“Blossoms come about because of a series of conditions that lead up to their blooming. Leaves are blown away because a series of conditions lead up to it. Blossoms do not appear independently, nor does a leaf fall to itself, out of its season. So everything has its coming forth and passing way; nothing can be independent without change.

It is the everlasting and unchanging rule of this world that everything is created by a series of causes and conditions and everything disappears by the same rule; everything changes, nothing remains constant.”

I hope this finds you and your family in the best of health and coping with drastic changes in the way we are now living our lives, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

No one likes changes, especially these last two weeks have brought so much anxiety, stress, apprehension and yes, anger. What does Buddhism say about all this?

One of the fundamental teachings in Buddhism is called “the three marks of the Dharma”, which describes our existence in this way:

1) all things are impermanent
2) all things are without an unchanging self, no self or all things are interdependent
3) our failure to realize 1 and 2 causes us to suffer, while a true understanding of them is the way to the realization of awakening.

Another way to say this is that Buddhism is the path that allows us to overcome the heartache attached to change. It does so by making us look directly at the transient nature of our existence and at our attachments to things.

Most of us really don’t want things to change. We want to remain comfortable, happy, healthy and stay with our loved ones forever. We don’t want them to become sick, and we certainly don’t want to lose them to death. Yet, the reality of our existence is that many of us will become very ill, hopefully not from the virus, we will grow old and for sure, someday we
will take our last breath. While that reality is hard for us to face, our failure to face it makes that reality even harder to bear.

The reading I began with is from “Teaching of Buddha”, it is a vivid reminder of nature’s fundamental lesson of impermanence. This is the first principle of Buddhism, the doctrine of Impermanence. Impermanence means nothing is stationary, static, or unchanging. All things are moving and dynamic. Without an awareness of this fact of nature, there can never be any true insight through which we can see things as they really are.

The Buddha teaches that we can only understand our anxiety and apprehension through the understanding of impermanence. The uneasiness that we feel arise when we try to cling to what is impermanent.

Unnecessary disappointment, despair and frustration in our daily life often stem from our ignorance of the law of nature, which is change or impermanence. It is therefore very important for each of us to understand the nature of impermanence so that we may face problems courageously in our daily life, so we may accept things that we cannot change, so we may learn to let go of our anxiety and anger and be in harmony with nature and live a happy life.

And when confronted with coronavirus pandemic and the many restrictions placed upon our families or other unfortunate events that occur unexpectedly in our lives, it presents an opportunities for self-reflection. From self-reflection we consider what is really important to us, and aspire to understand and seek ultimate truths which remain constant in spite of ever changing conditions of our mundane world.

Change may bring encouragement or discouragement, It may create happiness or unhappiness, it may give us joy or anxiety. In any case change is change. It is reality.