



## Dependent Origination & Emptiness 3 of 4

March 19, 2022

### **Leigh Brasington:**

While everybody's getting back, I thought I'd share with you something I learned earlier this week. Sati: that's the word we usually translate as mindfulness, right? Usually what you find is that it originally meant memory; Sanskrit "Smṛti". And I think that's correct. But it turns out, there's another way that sati can show up. It can show up as the locative past participle of the word "to be". I don't know exactly what a locative past participle is, it has something to do with location. Anyhow, if we looked at the four elements as mindfulness practice using sati; sati Earth would be: "there is Earth", "there being Earth", actually. There being Earth, there being water. There being fire, there being air. So, sati has a sense of remembering to be here now. But it also has a sense of recognizing what's going on right here. There being earth, there being fire, etc. Just a little tidbit to throw out while everybody gets settled again at their computer.

The next thing I want to talk about is middle length discourse Number 38, which is the greater discourse of the destruction of craving. It's a chapter in my book on page 48 of the PDF- Sati, the son of the fisherman. Again, if you don't have page numbers, you can scroll back to the table of contents, and perhaps you can click on Sati, the son of the fisherman, but you probably don't need much from it. It's not really going to be giving you charts and so forth, just a little bit from it and I'll put it in the chat. Now, one thing I definitely need to say at the beginning, is that one of the most important things to bring on the spiritual path is being comfortable with "I don't know". I mean, if you're not comfortable with "I don't know", then you're liable to just come up with anything so that you're not uncomfortable. It really is important that if you don't know, okay, you don't know. For everything you know, I could generate a dozen things that you don't know very easily, like what's going on on the equator at noon, and the nearest inhabited planet to Beetlejuice. There's just so much we don't know. So it's really important to be comfortable with that. Because otherwise, you just start grabbing onto some idea to make you not uncomfortable and in so doing you start clinging to that idea. And then you lost your open mind that's really necessary for advancement on the spiritual path. Now, the reason I say this is because I don't know what happens when we die. I've got no memory of ever having died. I've seen lots of supposed evidence but none that I find 100% reliable. It's just in the "I don't know" category. I don't know what happens when we die. I'll find out, or maybe I won't, but you know, at some point, something will happen. That's the preface to this sutta. As I said, it's the sutta on the destruction of craving. It's actually two different discourses jammed together to make one sutta. The first discourse is on the destruction of bhava tanhā. Bhava tanhā would be "craving for becoming". The second discourse is the destruction of kāma tanhā craving for sensual pleasures.

The craving for becoming actually has two aspects to it. One aspect would be craving for becoming something in this life. So, I'm craving to become rich and famous, or I'm craving to



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become whatever you want to fill in. Right? So, this life becoming; it's not so much a sensual pleasure or anything, but just- you want to become something. There's vibhava tanhā; you don't want to become something- you don't want to become sick with COVID. So there could be craving of vibhava tanhā, as well. Both vibhava tanhā and bhava tanhā are setups for dukkha. So we need to overcome these cravings as well as overcome the craving for kāma tanhā. Craving for sense pleasures, but both of these bhava tanhā, and vibhava tanhā could be craving in terms of your next life. In my next life, I want to be reborn in a family that has a Mercedes Benz, or I want to be reborn as a deva or whatever, right? So you have some idea of what you're going to become in your next life and you're craving for that to happen.

That was the basic idea behind the dominant spiritual paradigm at the time of the Buddha: Brahmanism. Brahmins were craving to be reborn in union with Brahma, they wanted to become in union with Brahma. Now, the Jains, which was another large spiritual group, at the time of the Buddha, they were craving for not becoming. They were so intent on not doing any action that would have karmic resultants that the best thing you could do as a Jain was to starve yourself to death. Not a really useful thing to do. Highly recommend against that, but they were so afraid of whatever they were gonna become in their next life that they were craving not to become. Like I said, I don't know what happens when you die. But Sati thought he knew; he thought that his consciousness would transmigrate to another incarnation. A number of monks heard this and they said to Sati, "Is this true? Is this what you that you think the Buddha teaches?" Sati said "yes, as I understand the dhamma taught by the Blessed One, this same consciousness which roams and wanders through the rounds of rebirth is not another." The monks said, "Do not say that Sati- the Blessed One has said on many occasions that consciousness is dependently originated." But, Sati, even though he was questioned and cross questioned by those monks, refused to give up his pernicious view. So, the monks went to see the Buddha, saluted, sat down at one side, told him all that had transpired. The Buddha said to one of the monks, "Tell Sati the Master calls", so that monk went to find Sati. "Friend Sati, the Master calls!" And so Sati went to see the Buddha, saluted and sat down at one side. Sitting there, the Buddha said to him, "Sati, is it true, that you think what I teach is that this consciousness roams and wanders through the rounds of rebirth? Not another?" "Yes, Venerable sir, as I understand the dhamma that you teach, this very consciousness roams and wanders through the rounds of rebirth, not another." "Sati, what is consciousness?" "Venerable sir, consciousness is that which thinks and feels and experiences here and there, the results of good and bad actions." Consciousness is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the results of good and bad actions. What do you think of Sati's definition of consciousness? You think that's good? You like that definition?

The Buddha responded, "You foolish man. When have you ever known me to teach anything like that? For on many occasions I have said that consciousness is dependently originated. But you misrepresent us and store up much demerit that will be for your harm and suffering for a long time. Monks, do you understand the dhamma taught by me as this bhikkhu Sati tells it?" "No, Venerable sir, for many occasions you have explained that consciousness is dependently originated." "Good monks, it's good that you understand this." And then the Buddha says, "But this monk Sati, has stored up much demerit, and he will be known by his pernicious view for a long time." And here we are, two and a half thousand years later, and we know of poor old Sati, because of his pernicious fear. The Buddha says consciousness is dependently originated and



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it's reckoned by the conditions on which it depends. When consciousness arises dependent upon eye, and sight objects, its reckoned as eye consciousness. When it arises dependent upon ear and sounds- ear consciousness. Nose and smell- nose consciousness. Taste and tongue- tongue consciousness. Body and tangibles- body consciousness. Mind and mind objects- mind consciousness, just like a fire is reckoned dependent upon what the conditions are upon which it depends. When a fire burns in a forest, it's a forest fire. When it burns dependent on rubbish, it's a rubbish fire; when it burns on a house, it's a house fire; when it burns on chaff, it's a chaff fire; when it burns on cow dung, it's cow dung fire. In the same way consciousness is reckoned by the conditions on which it depends. Now consciousness is a really important word and in the Buddha's teaching it shows up as one of the five khandas. It is one of the six elements when it starts talking about the six elements. The word is *viññāṇa*. There are the six consciousnesses of the six senses. Now, these are not separate things, right? These are our conceptualizations, I conceptualize hearing consciousness, ear consciousness, if I think about becoming conscious of a sound, right? But that's not separate or different from eye consciousness- But it's not the same either. It is arising based on a different thing. It's the capacity of the mind to know. But it's dependently originated. And what the Buddha is teaching here is that consciousness arises dependent upon sensory input. And if you think about it, when have you ever been conscious when there was no sensory input? Every night, right? You're in deep dreamless sleep. But you weren't conscious then, were you? You were in deep dreamless sleep, there was no sensory input and there was no consciousness. Or if you've had surgery, and they put you out? Well, there was no consciousness, even though there was no sensory input. If someone has a dream, then the mind consciousness comes back. Or if it's an unfortunate thing where you're not completely out when they give you anesthesia you may be hearing things or something that has been reported, but it's hearing consciousness. So as I mentioned earlier, there's always an object of consciousness, and the object is apprehended through the senses. So consciousness arises dependent on the senses, and dependent upon their being an object and dependent upon the interaction of mind and body. You need the mind to basically process what's coming in through the bodily senses-for external, and you still need the mind to deal with your mental sensory input as well.

So the Buddha points out that consciousness is dependently originated and then he starts asking questions of the monks to see if they understand dependent origination and the first question is: "Monks, do you see that this has come to be?" The commentaries make a big deal of figuring out what the "this" is referring to, and they decide the Buddha pointed to his own body. Do you understand this has come to be? I don't think that's what's going on. I think what was going on is that the Buddha was asking, "Monks when something comes to be, do you understand this has come to be? In other words, do you realize something has arisen?" "Yes, Venerable sir." "Monks, do you understand this has come to be dependent on that?" "Yes, Venerable sir." "Monks, can there be confusion about whether this has come to be dependent on that?" "Yes, Venerable sir." The questioning goes on in this vein, and it gets more and more tedious. As much as I love MN 38, MN 38 has pages and pages of some of the most tedious prose in the whole canon, we get the 12 links of dependent origination in their forward arising order, then we get them in their forward ceasing order. And then we get them in their reverse order arising and the reverse order ceasing and recapitulations of all of this stuff. It goes on and on and on. You should probably read it once. After you've read it once, then you're probably like, okay, just turn the pages get to the real part of the matter. But basically, what I'm guessing is



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happened, there were some useful question and answers there. As this sutta was being preserved, the monks who were preserving it just threw in a little bit more and a little bit more into the question & answers till they had a catechism of question and answers. Remember, these sutras were preserved by chanting them. And when you learn to chant them, that's how you learn the dharma. I mean, you didn't have a book, they didn't have books back then, right? If you wanted to know about a sutta, you either had to memorize it yourself. Or you had to go to somebody else at him, memorize it, and get them to recite it for you. And so, you learn the dharma by learning to recite the suttas. Being able to recite the 12 links of dependent origination it forwards and backwards and arising and ceasing and so forth- that's it's a good teaching tool, and so that got jammed into this particular sutta. But eventually it comes back to the heart of the matter.

"Bikkhus, knowing and seeing it this way, that is, in terms of dependent origination, would you run back to the past, wondering, were we in the past? Were we not in the past? What were we in the past? How were we in the past? Having been what? What did we become in the past?" "No, venerable, sir. Knowing and seeing in this way, would you run forward to the future thus? Shall we be in the future? Shall we not be in the future? What shall we be in the future? How shall we be in the future? Having been what, what shall we become in the future?" "No, Venerable sir. Knowing and seeing in this way, would you now be inwardly perplexed about the present? Am I Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go?" "No, Venerable sir." What the Buddha is saying- do these questions about the past the future or the present arise in you if you look at the world in terms of dependent origination? "No, Venerable sir." "Monks, are you saying this just because I'm your teacher?" "No, Venerable sir." "Monks, are you saying this based on your own experience?" "Yes, Venerable sir." "Good, monks. It's good that you know this from your own experience." I just put the questions in the chat if you want to look them over. But basically what the Buddha is saying, if you understand dependent origination, you won't be wondering, what was I in the past or even did I exist in the past? And you won't be wondering, what will I be in the future? Or even will I be in the future? And you won't even be wondering, What am I now? These questions won't occur. If, for example, what happens if you fall off the edge of the world? Does it hurt? I mean, you fall off the edge of the world? Do you land on something and it hurts? Or you just keep falling? If you just keep falling? Do you fall faster and faster and eventually have friction set you on fire? That would hurt. Or would you starve to death or something that would hurt, right? So if you fall off the edge of the world, does that hurt? Well, these questions never occurred to any of you, right? Because you don't believe in the edge of the world. That's not how you understand reality. You understand it's a sphere, and there's no such thing as the edge of the world. The questions make no sense at all. Right? If you understand dependent origination in his general sense that basically everything arises dependent on other things, and that you are no exception to this, you too arise dependent only on other things, there's no entity to be found, then the question of what was my entity in the past, or what will be my entity in the future, or even what's my entity now doesn't occur because you're not conceptualizing an entity. If you really see the general teaching of dependent origination, which could be stated as: Everything arises dependent on other things- what you wind up seeing is what I call "SODAPI": streams of dependently, arising processes interacting. That's all there is. There are all these streams of processes that are dependently originated. And they intersect at this point that I call me.



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Now, what are the streams that have made you who you are? Well, some of it's genetic material you got from your parents, right? But you're not your genetic material. If you think you are your genetic material you've identified with the body and your body is going to die, and you don't want that, right? So you're kind of hoping you're going to be something else, like your education. But, maybe the language that you speak, those are all streams that come together- your family of origin, who your friends were when you were a little kid, what books you read, what movies you watched, who your friends are now, which dharma talks you hear, the list is probably literally endless. Of all the streams have dependently arising processes that have impacted to make you who you are at this moment. I'm speaking to you in English, right? That's because I live in northern North America, where English is spoken. That's because some British guys came to North America, they ran off the Dutch, they ran off the French, they ran off the Spanish, they suppressed the natives- and so their language got left here and that's what I learned. Okay, so I'm an English speaker. When I first encountered the Pāli, word, *muditā*, appreciative joy is usually translation, I didn't know what *muditā* meant. But when they told me it was sympathetic joy, I still didn't know what it meant- what's sympathetic joy? And it was only later I began to get a sense of what *muditā* was, because we don't have that concept in English. We have the opposite- envy, right? So my language has, to some extent, determined who I am. The concepts that I have. This is all we are. We're just the intersection of a bunch of "soda pie"- streams of dependently arising processes interacting. That's all you find anywhere. I mean, if I hold this up, you know what it is? It's a cell phone, right? Yeah. Everybody knows that. No, this is a bunch of streams of dependently arising processes. It's plastic, and metal. And this is the rubber case and this silicone so it's what dinosaurs and sand and some mining operation and some poor soul probably in China that put it all together. Oh, and whoever wrote the software and put it on, and whoever sold it to me, and all of that has come together, and now I have a cell phone. Right? But when I say this is my cell phone, that's a concept, and it doesn't fully capture what's going on. In fact, it's probably not possible to mentally in my head, fully capture everything that's gone on to into making that cell phone. And it's the same with you. You can talk about your genetics and your family of origin and your education and all this other stuff. But what about that nice lady at the grocery store, who complimented you on whatever- that fit into your system, and you probably forgot about it till I just mentioned it. Maybe you don't even remember it. But that's part of who you are. All this stuff has come together, most of it we don't even remember. And it's made us who we are. When you can look at the world from a "soda pie" perspective- from the perspective of nothing but streams of dependently arising processes interacting- the questions of "what was in the past? What will I be in the future? What am I right now?" don't occur. And this was basically the Buddha's answer to Sati, the son of the fishermen. If you could understand that your consciousness is just another 'soda pie' phenomena, then you wouldn't think that it's going to be reincarnated or reborn or whatever phrase you want to use. You wouldn't be wondering what will I be in the future, or what was I in the past, and you wouldn't be so inwardly perplexed about the present. So that's the first discourse in this sutta. The second one is about *kāmma tanhā*, overcoming craving for sensual pleasures. And basically what it says is, we're caught up in looking for pleasant vedana, and we don't know any other source of kamma, sence pleasures, and what the Buddha suggests as a way to overcome kamma tanhā is what is referred to as the gradual training. If you're interested in the gradual training, the best sutta I would say on that is DN 2-the *Sāmaññaphalasutta*.



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But here, there's an abridged version of it. And basically, a Tathāgata arises in this world who teaches the dhamma, which is good in the beginning, good in the middle, good in the end. Someone hears the Tathāgata, gains faith, goes forth, keeps the precepts, guards the senses, is mindful of all that they do, content with little, sits down to meditate, abandons the hindrances, practices the jhānas and realizes there's something more delightful, more pleasant than the sense desires they've been pursuing. So the Buddha's answer for overcoming kamma tanhā is jhāna practice, experiencing that pleasure and realizing that the pleasure of the senses is temporary, fleeting, and dependent on other things. So that's what I've got for the moment on this sutta, I'm gonna stop here and see if there are any questions.

I don't know if this is the place to bring it up, but when you mentioned the jhānas, just now- when you started your book, you talked about how the Buddha had become, you know, the old history of the Buddha, going to learn meditation and becoming more accomplished than his teachers and basically learning the 8 jhānas. But being an expert in the 8 jhānas, at some point, he had this thought, like it was new and original and came up in an entirely different context that maybe the jhānas are the key in some way, to awakening. So this may have something to do with dependent origination, but I just wondered if you had anything you wanted to say about that?

So the Buddha learned- we know for certain- jhānas seven and eight; so we assume jhānas one through six as well- from his teachers, and they offered to make him co-teacher or sole teacher and he turned it down, saying, yeah, when I come out of the jhānas it's still dukkha- no good, right? So he's looking for something that's really going to take care of the dukkha, not just a temporary escape. So then he goes and practices the austerities. And now it's six years since he left home, and he thinks- this austerity stuff isn't working, either. There's gotta be some other way. And he starts thinking, and he remembers an incident from his childhood when he fell into the first jhana. He thinks, could these jhānas be the way to awakening? Then he decides, yes, these are the way to awakening. He realizes he's so emaciated that he's no shape to practice jhānas, so he starts eating, his friends leaving, and eventually he regains his strength, and he sits down under the Bodhi tree and becomes fully awakened. So what was the difference? He realized that his first teachers were teaching him the jhānas as the end of the spiritual path. And he's like, No, this is temporary. This is not it. And when he thought back on it, he realized, Oh, this is a skill for means. It's not the end of the path. It's a means to the end of the path, and he combined his jhana practice with investigation. And guess what he was investigating? Dependent origination, the sutta reference for that doesn't mention the jhānas. But it mentions that the night of his awakening, he was investigating dependent origination that's SN 12:65 "The city" is the name of the sutta.

So the answer to your question is that the jhānas taught by his teachers were taught as the end of the path and he realized no, this is not the end, but they are useful skill to have on the path to take you to the end, they were a useful means. So I saw some stuff flashed by in the comments.

An acronym for streams of dependently arising processes interacting: "sodapi", S-O-D-A-P-I. Ah, that's where it comes from. If you look at the back cover of my book, there's a picture of people eating pie and drinking sodas. So you can remember it, soda pie. The basic jhānas- Oh, how much time do you people have you want to spend till midnight? No, I didn't think so. Okay,



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so the jhānas are eight altered states of consciousness brought on by concentration that yield even more concentration, they're a preliminary practice for your insights, okay? And I have a book called "Right Concentration" that goes into them in detail. Or you can go to my website LeighBrasingtonb.com. And there's actually a link called jhānas. And there's a bunch of information there that you can click on and read about them and so forth, but basically they're concentration states and by stepping through them, you generate a mind that's concentrated, clear, sharp, bright, malleable, wieldy and given to imperturbability. And that's the kind of mind you want when you start investigating reality- doing your insight practice, doing your vipassanā. So it's the preliminary practice- the warm up exercise for your insight practice. Okay, Aaron.

## **Questioner:**

Leigh Brasington, thank you very much for this presentation today. It's certainly helping me to understand dependent origination, the way I thought it was to begin with. So my question is, you've mentioned insight meditation, and we're just talking now about concentration. My understanding to practice Vipassana or insight meditation, does not require even the first jhana what do you have to say about that?

## **Leigh Brasington:**

Well, what the Buddha recommends repeatedly is keep the precepts. Guard your senses, be mindful, be content with little, overcome the hindrances, practice the jhānas, and do insight meditation. This shows up in about 30 different suttas. It was a curriculum for the monks and nuns. However, what happened over time was, the understanding of what exactly constitutes jhāna kept getting more and more concentrated, deeper and deeper levels of concentration were required until it became almost impossible for anybody to do it. By the time of the commentaries, the Visuddhimagga, (800 to 900 years after the Buddha's death) at that point, the understanding of what constitutes a jhāna had become so difficult that almost nobody could do it. The Visuddhimagga literally says- of people who come to meditation, only one in a million people can get to the first jhāna. So since you're supposed to do insight practice, and, if you're supposed to do it after the jhāna, and only one in a million people can even get to the first jhāna- this isn't gonna work! So let's just throw the jhānas out. And that's what we have as standard Theravada Buddhism today: the jhānas are there, but you don't want to waste your time with that. However, if you go back and look at what the Buddha was talking about, he makes a big deal about the jhānas. He makes an even bigger deal about the importance of Sila, Samadhi, Paññā- morality, concentration and wisdom. If you're going to practice insight meditation, I highly recommend you get some degree of concentration before you start your insight practice. If you just sit down, I don't care what your practice is, it's not going to go nearly as well as if you invest some time in getting your mind settled and quiet. That's just the nature of human minds. You really do need a concentrated mind to be able to see reality.

When we look at the world normally we're looking at it in terms of: can I eat that? Or will that eat me? We get a little more sophisticated than that. But it's pretty much: is this something I want to get? Or is this something I need to push away? You notice "I" is right there in both of them, I want to get it, I need to push it away? Well, when you look at the world, from an egocentric perspective, you don't have nearly as good a chance of seeing what's actually going on than if you can look at the world from a less egocentric perspective. If you get your mind well concentrated, you shut down your ego construction- I'm assuming all of you are aware that



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you're constructing your ego out of your thoughts and emotions and so forth. So if you stop doing that and start examining reality, which is what insight practice is, you're going to have a much better chance of seeing what's actually going on. Those who say you don't need to concentrate, I'm just not in agreement with that. You don't have to do the jhānas. If you can do the jhānas, that's helpful. But you know, jhānas: some people find them easy, some people find them really difficult. If you learn the jhānas, you will find them very beneficial. There are other ways of approaching insight practice. But all of them described in the suttas have some degree of concentration to get you started, including, MN 118 the discourse on mindfulness of breathing. The first parts of the 16 steps of mindfulness of breathing will get you concentrated. Concentration is really important, and it's a shame that Western Buddhism makes so light of concentration- it is an eightfold path and the eightfold is right concentration. So the Buddha obviously thought it was important.

## **Questioner:**

How can I know that I have enough concentration to start insight meditation?

## **Leigh Brasington:**

Trial and error, basically. There is a point of diminishing returns. If you sit there working on concentration till you get tired, well, that was too long. And if you don't work on it long enough, you're more distracted. One way to know is to learn the first four jhānas. And then when you step through the four jhānas you're gonna have really good concentration for doing insight practice. So one way is to learn the jhānas because they'll give you a nice measuring stick as to how much concentration you have. But if you don't know the jhānas Let's say you're doing an hour long meditation period, I'd say spend somewhere between 20 minutes and half an hour getting concentrated first.

## **Questioner:**

Thank you. Thinking of soda pie as being what is, at any point in time- basically, what's really going on and thinking about how most people feel, or a lot of people I've talked to feel like they've changed over the years. I'm wondering if changing is really about getting closer to right view?

## **Leigh Brasington:**

So SODAPI originally was streams of dependently arising, phenomena interacting. But I thought about it and phenomena sounds too much like a noun. So I changed it to processes to get the verb nature of it, because, as you say, everything is changing all the time. And in fact- I heard a dharma talk from Joseph Goldstein and he said, You should think of yourself as a verb, not a noun because you're a bunch of processes, you're a circulatory process, an endocrine process, digestive process, breathing process. So I'm actually a collection of processes rather than a thing. And then I started looking around and realized everything was a process, there really aren't any nouns. It's just that some verbs move kind of slow, and we think they're nouns. But everything is changing, and so it's so many processes impacting us, the processes are changing- and the intersection which I call me, is changing all the time as well. I mean, presumably, you went and ate your lunch. You're different than you were when we first sat down here this morning because you have changed the process, part of the streams that are making up who you are now with the food you eat for lunch. So yeah, it's all changing all the time, the



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Buddha said that it's better to spend one day noticing how things arise and pass away than to spend a century not seeing this. So he was very big on trying to get people to see the arising and passing nature of the universe. Does that take care of your question?

**Questioner:**

Hi, Thank you. On the jhānas, as I try to sometimes progress through them, I mean- the third to fourth jhānas, what if I don't exactly experience it, as it's described? Which I haven't, you know, so I don't know where I am. So I just get confused in there. And I'm a park in the tree, maybe this like, you know, all through the body? And why not? I mean, you know, I get caught up in the mind stream kicks in?

**Leigh Brasington:**

So, the book "Right Concentration"- people kept asking me to write a book on the jhānas. I'm like, you can't write a book on the jhānas, that's ridiculous. Because you've got to work with a teacher to have some clue of what's going on. "No, come on, write a book on the jhānas!" Over and over again, and so finally, it was like, alright, I'll write a book on the jhānas. So I wrote a book on the jhānas. I'm surprised that people are able to learn the jhānas by reading a book, I never could have. I needed somebody to actually tell me what was going on. They needed to give me really clear instructions, I needed to go play with those instructions and come back and describe to them what was going on and I could tune it up. I could go do it again and get a little better. So for people that learn them on their own, I'm amazed. Really, that's amazing. That's wonderful. But if you really want to know, "Am I doing it right?", you're gonna have to sit down one on one with somebody that knows the jhānas, describe what you're doing and see what they have to say- either, that's perfect, or, try doing this a little different, and so forth. I still think writing a book on the jhānas was kind of ridiculous, but 16,000 people have bought the book. So I guess maybe it wasn't totally ridiculous.

**Questioner:**

Including I, sir. Thank you. No, no, it was wonderful. Thank you.

**Leigh Brasington:**

It's just really hard to know where you are. Without asking somebody, explaining exactly what you're experiencing and having them give you the feedback.

**Questioner:**

May I ask a question from a previous session? On the ignorance that I was talking about, it comes in from the previous lives? Depicted in the Tibetan circle as the pig, did I get that wrong?

**Leigh Brasington:**

Some people say it comes in from previous lives. All the Buddha said was, It's there.

You are ignorant of what's going on at noon at the equator on the nearest inhabited planet to Beetlejuice. It didn't come in from your previous life. It's just, you never knew that. Right? Alright. So don't know what's going on at noon at the second closest planet to Beetlejuice or anything like that, right? It's just so much that we don't know. It's not that we are ignoring it, it just wasn't there. And that's part of what the avijjā is about. There's just tons of stuff that could have been



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known that we don't know. The important stuff is anicca, dukkha, anayta- we want to know about those, because that's what we need to understand to get out of dukkha.

**Questioner:**

Okay. Sometimes I've heard that they say that someone comes in with a good process of handling, perhaps painting or more concentration than other people. And then they say they probably have completed in the previous lives. So I'm just wondering if there is something that just gets generated from one to the other? I know there are genes that have been passed on, but the other part, I don't subscribe to at this point. I have no idea. Not knowing. Thank you, sir. That's it.

**Leigh Brasington:**

People often try to describe or explain what's going on in the present by what happened in the past. If they don't see anything in the past persons' present life, then they'll ascribe it to some previous life. But I don't know what happens after we die. I don't know if I had a previous life. I don't find any evidence indicating I had a previous life. I was really good at mathematics from the get go. I had really good concentration from the get go. Why did that happen? I have no idea. I just have to leave it in the 'I don't know' category and not ascribe it to some other person that I have no conscious connection of! This is just the hand I got dealt, I don't know who was dealing the hands. That's what's going on. When somebody's trying to explain something by saying it's coming from a previous life, they're speculating, I'm sorry. And, you know, I have a background in science, I want to know more about what you can actually talk about, and leave the rest of the stuff in the I don't know category. I don't know why I was good at math. It just seems so obvious to me. That's all. No, but I don't know why it seemed obvious.

**Questioner:**

Thank you very much. Right.

**Questioner:**

One thing I like so much about the the idea of seeing it in terms of processes is that you've got the idea that there are inputs- something happens and there are results, and that's so in line with the dependent origination- the inputs or whatever, happened before are influencing what's happening now. And then then the process has certain lifetime, and then it stops. And that's kind of what happens at death too- a lot of our processes that are running, stop. Others continue on. And it really also ties it ties us in with the interrelationship between us and everything else that's going on- other beings, other matter.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yeah. So when I say I'm at the intersection of a bunch of streams of dependently arising processes- that's not the end, because I act. And my actions are another stream or multiple streams of Sodapi, right? So, I wrote two books, okay. Those are streams of dependently arising processes. They've gone out into the environment, hopefully somebody finds the books useful. But also- I helped a little old lady across the street. That too, is the stream that went out there. You really want to find your rebirth? Look at every intentional action you do, because every intentional action you do is going to have karmic resultants, right? It's going to change the universe, not in a big way. If any of you have the ability to change the universe in a big way,



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you've been slacking off on the job lately, and things are getting out of hand. So I presume none of you can change the universe in a big way. But we all get to change it in a little way. Well, better to change it to make it better than to change it to make it worse. And so you're basically being reborn with every intentional action. You're intentional actions are reprogramming your own brain, but they're also reprogramming the universe. And we're not separate from the universe. We'll get to that in the next talk. But yeah, you're exactly right. This is just this huge flow in this intersection that comes together and it goes out. You want a picture? Think of an hourglass, there's all the sand coming down to that little point that you call me, and then it flows out into the bottom. And it actually turns over, does it again and again.

**Questioner:**

Okay, there was a whole bunch of stuff that went by in the chat. Let me see. "...We're all walking stacks of conditioning continuously permeating as a result of streams of sodapi". Yes. "When is my next zoom presentation on the jhānas?" I don't have one scheduled for a day long, but if you contact the sati center, they might be interested in scheduling one, and then I'll do that. "...All streams of action have impacts from ripples to waves" Yes. Somebody else posted that my talks on the jhānas are all available on audio dharma, and also on dharma seed. If you go to my website, it's all on my website. Click on the Buddha, look down on that little menu and see "talks" Click on that. There's there's a whole retreat there, including a bunch of talks on the jhānas. But a zoom day long on the jhānas... if you really want help on the jhānas you've got to come on retreat, my schedule, of course, is on my website. It's all on my website.

**Leigh Brasington:**

Anything else on Sati, the son of the fishermen and his mistaken view?

We're going to take another break. Come back in and talk about emptiness. But do your bio break, stretch a little bit if you need to, and then meditate and get in some more meditation before we start talking about emptiness.