hearing process, a tasting process, a smelling process, a touching process or a thinking process. The lifespan of one of these processes is a billionth of a second. Why? Because the lifespan of a thought is only 17 'chiththakshana' or **thought moments**. And as soon as 17 thought moments have passed, a thought ceases to exist. A thought is what sees, a thought is what hears, it is the thought that smells, it is the thought that tastes, it is the thought that thinks. If the lifespan of a thought is one billionth of a second, well you may need to keep printing obituary notices every billionth of a second. "*I died many millions of seconds ago. I've died now", "I died now", "I'm dead now".* You won't be able to say anything else other than I’m dead now. Then where is the, “*I”?* Where is the *“me*”? Where are *'you'*? You are just a machine that's running six processes.

But, none of these six processes run at once. It is one process at a time but we can't comprehend that and we can't grasp the speed of this machine. Going back to the printer, imagine this printer could print a hundred pages. When you flicked your fingers, it could print a hundred pages and then it could scan six hundred pages and receive ten thousand faxes. When you did this, you would just see a multifunctional printer just spewing papers and receiving tens of thousands of faxes and your computer getting clogged up with all of these scanned images that are coming in. You wouldn't then be able to say, that prints, that is scanning or faxing. You wouldn’t know what to call it. You wouldn't be able to say, that's doing X thing, right now. Besides, you won't be able to get a name because it's just a machine that's running a process. Likewise, we are all machines running processes.

## Why the urge to compare ourselves with somebody else

So, what makes you feel that you are more valuable than the machine that's next to you, that's also running six processes? Why do you think that you are superior to the other person? Why does one person think that they are the same as another person or inferior to another person? The reason we think that we are better, lower or equal to and the urge to compare ourselves with somebody else, is when this ‘*me’* and ‘*I*’ come into the picture. An Arahant doesn't do that. An Arahant doesn't think that he is better than somebody else, inferior to somebody else or even equal to somebody else because it's just a machine that's running six processes. How can you say, your seeing process is better than my seeing process? If we are both looking at a flower, how can you tell me, that your seeing process is better than mine? You can tell me that your eye is better than my eye. Let's say, your eye had 20/20 vision and mine doesn't. Well, you could say your eye is better than my eye but how can you say that your seeing process is better than my seeing process?

If you are able to look at yourself in that view, if you are able to understand what we've just discussed, then this nonsense of comparing yourself to somebody else, to your friends and to your brothers and sisters and thinking, *'well, I've got a bigger house, you've got a smaller house and I've got a better car and your car is not as fast as mine, I've got better kids than you'*, all this comparison goes out of the window. It goes straight in the bin because what are you comparing? Machines and processes. Seeing processes, hearing processes, thinking processes, smelling processes and tasting processes. What you should be doing is, say, “*hey, my seeing process is better than your seeing process, well my hearing process is better than your hearing process*”. People will think you've gone crazy. But have we not gone crazy? We are crazy, we are mad. This is why when there is no *“me*” and *“I*” our mad consciousness “*vinnànaya”* comes in and creates a “*me”,* creates an *“I”.* Then it grasps and holds on to the things that help you run that process, including the *“I*” including the *'rùpa*'”- the object that you see, and including the eye consciousness because we've given so much value to 'myself'. So, therefore I need to exist.

**‘Me’ and ‘I’ is just a delusional view**

What you need to do then is, to reflect on this. Reflect on how and why we seem to find and give rise to this entity called a *“me*” and an *“I*”, when actually the “*me”* and that “*I*” is just a process and this machine running that process died before I even started saying these words. By the time I've completed this sentence, I will have died a billion times over and over. So, all you are pointing at, all you are seeing in the mirror is just a machine running these processes. If you are seeing anything else then you've got to realize that, that is just a delusional view. It's just delusion because what you are seeing there does not exist. What your mind is seeing there, does not exist. Your eyes are seeing a machine. Do your eyes see a “*you”?* No, your eyes see the machine. Your eyes see your eye, your eyes see your ears, your eyes see your nose, and your tongue.

So, your eyes are just seeing the machine. So, who is seeing the you? Your mind is seeing the 'you*'.* Why is your mind seeing the 'you*'*? Because your mind is suffering from ignorance. If you realize this and think about the difference between you and an Arahant, an Arahant is someone that, does not see a “*me”.* He does not see “*himself*” or a “*h*e” or an *“I*” or “*you*”. All he sees is just a machine running six processes. The difference between an Arahant and me is that *'me*' and *'I*' have ignorance, whereas he has no ignorance. Because there is no ignorance, he does not see a '*you*' and a *'me'* and an '*I*' and a *'him'*. Then we can infer that it's the ignorance that tells us that, *'I*' exist, that, '*me'* exists. Think about this.

## Death is coming

This is why every day you should reflect and realize that death is coming. If there's a tsunami that's going to hit us in a month's time, what do you think we'll be talking about? We are not going to be talking about whose birthday party I am attending this afternoon, we are not going to talk about that degree certificate that I've got to get myself, I'm not going to talk about, will I get my job in two weeks’ time? I'm going to talk about the tsunami that's going to hit me and it's going to take everything that I own. The problem is, we don't know when that death is coming which makes it even worse. The Weather Channel tells me when the tsunami is coming, The Weather Channel tells me when that hailstorm is coming, when the gale winds are coming, when there is snow. But there's no channel that tells me when my death is coming. This is why you've got that obituary notice with the question mark next to the date of death. The unfortunate reality is that death could be today, that death could be this hour, this minute, but if we live a life like we are not going to die, if we live a life like we are deathless, then we are doing ourselves the greatest harm ever. It’s going to be calamitous because when it comes, there's no room for arguments, there's no room for debate, there's no room for discussion. When death comes it's time to go whether you like it or not.

But the problem is, we have no idea whatsoever when it's going to reach us. But people live like it's not going to come to them at all. Some people live like, *'oh, it's going to be a 10, 20, 30, 50; you know many, many years from now'*. The same people will not wake up the next morning. You go and knock on their door and they don't answer the door, you call them, no answer. You ring the neighbours and they say, “*well, we found out this morning he was dead*”. That day could be today for all of us. This is why I instruct our novice monks in the monastery to remind themselves every morning that today is their last day. If you think about it, then that way you live a life like a man who is going to die and a man who is ready to die, a man who knows that when it comes, he is helpless. So, whatever preparation he must do, he must do it now. He should prepare for that event, for that fate. The only way we can prepare for that is, if we practice the Dhamma.

**Practise the Dhamma in preparation for your death**

This is why we have to use every moment that we can spare. Every moment that we have a life, we must use it towards understanding and absorbing the Dhamma, to remove *ràga, dvèsha, mòha”* from our minds. But what do people normally do? They live a life full of *ràga, dvèsha, mòha* and any spare time they have, they go to the temple. They spend in the vicinity and in the association of the Buddha dhamma and the sangha. It's completely the wrong way around. This is why I have got to remind you that what you are doing is wrong. What you are doing is only going to bring you harm and damage and destruction. Today you'll read this topic, you think to yourself, “*you know what, he's right, I'm going to die today, I'm going to listen to all of these sermons today, right now I'm going to understand this dhamma and I'm going to become a Sòtàpanna”.* But you will go to school tomorrow, you will go to your workplace tomorrow, you may go to the market tomorrow and guess what? When you go home, you will switch on the television, and the world is right in front of you. The world is telling you;

“*hey forget about that, we've got this medicine that makes sure that death will not come to you for the next 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 years. You are going to live a life of luxury, happiness and sensual pleasures. Go enjoy life. Life is worth living,”*

That is what they will tell you and you are going to fall for it. You are absolutely going to fall for it because that is the association of ignoble people. That is the association of immoral people. For as long as you do that, destruction awaits, death awaits, decay awaits, disease awaits. If you want to put a stop to all of this, you have to associate noble and moral people because they will always remind you,

“*hey, that's not reality. Reality is death, decay and old age are coming. Do something about it because if you don't do something now, you will be too late.”.*

This is the same thing I tell my parents; it is the same thing I tell my family; it is the same thing I tell my fellow monks at the monastery and it is the same thing I am going to tell the world. That death is coming, do something now or you are going to be too late!



00.02.30 Start

## 00.06.34 Paying homage to the Lord Buddha

## 00.07.34 Inviting all beings to rejoice in this meritorious deed

## 00.11.50 Seeking forgiveness from the Noble ones

## 00.21.50 The problem must be absolutely clear

## 00.24.20 Kalyànamitra

## 00.27.11 Dhamma and Vinaya

00.29.23 An obituary notice, one for every three kilometres.

## 00.31.37 Aniccàwata Sankàra (Obituary)

## 00.41.33 Tsunami of death is coming

00.43.15 The reality of life

## 00.44.54 Àrya Satya

## 00.47.35 Old Age

00.48.58 We seem to celebrate the death not birthday

## 01.00.03 What is living?

01.01.44 Process of living

## 01.05.46 The world that exists within our mind

## 01.07.41 The process of living (Example of the printer)

01.12.15 Living is seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, feeling or thinking

01.15.07 Body is not a multitasking machine

## 01.17.42 The five senses process information

## 01.20.11 The difference between a dead body and a living one is, in a living body one

01.22.41Who put the 'I'into living

## 01.26.23 What is Ignorance?

## 01.33.10 An Arahant doesn't feel the self

## 01.46.25 Cause and Effect

## 01.48.30 Thought Moments

## 01.52.02 Why the urge to compare ourselves with somebody else

## 01.57.31 ‘Me’ and ‘I’ is just a delusional view

## 02.07.55 Death is coming

## 02.11.00 Practise the Dhamma

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## Proof read by C.P 14.04.2020