

Ven Anīgha Reddit Archive 2023

Ven Anīgha

2023

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Ven Anīgha Reddit Archive 2023

Physicality of Breath

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-12-27 21:36:05

Hello all, just have a question pertaining to the discernment of breathing as ajahn has described.

It seems like intrinsically it is all about discerning that the breath is the basis for the continued life of the body, always. Physicality of breath is just a sensation within that. However, he also mentions that sometimes you want to “do” and breathing is the most wholesome type of doing.

Does this mean that essentially while enduring pressure, you can find the sensation of breath and essentially take refuge in it while the senses are under attack?

Thanks everyone :)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-28 12:38:56

Physicality of breath is just a sensation within that.

No, quite the opposite. The “physicality” of the *breathing body*, not of *the breath*, is what should be discerned; sensations are irrelevant and secondary to the physicality. Even if you experienced no sensations on account of it, you would still know beyond doubt that you’re breathing. That’s just how it works because it’s an *intention*, not a process that happens by itself and that you “observe” from an independent point of view.

However, he also mentions that sometimes you want to “do” and breathing is the most wholesome type of doing.

Yes, but that was in a particular context. Only with the Right View does one know what is wholesome and unwholesome, to begin with. So “doing” the breathing will only be wholesome if the Right View is there as the criterion.

Does this mean that essentially while enduring pressure, you can find the sensation of breath and essentially take refuge in it while the senses are under attack?

So no, because as soon as you talk about “sensations”, what you are referring to is shifting your attention to something else as to become unaware of the pressure.

Rather, the physicality of breathing can be known while pressure is being endured, because that is happening on a different level than the pressure. Sensations are even more particular than the pressure, let alone the physicality, so if you direct your attention to that, you are actually diminishing your context even more than if you had just stayed with the pressure as it was and done nothing.

Emptiness in the suttas?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-12-26 04:47:27

I was reading the suttanipata yesterday and found a sutta with this:

The monk who hasn't slipped past or turned back, knowing with regard to the world that “**All this is unreal**,” sloughs off the near shore & far — as a snake, its decrepit old skin.

Thanissaro, Snp 1.1

It seems the predominant translation choice is ‘unreal’ for the highlighted phrase besides B. Sujato who renders it as such:

They have not run too far nor run back,
Yo nāccasārī na paccasārī,
for they know that **nothing in the world is what it seems**.
Sabbaṃ vitathamidanti ñatva loke;
Such a mendicant sheds the near shore and the far,
So bhikkhu jahāti orapāraṃ,
as a serpent its old worn-out skin.
Urago jiṇṇamivattacaṃ purāṇaṃ.

Which translation is accurate? If it is indeed ‘unreal’, how should it be understood? I find ‘realness’ and ‘unrealness’ very vaguely defined in nearly any conversation surrounding it. When I myself refer to real, I don't know what quality/property that refers to within my experience; is it the presence of phenomena within experience? No clue. But if that is the case, well certainly you can't deny the fact of things being present? So that lends me to thinking that this can't be the meaning.

Would appreciate any insight.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-26 06:43:47

There is no concept of “real vs. unreal” in the Suttas. *vitatha* is more like “false” or “untrue”.

But even if one chooses to translate it as “unreal”, it would not automatically be wrong. The problem is what people actually *mean* with that, and usually, it’s the idea that there is some “True Reality” underlying our experience that is “hidden”, but nevertheless we somehow know it exists (a contradiction in terms). Even worse, that reality is then inadvertently conceived to be accessible through special *perceptions* and *experiences* that one can gain through meditation, making it very much within the same ordinary reality of perception and the aggregates in its *nature*, just that the *content* of it is “special” and “extraordinary”, as if that were of any relevance.

“Therefore, bhikkhus, any kind of form whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, ***gross or subtle, lowly or sublime***, far or near, all form should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

“Any kind of feeling whatsoever ... Any kind of perception whatsoever ... Any kind of volitional formations whatsoever ... Any kind of consciousness whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, ***gross or subtle, lowly or sublime***, far or near, all consciousness should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

—SN 22.59

Some Suttas talk about the aggregates being “empty” and “devoid of essence”, such as SN 22.95. But the difference is that the Buddha is not implicitly positing something “more real” and “not empty” that lies beneath the aggregates (as if something “outside” the aggregates can even be designated or experienced, when the aggregates *are* experience full stop), and contrasting a “conventional reality” with a mystical “ultimate reality”.

He’s just saying that *everything* is devoid of essence, including any notions that you might have of something that *isn’t* devoid of essence, which would have to be nothing but another perception. That’s it.

So if you want, you could say that “everything is unreal” for as long as you don’t peripherally designate something that *is* real, which leads to eternalism in disguise, even in the name of Nibbāna (which as far as I’ve seen seems to be present in Thanissaro’s view). When your mind posits something as “real”, you would have to include that within “unreal”, even if it seems like it’s Nibbāna itself. That’s the true all-encompassing dispassion and freedom from conceivings.

Why is anicca explained in these two forms: impermanent and un-ownable

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** homage23gems 2023-12-25 10:58:03

why is anicca explained as impermanent in some places and un-ownable elsewhere.. the un-ownable aspect is more vivid, that these are totally not under my control.. I can relate to the impermanence aspect as: I have no say in their disappearance.. how else to understand impermanence

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-26 06:18:27

anicca does literally mean “impermanent”, but the problem is that nowadays that term tends to evoke in people the notion that it’s about *observing* change like a scientist would, like how it’s commonly taught that one realizes *anicca* by *observing* the constant arising and passing of phenomena, “zooming” into the experiences even closer until one can see even more changes per second, etc.

And all of that fails to show why the Buddha said all that is *anicca* is *dukkha*, and that *because* they are *dukkha*, they are *anattā*. It instead jumps right into saying that because everything is always changing, there can be no “lasting entity”, and that’s what *anattā* is (meaning, it’s about “no-self” instead of “not-self”, so it’s the extreme of annihilationism in disguise).

Also, if things in our experience are constantly changing and never remain the same from one moment to the next, there is no reason why that has to be *dukkha*. One could very well find a kind of happiness in there being perpetual novelty and that one never has to “cross the same river twice”, as they say.

So the term “unownable” is to point towards the type of impermanence that matters, meaning the impermanence that is always necessarily *dukkha*, and thus prevents you from taking *anything* that you see in that way as “mine”.

Things are *anicca* not because you are *witnessing* or *have witnessed* their change, but because you *know* that you can’t prevent them from changing (i.e., you can’t own them), even if they last an uncountable amount of eons. On the contrary, the thing needs to still be present for you to know that it’s *liable to change* (and that’s what *anicca* is, hence it’s always synonymous with *vipariṇāmadhamma* in the Suttas). When a thing truly “disappears”, you can’t know anything about its nature anymore.

So that’s how one can undermine one’s sense of self (by applying this discernment on the emotional level of one’s attachments, including one’s very body and aggregates), whereas with the “observable change” wrong view of *anicca*, the sense of self always remains the “witnesser” at the background who is still seen as permanent and pleasurable.

Undistorted Translation of the Arrow Sutta (SN 36.6)

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-12-24 07:05:55

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-25 06:56:23 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

What you are comparing are relative trivialities, not where the distortions I referred to are. There is undeniably room for different sentence structures and constructions in English to render what the Pāli says without any issue. What there *isn't* room for is using English terms (at the important points of doctrine) that do not at all correspond to the Pāli to justify the translator's interpretation of the Sutta (or worse, inserting new ones that aren't even there).

The first example is the very beginning:

Sujato: “When an unlearned ordinary person experiences **painful physical feelings** they sorrow and wail and lament, beating their breast and falling into confusion. They experience two feelings: physical and mental.

Suddhāso: “Monks, when an uneducated commoner is touched by a **painful sensation**, he sorrows, frets, and laments, beating his chest and wailing, and becomes confused. He feels two feelings – one **physical** and one mental.

Thanissaro: “When touched with a feeling of pain, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person sorrows, grieves, & laments, beats his breast, becomes distraught. So he feels two **pains, physical** & mental.

Bodhi: “Bhikkhus, when the uninstructed worldling is being contacted by a painful feeling, he sorrows, grieves, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. He feels two feelings—a bodily one and a mental one.

Mine: “An untrained ordinary person, being contacted by unpleasant feeling, sorrows, wails, laments, beats their breast and becomes muddled. They feel two feelings: bodily and mental.

Pali: assutavā, bhikkhave, puthujjano dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno so-cati kilamati paridevati urattāḷim kandatī sammohaṃ āpajjati. So dve vedanā vedayati—kāyikañca, cetasikañca.

In this case Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation does not deviate from the Pāli in a significant way (although I prefer “unpleasant” over “painful” since the latter has physical connotations that are not present in the word *dukkha*). A second example is found in the verse:

Sujato: A wise and learned person **isn't affected** by feelings of pleasure and pain.

Thanissaro: The discerning person, learned, doesn't *sense* a (*mental*) feeling of pleasure or pain.

Bodhi: The wise one, learned, does not feel the pleasant and painful *mental* feeling.

Suddhāso: "The wise one who has learned much Does not feel pleasure or pain.

Mine: One who understands and is learned does not feel pleasure and unpleasure.

Pali: Na vedanaṃ vedayati sapañño, Sukhampi dukkhampi bahussutopi;

In this instance, Bhikkhu Suddhāso's translation is accurate, although there are several issues with his overall, especially the one mentioned above which recurs throughout.

Overall, Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation is the least divergent from the Pāli. Nevertheless, there are still discrepancies in his that are not found in the others, such as "*when* [the puthujjana] he seeks delight in sensual pleasure... *when* he does not understand [the origin, ending, gratification...]" giving the impression that *sometimes* the puthujjana can be free from these underlying tendencies. It's also not accurate to translate "*kāmasukhaṃ abhinandati*" as "*seeks delight* in sensual pleasure", implying that all the puthujjana has to do to be like the noble disciple is stop *actively* seeking sensual pleasures. The Pāli is simply saying that they delight in the pleasure of *kāma*, not that they *seek* it, because that's the only way they know how to (seemingly) escape *dukkha vedanā*.

That's why I mentioned recently that even the pleasure of enlightenment they anticipate (even on account of saying no to sensual pleasures on a particular basis) comes within sensuality for a *puthujjana*. It's a very subtle thing that doesn't have to be on the level of coarse sensual activities.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-25 09:25:42 (in reply to a comment not included)

Do you understand it like the puthujjana goes through all these stages when contacted by the first arrow, or are these the only possible options a puthujjana can have, all of them being one way to get hit by that second arrow? I'm thinking the latter but I don't want to rule out anything and since the 3 parts aren't delimited..

It's certainly the latter. It's not explicitly stated of course, but it's stated clearly enough that all of it is happening *because* the puthujjana does not understand the nature of feelings, not because some sort of "process" is unfolding that a puthujjana could somehow come in between and stop, which is how these things are usually thought of.

Even if it hypothetically *were* a process consisting of stages, one could only "stop" it by understanding the nature of those feelings as it says, meaning both the arrow of displea-

sure and the pleasure of sensuality. And one who understands that is by definition not a puthujjana anymore.

Furthermore, as stated in my other reply above, “delighting in the pleasure of sensuality” does not mean a puthujjana cannot help but to *act* out of sensuality. Of course they can, and they must not turn their internal delight into external actions if they hope to overcome the second arrow. The point is that *even* if they don’t act out, their mind *understands* no escape apart from the suffering than overriding it with a new pleasure, so they have no choice but to either put up with the suffering internally (which is what could eventually give rise to wisdom) or seek sensual pleasures, sweeping the suffering under the rug without ever actually solving its underlying cause (and this is all that “meditation” usually achieves for people in the end, hence wrong meditation also comes within the delight in sensuality the puthujjana uses as an escape).

Also, I keep hearing and reading about the gratification of sensuality and I’m curious about what is this gratification referring to?

This talk explains it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-27 09:34:32 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Thanks for taking the time to write this; it raises some good points for discussion.

the inner speech i was having was smth like “why me... poor me... how long is it going to last this time... this is absolutely unbearable... what have i done to deserve it... when is the next attack going to happen”

[...]

this experience of pain taught me a lot. and when i encountered this sutta, it was the passage i quoted that was the most precise description of the style of thoughts i was having while undergoing this kind of pain. and it is this that i regard, experientially, as the second arrow. the background feeling of pain being for me, affecting me, tormenting me. when the pain itself is intense, the thoughts are the unnoticed background; pain tends to impose itself so much to awareness that it is as if there is only pain there, nothing else – a total immersion in pain – and the thoughts are not noticed as such, while they are still operating. background awareness helps reveal how they operate, and their presence as such. and based on this, i would add a bit more nuance to what the second arrow is: it is this background feeling of the unpleasant tormenting ME, being FOR ME. i agree that it is not a second thing in time following physical pain – although, in my case, it was easier to discern it with regard to physical pain. it was there, regardless if it was about intense pain, mild dis-

pleasure, or even intense unexpected pleasure: pleasure creates an opposite reaction – but of the same type. the thoughts i used to have when undergoing unexpected surprise pleasure were “oh... what have i done to deserve this... how long is it going to last this time” – precisely of the same type as those correlated with pain. [not beating my chest lol, but feeling a kind of melting into the unexpected pleasure, which was just as reflexive as the mental wailing in the case of pain.]

To put it concisely, the thing is that, as I alluded to in footnote 6, these thoughts and reactions you describe are the *first arrow*, not the second one. That’s why it’s said in SN 35.28 that the *sense bases themselves*, including the sixth, are “on fire” with the defilements—*“on fire with* **sorrow, lamentation, sadness, despair***...”*

So, as the Sutta goes on, what a noble disciple does to become liberated is become *disenchanted* with that whole thing, not *manage* the first arrow, because that’s Māra’s domain (i.e. the arising of these thoughts). In fact, in MN 144 we see Ven. Channa, who as an Arahant, experiencing what could be argued as “negative thoughts” and a lot of mentions of “mine” on account of the pains he was experiencing, showing that this cannot possibly be the second arrow, nor appropriation, nor craving, nor anything unwholesome. The thoughts were “negative” to the point that he even went on to commit suicide.

Physical pain in itself is meaningless—it’s when these thoughts and significances are there that the first arrow is there. That’s why in (right) samādhi one is free from the first arrow temporarily even as a puthujjana—one is temporarily free from these *reactions* of the mind, but even as the extremely rare puthujjana that can enter jhāna, they would not have understood the escape from those thoughts when they *do* arise. Not having the first arrow on account of samādhi does not and cannot possibly mean that physical pain is not cognized when harm is inflicted on the body or there is an illness (unless one is in some sort of trance, in which case it isn’t right samādhi then).

I am not afraid of fear,
our teacher is expert in the Deathless
Where fear cannot settle
On that path the bhikkhus walk.

Theragātha 21

You could replace “fear” with any type of thinking, including the what you describe. That is what Ajahn Nyanamoli means with the phrase “not suffering amidst suffering”. The true distinctive achievement of the noble disciple is not sorrowing amidst arisen sorrow, not lamenting amidst arisen lamentation, and that is what is called “uprooting” of suffering as opposed to “management”, and that is why it’s so subtle and hard to see, but at the same time there is nothing that can stand in the way of that freedom, not even “bad” states of the aggregates arising. At the end of the day, even these thoughts are the subtlest part of

one's "environment" (the six sense base, the All), and seeking freedom on that level is a subtler form of trying to prevent external agitating events from happening to one.

and – respectfully – i would disagree explicitly with the idea in one of the footnotes:

This statement is also at odds with the idea that the first arrow is physical pain. People don't seek sensuality in response to physical discomfort.

they do. and it's not just my experience – i checked it with others as well. when physical pain is really intense, sensuality is one of the outlets: with pain present, one seeks to add pleasure to it – to make it be not just pain. been there, done that, in various ways, and i talked with others who were doing the same – so it is a possibility. and pleasure is seen as a form of temporary escape from the intensity of the pain until it subsides on its own – the fact that some people don't use sensuality this way, or that it's not an obvious way of using sensuality when one thinks of it, does not mean that when one undergoes hellish pain one would not seek sensuality as a form of relief – as misguided as that might be – and take at least part of one's attention from the pain that tends to impose itself as the only thing there. **[of course, it s not just the physical pain that plays into this, but its felt unbearability** -- but the tendency to run into sensuality as a way of soothing the chronic pain would not be so appealing without the intense physical pain there as well, and without its being felt as unbearable.

It's *only* the "felt unbearability" that plays into it.

Sure, intense physical pain will 99% *of the time* be accompanied by an intense first arrow, which in a puthujjana will inevitably be accompanied by the second, *on account of which* they will then seek sensual gratification. But that doesn't mean that the physical pain *is* what motivates the seeking, which is what you seem to suggest. Again, physical pain by itself is meaningless, and given a good enough reason to put up with it, such as saving the life of a loved one, even a puthujjana would experience not even a first arrow on account of it.

The second arrow is **not knowing the escape, not knowing how to remain unmoved by** the first arrow, which is the *reflexive* perceptions, feelings, and intentions that revolve, sorrow and lament around the physical pain. That "not knowing the escape" means that there is (mental) lamentation on top of the (bodily/six-sense-base/aggregate) lamentation, the suffering amidst suffering, that a puthujjana is yoked to. *That* is what makes it "unbearable", not the intensity of the physical pain.

Edit: Mental phenomena like the thoughts of lamentation you describe are not the second arrow because of what the Buddha says in MN 109 which Ajahn Nyanamoli quotes often: the five aggregates are *not* upādāna, but there is no upādāna without the five aggregates.

If *these thoughts* were the problem, it would mean that the content of the aggregates is to blame for the upādāna.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-28 06:18:49 (in reply to a comment not included)

part of our disagreement is a difference in emphasis in how we read the arrow sutta. the symmetrical structure of it (the puthujjhana experiences the “sorrow, wailing, lamentation” etc., the ariyasavaka doesn’t) leads me to interpret precisely the “sorrow, wailing, lamentation” as the second arrow – experienced by one, not experienced by the other,

Yes, I am not at all denying that that’s what the Sutta says. Our disagreement is about *what* is that “sorrow, wailing, lamentation”. I’m not saying that the ariyasāvaka sorrows, laments, beats their breast and becomes confused when they feel unpleasant feeling, because, as it says, the absence of that is exactly the distinction. What I am saying is, if there are no intentions and thoughts of “I don’t want this; when will this go away, etc.”, which we can for the sake of argument call “sorrowing thoughts”, *that is not actually an unpleasant feeling/first arrow in the first place*. It’s either neutral or somewhat pleasant, even if the physical pain (which is never *feeling*; it’s a *perception*) is very intense.

another thing – i would disagree that physical pain (or anything at all) is meaningless in itself. we experience it as *already meaningful*. its meaning might change – but the fact of meaningfulness doesn’t.

This which you wrote actually serves to illustrate my point. When I wrote “meaningless” what I was trying to convey is that there is no such thing as a physical sensation *alone*, certainly not if it can be called *vedanā* to begin with. It always *has* to have some meaning in order to be a discernible phenomenon in the first place. And “why is this happening to me; when will this end, etc.” *are meanings*. That’s literally all they are in the eyes of a noble disciple. But a puthujjana cannot help but to go with the grain of those meanings and welcome them when they arise. All they know how to do is either welcome those meanings which are inseparable from the feeling, which then automatically leads them to delighting in sensuality, or try to get rid of the meanings so as to wriggle out of the feeling. They can’t continue to feel the *same* unpleasant feeling without suffering; they need to alter the characteristics of the arisen experience in some way or another, no matter how subtle, to not suffer (thus we call that “management” as opposed to “uprooting”).

The ariyasāvaka, on the other hand, needs to do *nothing* to change the feeling nor the meanings that accompany it (which are perceptions and intentions, and any of the other aggregates which they also do not identify with) in order to not suffer, because they have understood the escape from feeling *the way it has arisen*.

Thus, the *citta* of the noble disciple (thus the second arrow is “cetasika”) does not sorrow and lament when such phenomena arise at the six sense base/aggregates (“bodily”; see also the footnote in the document referring to SN 22.1).

To illustrate, imagine you have a dog that has a bad habit of yelping and barking a lot. Now, if that dog is *yours*, you will be emotionally burned just by hearing its noises, even if you know full well that you can't actually do anything about it. But if the dog is *not yours*, then no matter what noises it makes, *which will certainly still constitute an annoyance*, you *can't* actually feel that burden that comes with ownership of the dog, *even if you wanted to*. And that's the difference. A noble disciple does not need to get the dog to stop doing whatever it's doing to be free from suffering because he understands the escape from the dog, whereas a puthujjana doesn't, so his freedom depends on the dog being in a certain favorable state.

And whether the dog is yapping because it's hungry, because it feels some excruciating physical pain, because it has perceived a female in heat, or because it simply wants to go for a walk, makes no difference. In its nature, it's still exactly the same annoyance *for you* (this is the first arrow of unpleasant feeling full stop, which, as the Sutta starts, is experienced by both puthujjana and ariyasāvaka). As a matter of fact, *what* specifically is the cause for the dog's woes, in this case the physical pain, only matters when the dog is *yours*—if it isn't, then to you it's just the same annoying noise all the same. The physical pain, or anything else, is entirely just the dog's problem: as Ajahn Nyanamoli has often said, only the senses have access to their respective objects—"you" can't actually experience (painful) touches, in this case. So only if the senses (the dog) are already taken as "mine" can touches (which include the most excruciating physical pains) be assumed to be of any relevance.

One might genuinely get a sense of relief by getting the dog to stop making noise, and there are times when it's fine to do so (i.e., if it's not against the precepts), but one should never conflate that with *disowning* the dog altogether. It's confusing virtue and restraint (regarding thoughts too) with the Dhamma (total non-ownership). That's how one remains honest about the unbridgeable gap between management and uprooting of suffering.

and, as far as i can tell, i don't simply repress them. the condition for their arising is not there any more – the attitude of appropriating

So, in summary, the actual "attitude of appropriating" is the need for certain phenomena to be absent from the experience. That's what we mean with "endurance on the right level".

Additionally, the greatest problem with this conception of the second arrow is that, with it, a puthujjana *could* experience freedom from it at certain times (by manipulating the meanings that accompany physical pain so that it's no longer unpleasant). But that is a contradiction in terms, because the cessation of the arrow can *only* come with understanding the origin, ending, gratification, danger and escape in regard to feelings, as the Sutta says. And a person who knows that is by definition not a puthujjana, and it can never be forgotten or lost once it's known, so truly experiencing no second arrow "once" means never experiencing it *ever again*.

Hence the absolute binary: (1) one either experiences the second arrow *whenever* the first

is there, no matter how skillfully the first can *mostly* be avoided, or (2) one doesn't get hit the second arrow *ever*, and doing so has become totally inconceivable. There is no "in between".

That is hard to accept, but it's actually good news. If it weren't like this, the threshold at which one is a sotāpanna and not a puthujjana would have to be subject to *doubt* (the third fetter)—meaning that every such "sotāpanna" is in reality a puthujjana.

There's simply no debate that someone who can remain at peace *even* when such deeply personal and inductive-of-ownership thoughts arise on their own has achieved a much deeper sort of peace than someone whose peace is defined by the absence of those thoughts, or of any phenomenon, for that matter. No matter how well one can prevent those things *now*, the fact of impermanence and non-ownership of the aggregates means one will at some point fail to do so.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-28 13:19:03 (in reply to a comment not included)

but what is there might present itself as having a totally different meaning from the meaning that was assumed before discerning.

Yes, that's quite possible, but there is nothing *fundamental* about this that would make a puthujjana unable to achieve it. The fact that the change of meaning was effected through anicca, dukkha, and anattā contemplations on paper, for instance, does not make it any more intrinsically "Buddhist" compared to if it was effected by thinking about how God is the one who gets to decide all that happens to one and thus one should not lament in the face of pain.

Genuinely, that could lead to the same result of not experiencing such "meanings".

What makes the absence of the second arrow "Buddhist", what makes it the sole province of ariyasāvakas, is that *meanings* are always already abandoned as they are, in whichever way they are, in any and every situation.

"So you should see any kind of form at all—past, future, or present; internal or external; coarse or fine; inferior or superior; far or near: **all** form—as it really is with right understanding: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.'

Any kind of feeling at all ...

Any kind of perception at all ...

Any kind of activities at all ...

You should see any kind of consciousness at all—past, future, or present; internal or external; coarse or fine; inferior or superior; far or near: **all** consciousness—as it really is with right understanding: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.'

—SN 22.59

Conversely, as I already alluded to, there is simply no way to be *ultimately sure* that those meanings will never arise again. In the end, it's a matter of inference and reasoning based on what one has read and learned that one would conclude that because something has been discerned, even if it's the right teaching on paper, certain phenomena will cease to appear. For example, one could hypothetically meet the Buddha in real life and be told that those phenomena will actually come back, and if one had unshakable faith in him, which a sotāpanna is supposed to, one *could* fall into doubt, meaning that can't be the measure of sotāpatti.

Whereas, when the second arrow is truly not there, there is no way to doubt that it cannot return, no matter what meanings arise or don't arise. Precisely *because* that freedom does not depend on any circumstances of arising or ceasing—no matter if they are (thought to be) out of the question on the one hand or very likely on the other—it is known beyond question as “inconceivable to not be there”.

Fundamentally, as long as you can *imagine* something, it is possible, and thus it still exists to that extent. There is no way to entirely guarantee that it will never turn from possibility into actuality, because the aggregates are uncertain.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-30 11:36:20 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Neither of them suffer a second arrow in that instance. But in the case of the ariya-savvaka it is because he cannot suffer AMIDST the arisen discomfort (which would include all the habitual grumbly thoughts as one might imagine) - in the case of the puttujhana it is because he HAPPENS to not experience a first arrow of discomfort on that same account. Obviously, the two cases are not mutually exclusive. But the former should not be conflated with the latter.

That basically summarizes the points I've been making. And also, that's why sense restraint (which is about “not grasping signs and features” of perceptions that give rise to unwholesome, such as with these “grumbly thoughts”) is indispensable, and it does bring about benefits on its own, even without the Dhamma—as in, reducing the intensity of the “first arrows” one experiences.

If one hasn't been cultivating sense restraint enough, one will not be able to endure the entirety of the arisen suffering on the right level so as to eventually understand it, because the first arrow, and of course the second, will just be too intense.

But then it's too easy to think that freedom lies in just going *further* in that direction to the extreme, so as to now prevent the “graspable” signs and features from *existing*. And that's when virtue and restraint gets confused with the Dhamma (taming the senses vs disowning them).

One NEEDS to start with the liability to both arrows that you have, and **accept that you'll only truly be able to see where the line between the two is in hindsight**, after the second arrow has fallen away. That attitude is essential for even a beginning of endurance on the right level.

That's how it is, but the problem is that there's often this "subconscious" urge to feel like one *already* has access to the sotāpanna's point of view, to one's own detriment, as one will then not make the effort to clear up the very wrong views that obstruct one from having it.

The type of humility that is required, as opposed to just a superficial quality of one's speech and bodily movements, is that of always keeping the Dhamma far ahead of oneself, while also pairing that with sincere striving to *develop* that thing which is still far away*,* instead of just encasing it in a shrine for admiration and not working toward attaining it, which is the other extreme of too much "humility".

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2024-02-25 13:43:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

When you say that the stream-enterer and the once-returner don't engage in sensuality in an attempt to outrun suffering but only because of the pressure of the hindrances, are we to understand that they are not acting out following gratification?

No, they *are* just following the gratification. A puthujjana would be forced to suffer if he doesn't get that gratification, whereas a noble disciple has the option to *neither* gratify the urge, nor suffer, **nor** get rid of the unpleasant feeling (management). But they might still choose to give in. Therefore, when they engage in sensuality it's because of laziness and complacency, not because of not having any other escape, and either way they're not suffering in comparison to a puthujjana.

I was under the impression that the pressure of the hindrances was because of the prospect of the gratification, that the prospect of gratification was where the pressure lied, I feel unpleasant and I'm pressured to act in a certain way that seems promising in releasing myself of that unpleasant sensation.

But if that's not the case, what constitutes the pressure of the hindrances if that is not to outrun the suffering?

The prospect of gratification is where the pressure is, and for a puthujjana that "merges" with the assumption of self so that it becomes one thing, which is why they would factually be strengthening their self view by being unrestrained. So for them, not only will sensuality and ownership seem synonymous; they should also be regarding it like that for practical purposes.

But for a sotāpanna the gratification is still there, while the self view, the cause for the need to outrun the suffering, is no longer there. Of course, seeking gratification is in itself suffering, but that's insignificant compared to the suffering of owning the aggregates.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2024-02-26 09:56:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

Bhante, can this be expected of a noble disciple? I have a hard time believing a noble disciple can give in to sensuality? Are there examples of similar events in suttas?

Yes, all of the lay followers who were ariyas but not anāgāmi. MN 14 tells of how Mahānāma, a noble disciple, is still a layman enjoying sensual pleasures on account of his mind still being overtaken by unwholesome states.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2024-04-02 06:10:36 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, I'm aware of this Sutta. The thing is that the Buddha clearly formulated this teaching on the five faculties in a different context: in SN 48.40, it's explained that the faculty of *domanassa* (*cetasika dukkha*) would cease without remainder in the second jhāna, which hypothetically even a (very exceptional) puthujjana could attain. It's not talking about the *cetasika dukkha* that is permanently destroyed for a noble disciple due to their understanding of the nature of feeling and the underlying tendencies, which is what the Arrow Sutta is describing.

Furthermore, SN 48.32 states that a sotāpanna (and even an Arahant in the next Sutta) would know the origin, ending, gratification, danger, and escape in regard to all of these five faculties, instead of saying that they now possess only some of them.

And again, why do we find the “kāyasamphassaṇṇa”/“manosamphassaṇṇa” distinction *aligned* with the distinction between “kāyikaṇṇa” and “cetasikaṇṇa”?

Because *kāya* in itself means something different in this case, and so both *mano* and *citta* would be in opposition to the meaning of *kāya* used in SN 48.37. The *kāyika dukkha* referred to in SN 36.6 is something that will never cease for as long as the six sense base is there (i.e., until an Arahant's Parinibbāna), whereas the *kāyika dukkha* of SN 48.37 would cease completely with just the first jhāna (SN 48.40). The latter is more on the level of physical discomfort, unlike the Arrow Sutta.

37 factors of awakening

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** cajuputoil 2023-12-24 03:36:00

How one puts into practice, the 37 factors of enlightenment listed in DN 16, Mahāparinibbana sutta,

consisting of The Four Ways of Attending to Mindfulness, the Four Right Strivings, the Four Paths to Power, the Five Faculties, the Five Strengths, the Seven Factors of Awakening, the Noble Eight-Fold Path.

Are all these factors developed one after another?

Or can one only check all these factors in an action?

Thank you for your explanation and understanding

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-24 06:14:02

The 7 enlightenment factors are *acquired* with stream-entry, as stated in SN 46.30. Also, in MN 2, they are at the very last section of the Sutta, which presupposes completion of the 1st part (abandoning the first three fetters), given that it says “reflecting *yoniso*, he develops these 7 factors”. As stated in the beginning of the Sutta, it is because of not understanding *yoniso manasikāra* that one is a puthujjana.

The pleasant feelings that may arise on account of practicing what one *thinks* are the 7 enlightenment factors are not a criterion for whether that idea is right or not. Even for the first factor, *sati*/*recollection, one needs to have the Right View to know what is it that needs to be recollected and in what way. Wrong view leads to wrong recollection.

Similarly, the five faculties only exist in someone who is no longer a puthujjana.

Even in the case of the four right strivings, it’s about making effort to abandon unwholesome and cultivate wholesome. And that distinction is only known, again, by a noble disciple.

So one’s goal should be to abandon wrong view and get the Right View, after which developing these 37 factors—or only one group because all of them are simply different formulations of the same thing—will be possible.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-25 06:12:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

what is the difference between these factors for someone who has understood right view and someone who has not understood realizing right view?

The thing is that, by definition, whatever a person without the Right View has faith in is necessarily a distortion, a similar but ultimately fake copy of the Dhamma (which only a noble disciple would be able to tell is wrong and why). That doesn’t mean that the *teaching* and the *information* that ordinary person uses for their practice is wrong (although nowadays it very well might be); it means that their *internal interpretation* of the teaching, even if it is the purest, unadulterated Dhamma that they’re receiving from the Buddha’s own mouth, is distorted and inaccurate. If the teacher themselves is a puthujjana and thus only knows their own “fake copy” of the Dhamma and a person puts faith in *that* then the problem is of course doubled.

This means that whatever effort, recollection, composure, and understanding that an ordinary person develops will *all* be rooted in that initial distortion of the Dhamma that they take to be the Dhamma, and the results of their practice will equally be wrong (while being

unable to tell, because knowing wrong as wrong is what defines a sotapanna; how liberated a puthujjana *feels* is by no means a criterion). That's why as AN 10.103 says, wrong view culminates in wrong liberation.

So what a puthujjana needs to do is make an effort to abandon their wrong understanding of the Dhamma, so that that which they have faith in, eventually, is *actually* the Dhamma. Once they reach that point, they will no longer be a puthujjana, but at least a follower by faith, the lowest type of ariya (SN 25.1 I referenced above), and *then* they will have the five faculties (SN 48.11). At that point they would also no longer be struck by the second arrow (SN 36.6), "just" on account of their faith being directed rightly unlike before, and will be forever freed from the lower realms (which includes intensely painful mental states in this very life too).

Understanding Peripheral Awareness Pt 2

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-12-21 05:08:08

Last week I made a post on here about peripheral awareness, and contemplating the responses to that led me to at least upgrade my understanding. I thought I'd post an updated version of my last post / some notes from my practice. Hopefully it is helpful to others, would really appreciate critiques and comments just like last time too. I really want to know if something I say is wrong, so I know where to look. Let me know if this doesn't fit with what is wanted in this community, I really value when people share their own experiences and find it very helpful, but I don't want to be annoying. A lot of people don't like talking about their practice but I feel like it's really helpful to put words to some of the subtle challenges / experiences that many of us probably share.

The main problem before was that I was making peripheral awareness way too complicated without really understanding it fundamentally. It's not really that complex, it's just a different direction than the mind generally goes. I had a moment where I just realized that it's about having phenomena occur while you know their nature – so it's knowing where things came from while they happen. I think Ajahn said that verbatim in a video. Anyhow, I realized that I had just been rehashing things I already "knew" over and over again actively, hoping for the experience to conform to whatever image of the right experience I had. If the knowledge of the basis was not around in the form of observable thoughts, then I assumed something was wrong. Because while still knowing about anatta, that everything was clearly arising on the basis of the body, etc, I still wanted my practice to be within the realm of my immediate control – despite the fact that "me" is composed of things that are out of my control anyways. And the realm of perceived control on the basis of self is the foreground.

But the reality is that you can't know something twice over - you know it or you don't. Once you know it, the knowledge is there. So the awareness that we are aiming for is actually awareness of the knowledge itself, not holding the knowledge as an object or something you can see. Then it's just the foreground, the prior foreground is now the background.

So instead I started observing what was actually occurring in the now, where I was appropriating that experience as self, and then realizing that it was already in the basis of the body, and by extension I must be breathing because the body is there. And after a while it became clear that I already KNEW that, but I kept feeling like I had to apply the knowledge, even at a very subtle level, to individual experiences or they would be appropriated as self.

But then I recalled that he mentioned applying the knowledge of the basis to your experience as a whole. So that is the path away from looking at individual phenomena. It's like I was saying "okay, this is definitely here on account of the body, but what about that other thing here on account of the body, how did that get here?" If all possible experiences fall under the same basis, no mental exertion needs to be applied to understanding each component. They all have the same origin, same significance, and same ultimate fate.

So while practicing on the level of the whole experience, I found also that the knowledge itself is very much persisting on its own, even when it is out of sight. It really is, and it makes sense, because my image of self is obviously inaccurate – things really don't need to be grasped in the foreground to exist. They don't need to be maintained by the self, because one can only grasp things that are already there anyways.

That has led me to now. Essentially, I sit and allow phenomena to occur as they will. Those objects arise already within the basis of the body. I already know that I know this, and I already know that I already know that I know this. As they occur, I'm aware that I already know, and the phenomena just serve to validate that further. It's like everything is falling into a box, and when it goes outside of the box, it's obvious because I start appropriating it. So while appropriating at some point I see what is happening and know that I know where it came from, and then let it endure - the pressure is already off at that point.

What I don't quite understand is HOW I know that I know without bringing anything to mind. I'm fully within the experience, yet at some level I also know that I know where it came from. As things arise, their origin is already known as not-self, so there isn't much room for resistance. I love when the mind is racing now, just having that small sliver of knowing that you ALREADY KNOW where it came from is enough to stop fighting or analyzing – over-analyzing has crippled me for years in meditation. And that knowledge I just mentioned doesn't require any thinking at all. It's more like a recognition of what is already there. Once you let phenomena fall into that box, there is no reason to fight anything, the fight isn't even yours.

So from where I'm standing now it seems like I just need to maintain this and endure whatever arises. I've been trying to stay absolutely still as well, I'm not sure if that is important but it does seem to be a lot more turbulent so I've been sticking to that. I see why sense restraint is so important now, because you definitely can't take this to fulfillment if you're still mindlessly appropriating things without seeing their actual basis. It's really hard to see it in the first place. I also see why the videos all seemed unclear at some level to me, it's because you have to not fully commit to the foreground, but how do you communicate that to someone who only knows the foreground? It's not even an escape from the foreground, it's just an understanding of where it came from. But legitimately conceiving

how you would do that IN THE MOMENT is very difficult when your frame of reference is only foreground and self. Another thing I realized is that you don't need to rehash what you already know once you know it. I haven't said "im breathing, body is here" etc at all, I don't even try to look at that beyond implicitly and thoughtlessly understanding it as things arise on that basis. But maybe I'm getting carried away because it's novel to me that I CAN do it like that at all.

I would really appreciate critiques to what I have described here, ANY opinions, etc. Especially if I'm just flat out wrong like I was last time. Really, any comment welcome, thanks so much to everyone who read this and HUGE thanks to everyone who responded to my last post, that had a direct impact on my practice.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-22 07:16:42

What seems to have happened is that you "loosened the strings" that were previously too tight, to use the oft-mentioned simile. You recognized to a slightly greater extent that your idea of sati was mixed with a craving to overly investigate things and "figure them out".

The way that progress happens is basically that one repeatedly recognizes that one's practice had been either too tight or too loose, meaning one was either questioning, investigating, and attending to things too closely on the one end, or being *too* "open to whatever arises" on the other end (to put it coarsely). And each time that realization comes about, it feels like *everything* one was doing was completely wrong. This is why it's important to always be willing to start from scratch, and always assume one's practice to be necessarily off in *some* way that one is not yet aware of.

Only then, after going through that "restart" process thousands of times, one will eventually have found the *actual* Middle Way, and will be unable to drift away from it unknowingly like before. That's when one sees the Fourth Noble Truth, meaning one knows what the Noble Eightfold Path actually is. Before that, one's eight factors are either "overshooting" or "undershooting" the mark, hence they cannot be called "noble" (and obviously that excludes the possibility of having actual jhānas, since for that one needs to be well versed in "tuning the strings" even as a puthujjana, which is why it would very quickly lead one to more than sotāpatti).

What I see from what you've written is that you are probably not investigating and questioning your motivations and background attitudes *enough* now. So what you need to do is find a way to tighten the strings again without going all the way to where you were before, and then rinse and repeat for as many times as it takes, not being afraid of the thought that you might have to do it a million times more or even scrap the whole thing, even after decades of practice—taking all insights and seeming progress along the way with a pinch of salt because that's never what matters. What matters is whether you are *incapable* of ever doing something other than the right practice.

The only reliable confirmation of that is what is described in SN 36.6, and that needs to be that way even when you don't try to practice.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-23 07:04:25 (in reply to a comment not included)

Functionally, does restraining the senses force non-appropriation when practiced correctly, which then levels the ship in some sense, and keeps you in the right direction? I can understand how sense restraint will diminish the pull of the senses, just logically as someone who has quit nicotine before. Is it that appropriation that is the root of the enduring ignorance?

No, non-appropriation can only be achieved by getting the Right View. Sense restraint only prevents one from taking the appropriation too far through actions. The important thing to understand is that appropriation is always there until one has the Right View, so one should never think that one is abandoning it even momentarily. If one does, one will never fully understand what the appropriation actually is, so all one will ever be able to do is restrain it, suppress it, and manage it, while falling into a wrong view that one is abandoning it. One who understands appropriation and sees the way out of it is a sotāpanna.

So as a puthujjana, even the practice of peripheral awareness, context of the body and so on will be taking place on the level of restraint and Gradual Training, not on the level of actually abandoning the sense of self and so on.

For instance, taking a warm shower out of a sensual desire. I can barely see the danger, honestly. But perhaps it is because that requires one to ASSUME ownership of the body itself, the pleasures of the body. Which just reinforces the wrong direction, reinforces the image of self, etc.

The danger is not in taking a warm shower (or in anything specific like that), it's in acting out of a mental state affected by desire. So one needs to learn to discern one's mental states so as to see why such *sensuality in its nature* is dangerous. Otherwise, one will just be avoiding specific sense pleasures (which is necessary on the level of a precondition for understanding; the understanding of sensuality still needs to be developed).

The suffering left for a stream-enterer (SN 56.49)

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** thewhitener 2023-12-19 23:15:23

“Mendicants, suppose a person was to place down on Sineru, the king of mountains, seven pebbles the size of mung beans.

What do you think, mendicants?

Which is more: the seven pebbles the size of mung beans? Or Sineru, the king of mountains?”

(...)

“In the same way, for a person with comprehension, a noble disciple accomplished in view, the suffering that’s over and done with is more, what’s left is tiny.

Compared to the mass of suffering in the past that’s over and done with, it doesn’t count, there’s no comparison, it’s not worth a fraction, since there are at most seven more lives.”

SN 56.49

I was curious about the usage of this sutta by Ajahn Nyanamoli, along with the assertions that a sotapanna is unable to suffer amidst suffering.

The Buddha himself explains, that in this simile, for sotapannas the mountain is all the suffering of the past lives, and the pebbles are the possible seven (at most) future lives as a human. It makes sense, given that there is no discernible beginning of samsara and that the hells are a lot worse than the human realm.

But Ajahn Nyanamoli sometimes presents it as if just during this present lifetime, a putthujana has a mountain of suffering, and a sotapanna has only 7 pebbles compared to that. Kinda ignoring all the craving that is left and how some bad circumstances can stir it up.

So, if we ignore samsara, does the simile still hold? I’ll gladly hear your takes on this, especially Bhante’s.

If anyone more familiar with Ven. Nanavira’s writings could share how he described the experience leading to his demise (i.e. was it suffering or rather a calculated decision without suffering?) that would be much appreciated too.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-20 07:28:54

But Ajahn Nyanamoli sometimes presents it as if just during this present lifetime, a putthujana has a mountain of suffering, and a sotapanna has only 7 pebbles compared to that. Kinda ignoring all the craving that is left and how some bad circumstances can stir it up.

The first thing to remember is that the Buddha did not give that simile within the context of rebirth specifically, or at least that could not have been his main intention, given that a sotāpanna doesn’t even know for themselves that they will be reborn even once. That always remains to some extent a belief on the basis of faith and some amount of reasoning, and they accept it because they experience for themselves the sheer depth of the Buddha’s teaching and the Four Noble Truths, and have no reason to doubt whatever the person who arrived at that ultimate insight by himself says, especially when it perfectly fits with everything that they do see here and now with their own understanding.

So when the Buddha was referring to the 7 grains of sand left, the main context of that is the suffering that is destroyed in the present life through seeing the Dhamma.

The answer as to how that is is given in SN 36.6. The “second arrow” is that mountain of suffering that is not present even in the sotāpanna (and note that the Sutta says “ariyasā-

vaka”, not “Arahant”, meaning it includes not only the sotāpanna but also the Dhamma- and saddhānusāri, the ones whose sotāpatti is guaranteed and are already ariyas).

The “mountain of suffering” is there because of the fact that the puthujjana does not see the way out of suffering, no matter how fortunate their circumstances might be in this present life and that they may not experience any *actual* suffering. The fact that they are not certain that they can be unaffected by *any* displeasure that comes up means they are already affected here and now. The simile Ajahn Nyanamoli gave in the first chapter of Dhamma Within Reach was of a person who lives within a lion’s enclosure. They may not have even seen any actual lions around, but the simple fact of *being there* and not knowing how to get out is tremendous suffering compared to one who is able to *at least* get out without fail whenever a lion comes, if not prevent themselves from being there in the first place.

So yes, a sotāpanna does have craving left from the point of view of an Arahant, but the reason why they are still free from suffering compared to the puthujjana is that they are fully able to escape *even* the suffering that results from their own acting out of craving, sensuality and aversion. In other words, even if they *actively* commit actions that lead to suffering, it is impossible for them to experience suffering the way the puthujjana does. This is why so many householders in the Suttas went back to their ordinary lives after they saw the Dhamma, since they knew beyond doubt that no matter what they did, they wouldn’t suffer compared to before. That can give rise to a great sense of complacency, which is why the Buddha had to encourage even ariyasāvakas to be diligent, etc.

The principle explained in AN 3.100 about the lump of salt is explicitly about experiencing the results of kamma, but it works exactly the same way on the level of craving and suffering. The sotāpanna’s mind does not experience, or only to a trifle amount, the suffering resulting from what would externally be the same amount of craving as an ordinary person.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-20 13:21:20 (in reply to a comment not included)

i wasn’t aware that a dhamma-follower (dhammānusārī), or faith-follower (saddhānusārī) are considered as ariyasāvaka. is this something that is stated in the suttas, or in the commentaries?

Yes, it’s stated in every Sutta of the Okkanta Saṃyutta, SN 25.

Someone who has faith and confidence in these teachings is called a follower by faith (*saddhānusārī*). They’ve arrived at surety in the right way, they’ve arrived at the level of true people (*sappurisabhūmi*), and they’ve transcended the level of ordinary people (*puthujjanabhūmi*). They can’t do any deed which would make them be reborn in hell, the animal realm, or the ghost realm.

They can’t die without realizing the fruit of stream-entry.

(On a related note, the term “sappurisa” also appears in the ubiquitous passage describing the ordinary persons’ ignorance and contrasting it with the ariyasāvaka, such as in SN 36.6.)

The takeaway is that even putting faith in the teachings correctly is something the puthujjana cannot do. That’s because there already needs to be understanding in order for faith to apply rightly; otherwise, one can have all the faith one wants but it won’t be directed to the true Dhamma which can only be seen through understanding. As soon as either faith or acceptance upon consideration are there for the true Dhamma, one is no longer a puthujjana, and one has acquired the five faculties including wisdom (SN 48.12). Not before that.

Hence our insistence on the point that one should not assume one has access to the Dhamma and is practicing properly before stream entry. Even the popular chant of praise for the Saṅgha echoes this, “The Saṅgha of the Blessed One’s disciples who is practicing rightly... that is the **four groups or the eight individuals**”, with the sotāpattimagga (Dhamma or faith follower) being the eight individual. MN 34 also compares these two lowest ariyas to the very youngest calves in a herd of cattle who *will safely cross over to the far shore*.

i think it’s important to note in regard to the salla sutta (sn 36.6), that although the second arrow of sorrow / grief may not be present on contact with painful bodily feelings for noble ones, stream enterers are not immune to sorrow / grief in its own right.

that is, stream enterers (and even once- and non-returners) will still experience sorrow / grief resulting from painful mental feelings **arising as a result of mind-contact with mental sense objects**.

This seems to signify a common misunderstanding of the Arrow Sutta, probably influenced by how the meaning is lost in translation. “Mental suffering” is not “mānasika dukkha” or similar, which would refer to mano and mental phenomena (dhammas), but “cetasika dukkha”, referring to the citta—a distinction I make sure to emphasize whenever I can.

So it’s not saying that a noble one does not experience sorrow and grief on account of the five senses but only on account of mental sense objects. That would make no sense, as it would basically mean that every noble disciple is a non-returner, and furthermore it would be talking about something else altogether (the fetter of sensuality instead of suffering in general). With regard to the mention of “bodily feeling”, it must also be borne in mind that the texts define the body as the whole six-sense base (MN 121), which is why in Suttas like MN 152, it is said that the Arahant (“the one with developed faculties”) experiences agreeable and disagreeable and both-agreeable-and-disagreeable in regard to the sixth sense base. If “mental feeling” in SN 36.6 were to be referring to that when saying that an **ariyasāvaka***,* not even an Arahant, does not experience it, there would be a glaring contradiction.

The sorrow and grief, the second arrow that SN 36.6 is referring to, is something that arises *in regard to* or “on top of” the unpleasant feelings resulting even from mind (mano) contact, and that’s why it’s much subtler than people tend to think, and also why the freedom of sotāpatti is much deeper than people tend to think.

Since “bodily feeling” also includes the feelings arising from mano, the mental displeasure resulting from losing a family member would also be a “bodily feeling”. Not in the sense that it’s a bodily *sensation* (or at least that part is irrelevant), but in the sense that it’s still within the six senses that are to be seen as impermanent and impossible to own. And as every noble disciple, including the sotāpanna, understands the cessation of the six sense base, even that suffering would not affect them in the way it would a puthujjana.

In other words, knowing the cessation *all* feeling (through the insight of paṭiccasamuppāda every sotāpanna has) is the same as knowing the way not suffer on account of bodily feeling—all feelings, even supramundane ones (nirāmisa), arise within the body, compared to guests arriving at a guest-house in SN 36.14—, and thus experiencing no feeling in the *citta*, or second arrow. The second arrow is due to the attitude of ownership toward *whatever* feeling and toward the five aggregates in general (self-view), which is absent in a stream-enterer.

to my understanding, all that is attained in stream entry is noble view. in the absence of non-return, there would still be sensual desire, clinging and craving, and in the absence of arahantship, there would still be grief / sorrow, , clinging and craving.

Yes, and that noble view includes both seeing the cessation and the way to the cessation of suffering. The main point is that if you *know* its cessation beyond doubt, you can’t be said to be a “prey” to it in the way a puthujjana is, which was what I was illustrating with the comparison of the lion’s den. It doesn’t mean that for a sotāpanna, sorrow and grief don’t *arise*, which can only be said for the Arahant, or for someone who is in the first jhāna (faculty of dukkha ceases in the first jhāna). Those will arise for sure for as long as there is sensuality and aversion in the mind, but even *when* they arise, even the sotāpanna knows the way out of that suffering (meaning that *while* it’s there, it’s *experienced* as 7 grains of sand as opposed to a great mountain) which is why they may not necessarily feel an urge to abandon sensuality in this life, as evidenced by the stories of the attained lay followers in the Suttas.

The sotāpanna’s mind does not experience, or only to a trifle amount, the suffering resulting from what would externally be the same amount of craving as an ordinary person.

And that’s what I meant with the above statement.

my understanding is that the extent of that sorrow / grief is a matter of kamma. some who have some inescapable kamma will suffer that grief according to

that kamma.

The problem with that idea is that it's a misunderstanding of what grief is. Grief (or dukkha to be more accurate) is there only if craving is there. So you can have done all the bad kamma in the world (case in point is Aṅgulimāla), and you will still be forced to experience disagreeable feelings on account of that even if you are an Arahant, but the difference is there will be no suffering in the mind. (To connect with what I wrote before, the feelings you would experience as results of your bad actions would always be *bodily* feelings, including all the mental discomfort of regret and remorse, because that pertains to the sixth sense base.)

That's what AN 5.142 means, and the sotāpanna at least is the person who “understands the freedom by mind and freedom by understanding where those unbeneficial qualities cease without remainder”, meaning they know how to not suffer even on account of things like regret and remorse when they arise. They experience only the first arrow of them.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-21 06:28:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

my understanding of the okkanta samyutta is that they confer on the dhamma follower and faith follower the status of sappurisabhūmiṃ, but not ariyasāvaka.

to my reading they are no longer puthujjanabhūmiṃ but they aren't yet ariyasāvaka, though they are guaranteed to become so before they die.

is that correct, or is there a sutta that directly states dhamma- and faith-followers are ariyasāvaka?

the reason i think this is relevant is because the buddha states its only stream enterers and above who are guaranteed to end the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Well, that would certainly lower the threshold of Dhamma and saddhānusari, and allow almost any serious practitioner to believe themselves to be one. But it would clearly contradict the Okkanta Saṃyutta, which states unequivocally that they are “incapable of dying until they experience the fruit of stream-entry” (translating literally from the Pāli).

If such a person could fall from the path, the Buddha would be quite careless to state that they're incapable of not becoming stream-enterers, considering that the number of people who fall from the practice having taken it up is always much greater than those who actually achieve the results. I also mentioned MN 34, which explicitly says of the Dhamma- and saddhānusāri that they will cross over to safety, exactly the same as the other noble disciples.

elsewhere the buddha states something like “sometimes i see someone and i think they will never commit any wrong, but then i see that same person again

and they have fallen from the path” (paraphrasing only and can’t recall sutta reference!).

You might be referring to the Suttas in the Lābhasakkārasaṃyutta, e.g. SN 17.11, or AN 6.60. But none of that refers to what these two individuals have achieved, making them transcend the plane of puthujjanas (for which there is no in-between, it’s either ariyasāvaka or puthujjana). And that achievement is, as I mentioned above, *actually* seeing the Dhamma to the extent that they could at least put faith in *it*, and not in something else.

The type of person who can fall from the path is in fact named in AN 6.98, “anulomikāya khantiyā samannāgato”, meaning one whose conviction is “along the grain” (anuloma). The *next* stage is “sammattaniyāmaṃ okkanto” and that is exactly the term that appears in the Okkanta Saṃyutta to describe the faith and Dhamma follower. That means “one who has entered upon the course of rightness”, and that is the sotāpattimagga, the eighth noble individual, hence it says it’s impossible to attain any of the fruits, including stream-entry, without reaching that stage.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-21 07:10:17 (in reply to a comment not included)

It sounds like it’s talking about an Arahant, not just any noble disciple.

Yes, this is a common source of confusion.

If all noble disciples are “detached from rebirth, death, suffering”, then where is the work? “?”

The work is in *steadying* themselves in that detachment. The “problem” for sekha is that they can become distracted from their own understanding, hence MN 1 encourages them to “not conceive”. But that doesn’t mean that they become puthujjanas when they get careless, it just means that there is some residue there left that is not present in an Arahant. That is as much as can be said. That’s also why the Suttas always speak of sekhas in a positive light, that they don’t conceive the aggregates as theirs, they don’t delight in sensuality, they understand the origin and the cessation of everything, etc. What you see coming from the Buddha towards ariyasāvakas is only encouragements and advice, never the disapproval and critical attitude he shows towards puthujjanas.

You could basically say that, instead of conceiving of the sotāpanna as a “better puthujjana”, which is how people usually think of them, they must be seen as a “lesser Arahant”, who has certain comparatively trifling habits left over (as the Buddha said, it’s *wrong view* that is the foremost of all unwholesome qualities, not all the subtler things that are left for a sotāpanna—and yes, even the fetters that would make them live as householders enjoying sensual pleasures are trifling compared to the wrong view binds a puthujjana) that they must address in order to be completely steady in Nibbāna.

So for example, in SN 36.6, that description of an ariyasāvaka needs to be understood as

referring to one who is currently making effort to restrain those habits. But even the most heedless ariyasāvaka is *still* on an entirely different plane than the puthujjana, because the thing is they *can* not resist painful feelings, they *can* dispel the underlying tendency to repulsion, they *can* completely abandon any desire for sensuality, etc., even just momentarily *if they try* (and continually doing that eventually makes those things never come back, and that's Arahantship; they become an Arahant permanently by continually making effort to be like an Arahant momentarily).

A puthujjana, on the other hand, does not know how to not resist painful feelings without craving for sensuality, and here it must be understood that the puthujjana's idea of the pleasure of Nibbāna is always necessarily underlain by sensuality. Sensuality is much subtler than just the coarse pleasures of the five senses; it's a form of *being* (kāma-bhava), as the Suttas say. And that's why a puthujjana who is free from sensuality would get to see Nibbāna almost instantaneously if they were to hear the Dhamma. The main obstacle that would lead them to misconceive it and miss the mark is gone.

The principle of sensuality is simply that of having a "itch" and needing to scratch it. That "itch" can very well take the form of a desire to be enlightened.

What is the difference between being detached from rebirth and free from rebirth? Do the final stanzas also talk about non-arahants? Is it common that the suttas would say that non-arahants are "gone beyond rebirth"?

Well, there's actually a mistranslation there (and everywhere else in those translations where that term occurs). The Pāli doesn't say "rebirth" (and that word doesn't exist in Pāli). It says *birth* (*jāti*).

A sotāpanna is "detached from birth" because they see paṭiccasamuppāda, meaning they know the cessation of being (bhavanirodha) which is the cessation of birth (jātinirodha), and thus of also aging, death, sorrow, lamentation—the whole mass of suffering.

Also, in the last line of the verse, where it says "gone beyond rebirth", that's another mistranslation. The Pāli is "**bhavassa** pārāgū", meaning "gone beyond *being*". Sujato has chosen to translate both "bhava" and "jāti" as "rebirth" everywhere, causing total confusion.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-21 08:16:53 (in reply to a comment not included)

however, i'm still not clear on whether the buddha ever states that a faith- or dhamma-follower is an ariyasavaka, or whether he always refers to them as sappurisabhumim.

are you aware of any suttas where they are referred to as ariyasavakas? (it's not inconsequential for me as i don't wish to misrepresent what the buddha teaches).

I am not aware of any specific Suttas, but I don't see why it would have to be explicitly stated. I haven't found any evidence or even suggestion in the Suttas that there could be someone who is neither puthujjana nor ariyasāvaka.

The very common formula contrasting “assutavā puthujjana” with “sutavā ariyasāvaka”, which is the main occurrence of the word ariyasāvaka, suggests that the “sappurisa-dhamma” is synonymous with “ariyadhamma”, and that the puthujjana is defined by not being trained in either, and the ariyasāvaka the opposite. So I see no reason not to take the statement that the Dhamma and faith follower have ascended to the “sappurisa-bhūmi” and transcended the “puthujjanabhūmi” as equivalent to them being ariyasāvakas. Even if you were to translate ariyasāvaka as “disciple of the noble one(s)”, that would still make saddhānusāri the minimum ariyasāvaka, as only at that point can one be said to have faith in the noble ones and their teaching, instead of a misrepresentation of that being mistakenly taken to be true.

And, again, those who have reached sotāpatti-magga are the eighth type of individual comprising “bhagavato sāvakasaṅgho”, the group of the Blessed One's disciples.

Edit: SN 55.40 states that the one who does not possess the four factors of stream entry *at all* is called “an outsider, standing on the side of puthujjanas”, and contrasts that with an ariyasāvaka explicitly. In SN 48.9, the faculty of faith is defined as faith in the Buddha's enlightenment, and MN 70 says that the saddhā and Dhammānusāri possess the five faculties.

Thus, they do not *completely* lack the four factors of stream entry, and are ariyasāvakas under the definition of SN 55.40.

Also, the corollary to that is that unless one is incapable of not attaining stream entry before death and of committing actions that would bring one to the lower planes (i.e. is a saddhā or Dhammānusāri /sotāpattimagga), one does not have the five faculties, including faith, as shown by SN 48.18 (which uses the same phrasing as SN 55.40) and implicitly by the other Suttas in that chapter as well.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-21 11:22:05 (in reply to a comment not included)

in the other hand, for me, it makes sense that a being may be bound for noble discipleship, but not quite there yet.

If this is the crux of why you feel the Dhamma and saddhānusāri cannot be ariyasāvakas, then even if there is no specific Sutta equating the two, what I've quoted so far is enough to prove the point that there is an unbridgeable divide between an ordinary person and these two individuals.

So even if the Buddha would not label them as ariyasāvakas (which, again, is the opposite of what the Suttas I've quoted at least strongly suggest even if not explicitly state), it would still undeniably be the case based on what the Buddha did explicitly say that the only one who would be “bound for noble discipleship”, as you seem to define it, is a person

who already has only 7 existences left (or even 8 for the sake of argument) and *cannot* die without experiencing the fruit of stream entry.

Therefore, one would be well advised to assume to that one is nowhere near *neither* a faith or Dhamma follower *nor* much less an ariyasāvaka (if hypothetically they are different), and that either way one is still well within the puthujjanabhūmi.

That is the only reason why this point is important, not the theoretical distinctions: so that one will not assume oneself to be in an elevated position of any kind, not even the minimum that is attributed to these two individuals, until one has *actually* become one of these two individuals at the very least, in the Buddha's definition of what they are.

One will only reach the point one day where one *at least* puts faith in the right teaching correctly as the saddhānusāri does if one is willing to accept that as of yet, one still does not see what is and what is not Dhamma. That is the only reasonable conclusion, unless one is bold enough to believe that one's stream-entry is already guaranteed. I think any sensible person would agree that that's not a wise attitude to have, though.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-21 13:19:24 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

if the explicit formulation of ariyasāvaka in the suttas by the buddha doesn't include them in it.

Well, there is no "explicit formulation" of ariyasāvaka in the Suttas, apart from saying that it's the person who does see the Dhamma of the "sappurisas" and "ariyas" and is trained in it, and thus does not regard form as self, etc. If there Buddha were to list which types of people are ariyasāvakas explicitly, and did not include the two anusāris in that list, I would not even suggest that they are ariyasāvakas. But in the absence of such an explicit statement, and given that everything points towards them being the eighth type of noble individual, meaning the sotāpatti-magga attainer, one would actually need evidence to show that they are *not* ariyasāvakas if we define that as the eight types of noble individuals, and if such evidence were to exist, there would be a contradiction in the Suttas.

you seem to be positing a binary of either puthujjanabhumi or ariyasāvaka that doesn't allow for something between them. is that correct?

Indeed. And, most importantly, in the hypothetical event that there *were* such an "in-between" (which is not hinted at anywhere in the Suttas), the faith and Dhamma follower *cannot* be that in any meaningful sense. Whether one classifies them as ariyasāvakas or not is actually not relevant; at the very least, they are *guaranteed* to become ariyasāvakas, which cannot be said for the puthujjana, who is still liable to the underworld and endless wandering in saṃsāra, does not possess the five faculties, and neither sees nor is guaranteed to see the Dhamma.

So if there *were* an in-between state apart from these two individuals who are already

destined to safely cross over to the far shore as said in MN 34, it would have to be someone who *isn't* destined to do so, and thus there would be hardly any benefit in being conferred that title as opposed to that of puthujjana. It would be redundant, and the Buddha would have no reason for even mentioning it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-22 06:48:09 (in reply to a comment not included)

however consistent with what i've suggested above, it seems the buddha is explicitly drawing a line here between these kinds of ariyasāvaka who are not yet stream enterer, and the event of stream entry. this supports the separation of sotāpanna and dhammānusāri / saddhānusāri as distinct and separate types of ariyasāvaka.

consistent with what he states in the okkanta samyutta, dhammānusāri / saddhānusāri then are not yet stream enterers but they will eventually be.

Certainly. The Okkantasaṃyutta draws a clear distinction at the very end for the one who “understands and sees these things”, which is the sotāpanna. Most importantly, these two pre-sotāpatti individuals are not free from doubt and the first three fetters in general yet even though they 100% will be eventually, so it's not like they would *know* that they are no longer puthujjanas even though they aren't, and they would lack the confidence a sotāpanna has (including in the Triple Gem, as the “unshakable faith” is acquired only by the stream enterer, as stated in SN 55.24). SN 48.12 also states that they have weaker faculties (but they *have them*; a puthujjana doesn't).

re-reading your comments above, an55.40 supports the idea that a dhammānusāri / saddhānusāri could “utterly lack the four factors of stream entry” and would then be on the side of the “puthujjanapakkhe”. this appears to clearly indicate that there is a continuum from puthujjana to sotāpanna, and supports the notion that a dhammānusāri / saddhānusāri can very specifically an ariyasāvaka, but still on the side of the puthujjana.

I don't see why you would come to that conclusion. I see it as clearly indicating the opposite, since the faith and Dhamma follower are the ones who have acquired the five faculties, the first of which is defined as faith in the Buddha in SN 48.11. So they don't *completely* lack the four factors of stream entry, whereas whatever a person who is not destined for stream entry has faith in is by definition *not* the Buddha and his teaching, but a misunderstanding of them that appears to them to be right.

This idea would also clearly contradict the Okkanta Saṃyutta, which says that the faith and Dhamma follower have transcended the plane of puthujjanas.

One must assume that the Buddha would not contradict himself; otherwise, the Suttas falsely *seem* to allow for different interpretations.

these types of ariyasāvaka don't have the fetters of stream entry broken - they might not have complete faith in the buddha yet (thought they might have faith with certain doubts).

Yes, but they are ariyasāvakas who are practicing the right way, and are the “unsurpassed field of merit for the world”. Or even if you argue they aren't, they are guaranteed to become that, in stark contrast with the vast majority of practitioners.

The reason why I find it important to disprove what you're putting forth is that it allows people to find undeserved contentment with their practice and likely end up overestimating themselves eventually, by assuming that their faith and intellectual agreement with the Dhamma, and whatever other qualities they might have developed are definitely on the “right” side of the spectrum, and that when the Buddha talks about “trained noble disciple” in the Suttas, that they can consider that to pertain to them, and that when he talks about the “uninstructed puthujjana” they can assume themselves *not* to be in that category, much to their own detriment. They will eventually end up in the perilous position described in MN 105.

The only way to actually become a noble disciple is to never assume that one's practice is correct, and always be striving to upgrade it—even fully go back to square one no matter how many years one has been practicing, if one finds contradictions in one's views. That is surely more unpleasant, but if one doesn't do that, one is almost guaranteed to settle for less than the real thing.

In fact, since as I said above, the faith and Dhamma follower don't *know* that they are noble disciples and are destined for sotāpatti, they would necessarily still be regarding themselves as puthujjanas, as they have no confirmation of their attainment. So what is then to be said of someone who may well not be destined for enlightenment like they are, and already wants to find a way to not consider themselves to be in the lowest possible category? The temptation is too irresistible for many people these days.

i'm not that familiar with the notions of path and fruit but perhaps what the buddha's doing here is drawing a line between those who have entered into the path to stream entry with right view of impermanence, and those who have attained the fruit of stream entry with that view consummated into noble view.

Yes, and those who “have entered into the path of stream entry with right view of permanence” will only be reborn a maximum number of times already, meaning nobody in their right mind should assume themselves to be there yet, and should instead take themselves to simply be puthujjanas. They should only come to the conclusion that they are stream enterers once the second arrow of suffering cannot touch them anymore, which is how they know for sure they are ariyasāvakas as per SN 36.6, not when they have become skilled at outrunning the second arrow through various management strategies.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-22 09:32:01 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, and I actually found other Suttas in support of that.

SN 48.37 divides dukkha into two categories: “dukkha” as bodily unpleasant feeling and “domanassa” as mental unpleasant feeling. SN 48.32 then says that the sotāpanna knows as they really are the origin, ending, gratification and escape from both. Then, the Arahanth in SN 48.33, having known all these things, is *also* liberated through non-clinging, which is the what the sotāpanna hasn’t achieved yet.

Edit: SN 48.26 also states that the sotāpanna knows the escape from mano, the sixth sense base.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-22 13:33:48 (in reply to a comment not included)

I’m not sure if this is a starting point for your thinking, but it occurs to me that mn121 only states that the six sense bases are “dependent” on this body, but do not define the body as just the sense bases.

No, that’s the ubiquitous (mis)translation. The Pāli is:

’ye assu darathā kāmāsavaṃ paṭicca tedha na santi, ye assu darathā bhavāsavaṃ paṭicca tedha na santi, ye assu darathā avijjāsavaṃ paṭicca tedha na santi, atthi cevāyaṃ darathamattā yadidaṃ—

imameva kāyaṃ paṭicca saḷāyatanikaṃ jīvitapaccayā’ti.

Literal translation: “The disturbances dependent on the influx of sensuality, being, and ignorance are not here; there is only this extent of disturbance—(the disturbance) dependent on this *six-based body*, conditioned by life.”

I suspect translators skew the rendering because of the common view that the body “disappears” during meditation while the six sense base is always there (a contradiction), but the Pāli is very clear. “saḷāyatanika” is an adjective qualifying “kāya” because it’s also in the same case.

The usual “disturbance connected with the six sense bases dependent on this body” would correspond to “imameva kāyanissitaṃ saḷāyatanaṃ paṭicca” or similar in Pali. Big difference.

in this sense, the second arrow just refers to the proliferation of physical pain into mental pain. to my understanding, it’s this that a noble disciple can evade. i can’t conceive of any mental feelings beyond what the buddha describes in the suttas that mental pain can refer to. and here in the salla sutta, it seems to

only refer to that proliferation of physical to mental. it's not saying however that noble disciples are free from mental pain at all.

The thing is, even if we were to put all the Suttas aside for a moment, how does it make sense that noble disciple is defined by just being able to endure bodily sensations? Moreover, what does it mean to say that they “don't proliferate bodily pain into mental pain”?

My first guess is that for you that means that they experience only a “bare perception” of the physical sensation, and that they are able to not add a mental “narrative” to it. If that's the case, the Suttas are clear that that's not how experience works. They are explicit on how the perceptions and feelings that arise at the six sense base are not in one's control, even mentioning that they are Māra's range of influence. So it would not make sense to say that a noble disciple's achievement is in controlling what belongs to Māra (preventing feelings from arising at *mano*), as the Buddha always says that *relinquishing* what belongs to Māra is the way to liberation.

Furthermore, as I already pointed out, the term translated as “mental suffering” in the Arrow Sutta (and SN 48.37 also) is “*cetasika dukkha*”, and that alone shows that it's not about the sixth sense base, which is not *citta* but *mano*. That distinction is the crux of it all.

The main problem with this view is that anyone who is able to use secondary management methods and meditation techniques to suppress their thoughts and “prevent proliferation” when they experience physical pain, and often experience some sort of meditative bliss or another on account of it, can come to think that they're an ariyasāvaka and have gone beyond the second arrow, whereas the Buddha is describing something way more profound than that, made clear by how the it says that as a result of that lack of a second arrow, the noble disciple is “detached from birth, aging and death, from *sorrow, lamentation ... sadness, distress*” (which are clearly mental, stated explicitly in the case of sadness/*domanassa* in MN 10).

I should also add that there is yet another mistake of translation. Sujato has added a “physical” into the “*dukkha*” of SN 36.6 which is not there in the Pali, suggesting that he may hold a similar view to what you're describing, and misleading those who read this into it too.

The Pāli is:

Evameva kho, bhikkhave, sutavā ariyasāvako **dukkhāya vedanāya** phuttho samāno na socati, na kilamati, na paridevati, na urattālim kandati, na sammohaṃ āpajjati.

So ekaṃ vedanaṃ vedayati—

kāyikaṃ, na cetasikaṃ.

What this is saying is that when a noble disciple experiences *any* kind of *dukkha*, for them there is only the bodily aspect, not the mental (*citta*) aspect. And this is what fits perfectly with all the other statements of the same Sutta, such as that they understand the origin,

ending, gratification, danger, and escape from feeling *in general*, and what I already mentioned regarding being detached from birth, aging, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, etc., which are the categories of suffering that always occur description of the first noble truth. The displeasure of all these things is primarily mental, not physical.

The translation (or more like interpretation) skews it into “when they experience *physical* pain, there is only the bodily aspect.” Again, big difference.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-23 06:38:29 (in reply to a comment not included)

i'm not suggesting this. rather, i'm just agreeing with the literal words of the sutta that for the noble disciple, the second arrow of mental pain doesn't arise following a physical pain.

My point is that those are *not* the literal words of the Sutta. you're still reading the “physical painful sensation arises, then mental pain comes after” concept into it, which I've heard many times before, but that is not what it's saying (except when mistranslated). If you interpret *vedanā* as “sensations”, which is a common mistake contemporarily, that would no doubt explain the misreading of the Sutta.

just that, as the buddha says, there is no mental fabrication after the initial physical painful sensation. it's just a physical painful sensation - that's all.

The Pāli doesn't say that there is an “initial **physical** painful **sensation**” at all, it says that there is a general unpleasant feeling (*dukkhā vedanā*), and that the puthujjana then experiences that *twice*, once in the body and once in the mind (*citta*, which means it's not about “mental proliferation” of ideas and concepts, which you agreed is how you interpret it. “Mental fabrication” is an affair of *mano*, not *citta* which is the term that appears, which is why I said the distinction is crucial).

See SN 22.1 on how alterations in *any* of the five aggregates are considered “bodily” (*kāya*), whereas it's the attitude of appropriation of the aggregates that leads to being “afflicted in mind” (*citta*). And *kāya* and *citta* are the terms used in the Arrow Sutta, whereas in the context of enduring **physical** pain, it's always “**sārīrikā** *dukkhā vedanā*”, not “*kāyika*”, such as in SN 1.38 which you quoted. Putting up with physical pain is part of a noble disciples training as said in MN 2, but it's by no means what distinguishes them from a puthujjana. It's a secondary line of development in the grand scheme of things.

Furthermore, thinking that the first arrow is about *physical sensations* trivializes the Arrow Sutta, and does not at all explain why the Buddha is saying that the noble disciple is detached from *sorrow, lamentation, birth, aging, sickness, death*, and even *being*, instead of just stating that they're detached from physical sensations (which is comparatively a trifle achievement). Your interpretation is also at odds with the statement that on account of

that dukkha, the puthujjana seeks gratification in sensuality. People don't seek sensual pleasures on account of painful *physical sensations*, but always on account of pain in the six sense base in general (stress from work, disappointments, bad moods, etc.)

All those mental things like disappointments, loss, anxiety, *as well as* physical pain, are what the first arrow is, and the noble disciple does not experience a second arrow on top of that.

At the end of the day, nobody stands to gain anything from interpreting the first arrow as physical pain, as it just waters down what an ariyasāvaka is, allowing puthujjanas to think they're ariyasāvakas because they're free from something which wasn't the second arrow to begin with, but just a particular instance of the first (the mental pain on account of physical pain which they can suppress on a particular basis), not realizing that *overall*, the second arrow is very much still there.

Lack of samvega

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GooseResponsible6172 2023-12-19 20:09:09

I have been lying to myself that I am “practicing” for more than a year. I kind of determined that this teaching is something that is something that is least likely to be wrong in whatever things I have read into. The only part left was applying the medicine.

But all this time, I couldn't even establish precepts and sense restraint properly. And this isn't just a slip back here and there but the same sensuality that I delighted in early back, I keep delighting in it even now. In the retrospect, I have gained a lot of theoretical knowledge and wrapped my head somehow around it but honestly I am in the literal same place as I was. The mind is still just as easily disturbed.

When I tried looking into what is wrong with me, I couldn't even discern my reasons behind why did I take up the dhamma practice. I can't even discern that I have an illness. It's not like I am not bothered by things - recently, something permanently affected one of my tooth and I was deeply affected and anxious due to it. Initially I was able to put this into the context that this is really the nature of suffering and that I really need to put efforts. It worked for sometime but then that thing got psychologized and it no more feels threatening. It doesn't help that certain good worldly things have been happening in my life that blind me even more. I feel hopeless that I will ever be able to take upon the practice as if my life depends even though I intellectually believe it very much does.

In short, I have been fooling myself and don't have the samvega necessary for the practice. Is there anything I can do so that I constantly “feel” the weight of existence?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-20 07:47:39

Firstly, you want to make sure that your reasons for taking up the practice are clear, because that's the only thing that will keep you going when inspiration fades (which will have to happen because that's just another arisen experience). Try to recognize what the

Buddha meant with “being prey to suffering”, which is the realization that left people back in the day no choice *but* to take up the practice. It’s not the fact that you *are* suffering right now, nor that there are any specific events that you know will cause you suffering in the future. It’s the fact that *if* something intensely unpleasant were to happen, you know that you will suffer on account of it, and that possibility looms greater the more pleasures and acquisitions the mind depends on (the higher you go, the harder you will eventually fall, when death comes at the very latest).

Having said that, it’s not about constantly *trying* to feel the weight of existence, because if that weight is being felt “on your own terms”, meaning you are the one bringing it about, it will not be felt on the right level. It will be weighing on where you can carry it, so to speak, because you’re fabricating it volitionally.

You would “feel the weight” on the right level by recognizing how you *can’t* get yourself to feel it all the time, and how the urge to practice comes and goes on its own. That will make you see how you can’t even rely on your own moods to aid your practice, and that even that which is closest to you—your own mind—is actually doing its own thing, not really for your best interest most of the time.

The “weight” needs to be felt on the level of the uncertainty of not being able to get what you want, no matter what that is, including the desire to “feel the weight”.

Difference between ordinary people and noble disciple

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-12-19 09:21:52

Hello, here in this talk Venerable Nyanamoli addresses the subject of the two arrows simile explaining the difference between puthujjana and ariya, the latter not suffering on the level of the mind when suffering on the level of the body, while puthujjana does.

When reading this sutta I always thought “bodily suffering” referred to an unpleasant feeling at the level of touch (hurting), sight (too bright), hearing (too loud), taste (too disgusting), smell (too stinky), but I didn’t consider it could also be at the level of the mind.

And I would like your help to clarify if I correctly understood what Ajahn Nyanamoli said and to better understand what’s happening in the following example he gave:

One is seeing someone (or it could be something) they don’t like and they feel anger or anxiety on account of seeing them/it. **The ariya knowing the sight pertains to something unownable is not struck by that second arrow.**

Here do I understand correctly that the first arrow would be only seeing someone/something **I don’t like**, while the second arrow would be feeling anger or anxiety on account of it?

- (1) So here the first arrow would be only the sight which pertains to the eyes, while the second arrow would be the feeling on the level of the mind that arise as a reaction to that sight.

What I don't understand then is: why should the sight be felt as an arrow in the first place, isn't it only unpleasant because it is a sight of something **I don't like**, unpleasant because of the feeling on the level of the mind arising because of the reaction to that sight? If there was only the sight without the reaction ("I don't like") there would be no place for unpleasant feeling (meaning no first arrow)?

- (2) Which lead me to question my understanding: could the first arrow rather be feeling anger or anxiety on account of seeing someone/something I don't like, while the second arrow would be resisting that unpleasant feeling (anger or anxiety) and suffering because there is now an unpleasant feeling and I don't want it and don't know what to do about it for it to subside?

Or could there be 3 arrows in this case (the sight, the reaction to the sight, the reaction to the reaction of the sight)?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-20 06:57:02

- (1) So here the first arrow would be only the sight which pertains to the eyes, while the second arrow would be the feeling on the level of the mind that arise as a reaction to that sight.

What I don't understand then is: why should the sight be felt as an arrow in the first place, isn't it only unpleasant because it is a sight of something I don't like, unpleasant because of the feeling on the level of the mind arising because of the reaction to that sight? If there was only the sight without the reaction ("I don't like") there would be no place for unpleasant feeling (meaning no first arrow)?

Yes, there is a contradiction there, which is how you know that can't be right. The fact that the Buddha is calling it an "arrow" means it is unpleasant, so one must keep that as one's starting point. Often people's idea of Arahantship is inadvertently that there is *no* arrow, precisely because the ignorant mind sees no way to not suffer on account of a feeling other than *not having it at all*. When one gets to see how there can be the full extent of feeling without suffering, one understands the Four Noble Truths. Before that point, one's idea of the ending of suffering necessitates, whether one realizes it or not, the ending of *unpleasant feelings*.

And that is what the "first arrow" is. Take *any* experience of feeling, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near and see that as that which is given on its own. The "second arrow" is, in simple terms, due to the

ownership of feelings, meaning that the mind feels a sense of entitlement to any degree towards what is felt. If it's pleasant, it feels entitled to get more and suffers if it can't, and if it's unpleasant, it feels entitled to get less and suffers if it can't. If it's neutral, it feels entitled to distract itself with something more engaging and suffers if it can't.

And this is where the Gradual Training comes in. Only by *actually* going through that development of one's behavior can one eventually get to see the sheer "size" of what feeling is. Otherwise, one will be confusing the extent of the "entitlement" with the extent of the feeling, and one's only conception of an escape from the situation will be to get rid of the feeling, and that's what most contemporary Buddhist practices revolve around.

- (2) Which lead me to question my understanding: could the first arrow rather be feeling anger or anxiety on account of seeing someone/something I don't like, while the second arrow would be resisting that unpleasant feeling (anger or anxiety) and suffering because there is now an unpleasant feeling and I don't want it and don't know what to do about it for it to subside?

It depends on the situation and in what direction one's ignorance is going at the moment. There will be times when one will be confusing what is just the first arrow of an unpleasant feeling (which naturally comes with associated perceptions and intentions) with anger or anxiety when it's not (e.g. perceiving someone as a useless fool is not *necessarily* anger, as exemplified by the Buddha all over the Suttas) . Other times, one will be missing the mark by thinking that everything is the first arrow and not recognizing one's unwholesome attitudes that factually have to be abandoned. So that's why it's essential to keep questioning one's understanding and not think that it's correct, because both of these wrong views can give rise to "pleasant results" that people would mistake to be a sign of progress.

So the only way to start getting it right reliably is to learn how to see the full *extent* of one's feelings (which is where the "endurance" we talk about comes in, and it's also what the oft-mentioned sign of the mind is). Only then can one get to see for oneself where the feeling "ends" and where one's gratuitous entitlement "begins".

If I can't have angry thoughts without an angry mind, am I all the time angry ?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-12-17 08:45:19

Well if something makes me suddenly angry, let's say my son broke something I care about, anger swells up. But as Ajahn says, the anger was already there ! Does it mean that anger, lust and so forth are all the time already there and they just rise up in the mind depending on external triggers ?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-17 11:06:35

Does it mean that anger, lust and so forth are all the time already there and they just rise up in the mind depending on external triggers ?

What the statement “you can’t have angry thoughts without an angry mind” is pointing towards is the discernment of simultaneous dependence in regard to the experience of anger. Instead of trying to get rid of the thoughts at face value which is what people usually do, one should recognize the state of mind affected with anger, and learn to deal with that on the right level, meaning enduring it and not resisting the discomfort that comes from it. (See this talk).

Since that is the true root of the angry thoughts, their simultaneous “nutriment”, it is impossible for them to continue to be there if the angry state of mind has been properly overcome in that way (through right endurance).

But this will only make sense if one has recognized that the significances and perceptions of “this is unpleasant” or “this person is foolish” are not in themselves what constitutes an angry thought, as those will continue to arise even when there is no angry mind. The angry thoughts are on the level of your specific mental *actions* towards the significance of “this is unpleasant”, of wishing another person harm or bitterly thinking over what you should have done to prevent this or that from happening. The angry mind is just the overall mood that inclines towards such actions and thoughts, so when an angry mind is left unchecked and allowed to grow, angry thoughts will come to the surface accordingly.

One must learn to recognize one’s state of mind so that one can see oneself proliferating it through little intentions and carelessness here and there when it’s still not as strong, instead of recognizing what’s going on only later once the coarse lustful and hateful thoughts are already coming up at full force and one is overwhelmed. That is usually the late stage at which people recognize their defilements, and address them wrongly with all sorts of secondary management methods to boot, never really getting to the root of the issue.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-26 05:58:52 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

the anger or ill-will mind-state would be the dhamma

No, in this case the mind-state would be the saṅkhāra—that which is determining the thoughts as angry thoughts. Because you could literally have exactly the same thoughts on another occasion, no matter their content, when there is no angry mind state and you would never call them “angry thoughts”. So the mind state is what determines those thoughts for what they are, and by seeing that simultaneous dependence, you realize that you have no ultimate say neither in the mental state nor the thoughts, and that’s how you eventually “uproot” (ownership of) the angry mind without wasting time with that which is secondary as people usually would (replacing the *content* of thoughts with attention to bodily sensations or thoughts or loving-kindness, etc., as if the content was the problem).

Once the angry mind is not being taken up through discernment, it will have to fade eventually (because looking past it and focusing on the thoughts is how it gets nourished). Then whatever you think about will be impossible to involve anger, even if it's "that person is a complete idiot". That's why you often see the Buddha in the Suttas making such statements, without any trace of anger.

Nāmarūpa-viññāna Viññāna-nāmarūpa

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-12-16 09:05:50

Hello, in the latest video Ajahn Nyanamoli talks about the knowledge of the simultaneity of two things and the dependence of those two things in the sotapanna's insight, and he finishes with : "Nāmarūpa-viññāna Viññāna-nāmarūpa dependence from paticcasamuppada still remains in an arahant".

I think I also remember Venerable Anigha saying that Viññāna-nāmarūpa constitute one's all world, the entirety of one's experience, but I'm not sure how accurate is this memory.

That's probably wrong but that's why I'm asking the questions:

Is Viññāna-nāmarūpa one's all world and is this exactly pointing at those simultaneous elements that Ajahn Nyanamoli advises puthujjanas to work on, namely what is (or is taken as) the sense of self and what is simultaneously there enduring on its own on which the sense of self depends?

So is nāmarūpa everything that is simultaneously enduring there, while viññāna is what is "attending to it while not attending to it"?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-17 05:58:58

So is nāmarūpa everything that is simultaneously enduring there, while viññāna is what is "attending to it while not attending to it"?

More like, through learning to practice yoniso manasikāra, one gets to recognize the indirect nature of viññāna (which is not an "object" that you just "observe"; that's exactly the sort of attitude that needs to be abandoned). By having the simultaneous recognition of two phenomena, which together form the totality of your experience, there is no room for "something else" there, meaning the sense of "I am".

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-17 10:44:27 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, taking on the attitude of “observation” of objects entails taking on a saṅkhāra in a manner that is oblivious to itself. Meaning one cannot at the same time know what is simultaneously “beneath” one’s attention as discussed in the video and be observing objects with that attention, even if those objects are subtler and more complex, like when people think they’re *seeing* the arising and ceasing of their aggregates or whatever on the level of perceptions.

All of that is just watching nāmarūpa, unaware of the simultaneous enduring of viññāṇa which can’t be discerned on that observational level, and because of that the actual view of self and appropriation remain.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-18 06:45:38 (in reply to a comment not included)

The general principle is that of seeing one’s experience as a whole (nāmarūpa in this specific case, which includes anything that can manifest) being dependent on something else (viññāṇa).

The principle is what matters, so you could take something as simple as your total experience of sense objects (which also constitute the entire world, internal and external) being dependent on your sense organs, which are lumps of matter existing in the world that cannot be guaranteed to remain functional any more than a branch can be prevented from falling off a tree.

By seeing that anything you call “my self” will be either within the domain of sense objects or within the domain of the sense organs, it becomes clear that appropriation is a mistake (not that “the self does not exist”; rather, it’s a mistake, and mistakes are real as such).

Understanding Peripheral Awareness

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-12-14 02:19:53

I’ve been trying my best to comprehend how to practice peripheral awareness, and I would really appreciate any pointers from the community. I’ll outline how I understand it below.

Essentially, the knowledge of the basis of your situation, as it endures, is totally outside of the sensory realm. So you can’t just attend that knowledge, if you think you are, you are just attending the image of the knowledge while remaining within its basis. So the knowledge that you are seated will endure really no matter what on its own level, because it is within its own unseeable realm. However, its existence on its own is not consequential without awareness, with awareness it shapes all that is within the awareness. Awareness

on its own is also outside of the sensory realm, it's just a different type of knowledge - anything that represents the awareness is just a separate image on its own. This is obviously deviating from what has been overtly said in the talks but it's just my anecdotally-derived idea of how it works as I understand it now and I want it to be torn apart.

So the question is how do you actually maintain that awareness of the knowledge, and on what level, to what extent? When I know that I'm breathing or sitting, and I try to maintain the image of the awareness of that, it is either represented by a sensual object (ie, a thought or a particular sensation / pressure you associate with that "thing") or it is quickly overtaken by the churning of other phenomena occurring on account of the body.

I'm having a hard time discerning at what level something is actually being attended to or not - mental objects evolve and unravel right in front of me and it feels exactly the same whether I think I'm attending it or not. Widening my area of attention so to speak is just an iteration of the same thing. This awareness of knowledge of basis seems like it needs to be attended or maintained on some level. When I try to attend it, I'm just attending sensuality. When I loosen up, it vanishes. What is the middle point here? From the talks and essay the awareness really seems to be beyond sensuality.

One idea I've been playing with is that perhaps it's continuously applying the awareness to what has arisen that maintains the awareness of knowledge. So for instance a feeling of tightness is present in the head. You understand even without really needing to think that this tightness has arisen on account of the body, within the sensory realm. But it takes a second, you have to kind of step back, notice that you are perceiving it in an unskillful way (because it hurts!) and then view it within the context. And then it really doesn't require anything more unless you go and overwrite that context in regard to that object that you attended for some period of time.

Sorry if this post doesn't make a ton of sense, it's kind of hard to bring experience into words in this way, I understand peripheral awareness from a high level but it's these nuances in practice that make it difficult to really understand on a moment-to-moment basis as it really is. So it makes sense as an abstraction but I can tell that I don't really get it where it counts.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-14 06:58:18

What is sounds like is that you are inadvertently still turning peripheral awareness into a sense object by trying to tell yourself that it shouldn't be one. That's what the "peripheral" aspect refers to—it always has to do with what you are doing and the background implications of your attention to this or that here and now, so even if you are following the instructions verbatim, if peripherally you are not aware of how your mind is "looking with restlessness" towards this very practice you are doing, that's lacking peripheral awareness. What is peripheral is never "fixed"; it's the underlying basis of your situation

here and now, often in the direction of “why am I doing/attending this?”.

In this case, instead of trying to *figure out* peripheral awareness and trying to “apply it” in an almost systematic way, you would be much closer to it by suspending the whole project on that “I am doing this” level, and catching that underlying pressure towards “figuring out” as a subtle phenomenon that is *real as such*. That’s the key phrase always. It’s not that the context is “outside” of the sensual realm in some esoteric sense, but that it entails a clarified recognition of things that are there and have always been there, but that one *overlooks* when one’s attention is by default running along with the pull of sense objects. In this case, the thoughts about figuring out what peripheral awareness would *also* be sense objects. Only the knowledge of that pressure that results from not acting out of it can truly be said to not partake in that nature.

That’s why the only to *both* accurately wrap your head around and further cultivate peripheral awareness is virtue and sense restraint. When your mind is pressuring you towards some sense object, and mentally on the level of doubt, towards revisiting and redefining your Dhamma knowledge again and again, your intention to not act out of the pressure without trying to deny its presence constitutes peripheral awareness whether you’re aware of it or not (and yes, it’s another intention but on a different level, which is why it’s not “out of this world” or something; the intention to give in to pressures is equally peripheral, in fact, so everyone is in a sense already practicing “peripheral awareness” always since that’s the nature of the mind, just in the completely wrong direction and without recognizing it).

That same principle you just expand towards everything else. Whether it’s body postures, feelings, moods, or whatever, it needs to be used as a way to not be fully engaged with whatever movements are there in your experience here and now on the level of the six senses. That “not being fully engaged” in itself is what peripheral awareness is, not some (foreground) nuance of you directing your attention like this or like that, measuring how much is background and how much is foreground, etc., which is the direction one will tend to go initially due to the untamed habits of attention.

That’s why when the mind is tamed, peripheral awareness is always there even without making an effort. Not because you “strengthened it like a muscle”, but because you by default don’t get baited by whatever is happening in the six sense domain, so it’s effortless. But yes, to get to that point, one must cultivate that attitude and keep trying to better understand it through concrete practices like the satipaṭṭhānas.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-15 06:51:14 (in reply to a comment not included)

No, sati isn’t exactly the same as peripheral awareness, but sammāsati is right *because* of peripheral awareness/yoniso manasikāra.

As I wrote here, everyone has sati/recollection/memory already. But knowing how to recollect the relevant phenomena peripherally is what turns it into sammāsati. That’s why seeing the signs of the mind and the Right View are necessary for the practice to be

right. As MN 2 says, there is no abandoning of defilements for one who does not recognize *yoniso* and *ayoniso* manasikāra (i.e. knowing right recollection as right and wrong recollection as wrong).

What are the light and visions of forms talked about in MN 128 ?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-12-13 20:49:21

Well my question is pretty straightforward. We have in MN 128 (upakkilesasutta) a long passage discussing light and visions during meditations, here is an example :

“Good, good, Anuruddha and friends! But as you live diligently like this, have you achieved any superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones, a meditation at ease?”

“Well, sir, while meditating diligent, keen, and resolute, we perceive both light and vision of forms. But before long the light and the vision of forms vanish. We haven’t worked out the reason for that.”

“Well, you should work out the reason for that. Before my awakening—when I was still unawakened but intent on awakening—I too perceived both light and vision of forms. But before long my light and vision of forms vanished. It occurred to me: ‘What’s the cause, what’s the reason why my light and vision of forms vanish?’ It occurred to me: ‘Doubt arose in me, and because of that my immersion fell away. When immersion falls away, the light and vision of forms vanish. I’ll make sure that doubt will not arise in me again.’

The way it’s framed though, make it seem like the light and visions of forms are a good thing that may disappear on account of various mental faults. It also reminds me of the orthodox understanding of the *nimitta*. Any idea how we should interpret it ?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-14 12:19:04

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3P-Z3RvBY_c&ab_channel=HillsideHermitage

Interesting parallel between sensuality and smoking addiction

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** plucesiar 2023-12-10 23:43:11

Recently watched Why did the Buddha say “sensuality” to be an assumption?

One very interesting parallel of the talk is to Allen Carr’s book on quitting smoking (Easy Way to Stop Smoking). In that book he talks about the addicted cigarette smoker facing

two monsters to overcome the addiction: the Big Monster which is in charge of brainwashing, and the Little Monster which gives you cravings.

The crux of the book is in addressing the brainwashing. The addicted smoker believes that the relief from the last cigarette is truly pleasurable, when it's simply the relieving of the craving for nicotine. Because if it were truly pleasurable, then a smoker would derive pleasure even if they kept smoking incessantly without taking breaks in between, etc.. So, it's not really about pleasure, but topping up one's nicotine level to make up for the withdrawal induced by the last cigarette. It's like purposely tying your shoelaces too tight because you enjoy the sensation of loosening them. Therefore, the key to counter the brainwashing is to fully dispel the illusion of seeing the cigarette as desirable (in fact, in the book it suggests the reader to not stop smoking until they fully understand this point).

Obviously, the approach to sensuality is much, much broader in context, but I find the parallels to be rather astounding. In that one needs to develop proper understanding and maintain the right context of sensuality being driven by the pain of craving (on top of the prerequisites of sense restraint, precepts, etc.), or else true dispassion will never develop.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-11 06:37:13

The reason why we say that one must learn to *endure* the pressure of sensuality and not try to immediately get rid of those thoughts is because that's the only way one will get to address the actual "brainwashing" part, meaning the *view/assumption* that scratching the sensual itch is truly pleasant.

If the cigarette addict were to just distract themselves with something else so that they forget about the desire to smoke, they wouldn't get to understand the real reason why the addiction should be given up, no matter how painful the withdrawal gets (or rather *because* of how painful it is). One day, even if it's many months later, they will end up smoking again once the secondary management approaches (meditation techniques and "observation" practices) stop working well enough, and it's the same with sensuality.

That's what the Buddha meant by saying one needs to understand the gratification, danger, and *then* the escape from sensuality, but people are often just focused on getting the escape ASAP, which in the end means it's not an escape at all, but just sweeping the issue under the rug (like when your meditation is about getting rid of thinking and pondering, through which the the "itch" of sensuality is felt). And one can only come to understand the gratification and danger by enduring the pressure of the thoughts without acting out of it.

Sotapanna's insight

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-12-10 07:30:41

Hello, in the latest video Venerable Nyanamoli says: Sotapanna (and Ariya for that matter) knows all for all because he knows that "whatever has the nature to manifest, its

manifestation is its ending, manifestation carries its end, **because it came on its own**".

As for the first part I don't really have an issue understanding that whatever manifested, because of its manifestation, that implies it is of impermanent nature, this is I believe what the Buddha taught with Anicca.

- (1) Where it didn't click for me is the "because it came on its own", I'm sure it underlies and carries meaningful informations but the meaning is nebulous to me, what does it mean and implies?

Also we are taught Sotapanna doesn't (and shouldn't) *conceive*, rather he knows, *conceiving* is explained in this manner (I hope I didn't miss further explanations of it):

- Here that phenomena are perceived as separate/independent, failing to understand the very sense of self assuming them as separate is undermined by these phenomena (dependent upon those phenomena (as well as the body) as a foundation for its existence??)
- Here that phenomena are not perceived as permanent, but known as impermanent through their manifestation

- (2) Does *conceiving* here solely means what has been listed (and what could be derived from these points)?

I'm thinking for example about phenomena's nature of being unownable (which I believe a Sotapanna would *know*), this is something I came accross multiple times in insightful messages on this sub and I'm failing to recognize it for sure in this list.

But I'm also thinking maybe it can be derived from the first point: because the sense of self is dependent upon these phenomena (as well as the body) as a foundation for its very existence, it makes this sense of self unable to be the owner of this body, or of these phenomena; as well as the idea that phenomena are manifested through and only through the body, which is unownable, rendering them unownable.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-10 16:25:28

- (1) Where it didn't click for me is the "because it came on its own", I'm sure it underlies and carries meaningful informations but the meaning is nebulous to me, what does it mean and implies?

Also we are taught Sotapanna doesn't (and shouldn't) *conceive*, rather he knows, *conceiving* is explained in this manner (I hope I didn't miss further explanations of it):

- Here that phenomena are perceived as separate/independent, failing to understand the very sense of self assuming them as separate is undermined by

these phenomena (dependent upon those phenomena (as well as the body) as a foundation for its existence??)

- Here that phenomena are not perceived as permanent, but known as impermanent through their manifestation

Related to what u/fe_feron wrote, this can only be understood by *enduring* the pressure of experiences that come up, particularly the ones that result from undertaking the Gradual Training.

The thing is that as a puthujjana, precisely due to not seeing the signs of one's mind, when one practices recognizing the impermanence of things, one is inevitably doing it on the level of rationalizing or explaining the nature of the experience, meaning that one is essentially *determining* things as impermanent on a very subtle level. That's what MN 2 means with "seeing not-self with self", and it's what will result from contemporary meditation practices generally, as they often involve gratuitously taking a certain "supramundane" *perception* (where you supposedly "observe" consciousness arising and breaking apart in a discontinuous stream) as an insight of anicca. One then *infers* that consciousness or anything else is impermanent *due to* that perception, and that's not an insight about the entire nature of perception, but just another "more special" perception that should equally be seen as impermanent and unownable. Hence the Sutta says that *even* if the puthujjana were to perceive Nibbāna itself, that experience would still be wrong for them, which is why they would not cease to be a puthujjana.

Practically, seeing that "things are impermanent *because* of their manifestation" is accomplished by seeing the signs of one's mind, and that is also not something that you achieve by catching some *perceptions* or arisen thoughts about this or that. Not even feelings for that matter—the signs of the mind are on the level of what you are *doing* in regard to feelings and perceptions, on any level of subtlety. A good example would be giving in to doubt instead of allowing it to arise on its own for however long it wants, which is a subtle mental action. Once you're not acting out of the pressure on any level, which means you have at least temporarily put aside the conceivings, you get to recognize their true nature that was there from the start (hence abandoning hindrances, which are fueled by actions, leads to understanding naturally). The tendency to act out is the most practically relevant manifestation of that assumption of "separateness".

- (2) Does conceiving here solely means what has been listed (and what could be derived from these points)?

Not at all. It refers to *any* experience whatsoever that may arise, which is why the Buddha went through so many specific instances, hammering the point that it doesn't matter *what* it is, even the loftiest "supramundane insights" people get out of their meditation. For a puthujjana *all* of it will be wrong because of the inability to not conceive in regard to and delight in *experience as such*.

SN 8.4: “your mind is burning”

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** According_Clerk2745 2023-12-07 10:54:29

SN 8.4: “your mind is burning with lust due to an inversion of perception (i.e. things are in the wrong order)”.

It is said that if the correct order is perceived the right view can be attained.

Bhikkhu Anigha briefly explained this sometime in the past. I want to reflect on this further, taking into account what I encounter on a daily basis. Either driving to and from work, walking on the street, at home doing stuff around the house etc. Is it possible?

Also how this is related to contemplating body in the body, feeling in the feeling etc?

Thank you ☺

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-07 16:23:11

It is said that if the correct order is perceived the right view can be attained.

I wouldn't use the word “perceived”, as that tends to carry the notion that it's this special revelation that suddenly transforms you—a perception that frees you from perception by just having it, a contradiction. It's more like, when the right order is known for what it is beyond doubt, one has the Right View. Before that, one can see the right order to some extent but the fetter of doubt makes it not be fully right ultimately.

Bhikkhu Anigha briefly explained this sometime in the past. I want to reflect on this further, taking into account what I encounter on a daily basis. Either driving to and from work, walking on the street, at home doing stuff around the house etc. Is it possible?

Assuming one is already not acting out of intentions of lust, aversion, and distraction by body and speech, the most basic way in which the order is inverted, one needs to recognize that it's not about establishing the right order anew with every individual thing and experience, which in the end would just mean dealing with objects. Rather, individual things and experiences come and go *within* that which is first, and one needs to learn over time to see even the subtlest aspects of one's experience in that manner, as secondary, such as one's most personal moods and internal attitudes. That's the domain that matters, not what's happening to you externally.

For instance, you recognize how any mental state you might have, no matter how ambiguous and undefined it is, is *second* and the body and senses are *first*, because even such a subtle experience could not possibly arise if there were no sense objects to have moods in regard to. And then whether you walk, stand, sit or lie down, it doesn't matter for as long as you don't forget that “order” and re-establish it when you lose it.

It's also important to note that it *must not* be any more specific and detailed than this. The moment one starts trying to pin it down into details is when one is already putting specific thoughts first and the context second, perverting the order. So instead of trying to figure

out further details, one needs to put in the effort to clarify one’s notions of what a “mental state” even is, for example, as even that is not sufficiently recognized by a puthujjana.

The lack of familiarity with the very phenomena the instruction is pointing towards (and that one already is and always has been experiencing but ignorantly) is the reason why one can’t practice correctly, not that the instruction needs to be more detailed.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-08 09:57:50 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Does this context ever get less murky?

The whole point is to reach the stage where a “murky” mood or phenomenon can be recognized as real and as valid in itself, and *that* can then be included within the context. The doubt that arises when things are ambiguous is precisely due to the mind’s habit to operate on the level of the *content* rather than the *context*. The context of the body being there as the necessary basis for your experience, for example, remains there no matter how “murky” that experience gets, and *that* recognition is what matters, not the characteristics of the experience itself.

“So you should truly see any kind of form at all—**past, future, or present; internal or external; coarse or fine; inferior or superior; far or near: all form**—with right understanding: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’

Any kind of feeling at all ...

Any kind of perception at all ...

Any kind of choices at all ...

You should truly see any kind of consciousness at all—past, future, or present; internal or external; coarse or fine; inferior or superior; far or near: all consciousness—with right understanding: ‘This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.’

—SN 22.59

If not, how do I know that I am keeping the context at the right level? Is it because the beast of the mind becomes more still and ends up thrashing the fences we’ve put around it (sense restraint, precepts) less often over time?

You won’t know it in a way that is free from doubt until you have the Right View; that’s what the fetter of doubt is. So it’s important to not expect the doubt to not be there since that would just amount to covering it up and practicing “on the wrong level”. Instead, one’s mind needs to grow so that doubt cannot cause it to lose perspective. It’s precisely

that discomfort of ambiguity and lack of clarity that needs to be seen as arisen on its own and thus unownable.

That is the measure of progress: being able to keep perspective purely and on its own, regardless of what's happening in one's experience in terms of moods, etc. That alone is something one will need to spend tons of effort trying to understand, as the natural expectation of the mind still immersed in ownership is that progress and success are about replacing one mood/experience with another, and *then* comes the context of non-ownership, but that's like locking the stable door after the horse has bolted.

How does right effort fit in with “endurance of cravings”?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-12-06 22:32:55

In the past I have heard Thai Forest monks and others say that part of right effort is to recognize an unwholesome thought and to get rid of it, to replace it with something else that is wholesome. Like a carpenter would drive a rough peg out of a chair with a more refined peg, or something like that.

My understanding of part of Ajahn Nyanamoli's teachings is that - when there is a craving, instead of giving in, or replacing the craving with something else, or distracting myself from the craving with something else, I should allow the craving to be there, to endure it.

Am I understanding that part of AN's teaching correctly? If so, can you please point out how this isn't a contradiction with right effort, or where I'm missing something. Thanks very much,

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-07 06:01:32

My understanding of part of Ajahn Nyanamoli's teachings is that - when there is a craving, instead of giving in, or replacing the craving with something else, or distracting myself from the craving with something else, I should allow the craving to be there, to endure it.

You could phrase it that way depending on the context, but it's also important to recognize that you're not literally being told to allow unwholesome states to continue unchecked, as that would be taking it too far. Rather, the point is that whatever is taking place when you endure the *pressure* of a mental state correctly (which is what a puthujjana needs to learn to stop being a puthujjana) cannot be called craving anymore, regardless of that fact that it won't “feel right” to you initially. Because of that, it's better to say that you're supposed to endure the mental pressure, not “craving”.

Craving is basically the deeply-rooted tendency of wanting to *respond* to pressure, whether positively or negatively. The (practicing) puthujjana's misconception is precisely in confusing pressure with unwholesomeness and trying to get rid of it, or also confusing acting out of pressure with wholesomeness in some cases. The attempt to endure the pressure

instead will not be perfect initially, but it will not entail as course of a mistake as these two extremes.

Like a carpenter would drive a rough peg out of a chair with a more refined peg, or something like that.

People don't even contemplate the simile carefully, and it actually reinforces our point. This is the first simile in MN 20. When you have a certain, say, sensual thought that is pressuring you, replacing it with something else is exactly like using a peg that is just as course, meaning you end up with just a different form of the same problem (you removed the sensuality which is welcoming the pressure, but are now left with aversion towards the pressure, and the "amount" of craving did not even diminish, it just "morphed"). The "finer peg" would be establishing a peripheral context that does not deny what has arisen, but also prevents you from welcoming what has arisen, and that can only be achieved through that *endurance* of the pressure. That context could even be the second reflection that is explained in that very sutta (and in MN 19 as well).

Each subsequent "strategy" in MN 20 is actually happening within the first, so even in the last one, where you're supposed to clench your teeth and "crush mind with mind", you won't be doing that rightly and it won't result in abandoning of unwholesome as it says it should if that "crushing mind with mind" is being done as a form of *replacing* what is arisen with something just as coarse. That's why it says it's like a stronger man would beat down a weaker man *from above (*from his head or shoulders). The stronger man doesn't get into a *fistfight* face-to-face with the weaker man, which is what people usually do. Not only with this strategy but with all of them, including the first.

An interesting translation of Yoniso Manasikara that I think would be appreciated here.

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** BloodofTheNorth 2023-12-06 21:10:02

We are all familiar with the more common translations of yoniso manasikara being rational/wise/careful etc. attention but I came across one that is close to what we're all familiar with here.

Michael Olds translates SN.I.iv:4 as "It is through mentally tracing things back to their origins, by making the effort to track paths to their sources, beggars, that I have reached incomparable freedom, seen incomparable freedom with my own eyes."

Which is a much more practicable translation than everyone I've seen except HH's.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-07 05:36:31

It's a bit less watered down than "rational, wise, careful", but technically it's still inaccurate even just based on the Pali. Yoniso means "according to; by means of", which is very

different from the directionality involved pretty much all modern translations (and ways of practice as well). You don't try to "look at" the origin/source, and "tracking things back to their origins" carries that implication, but rather you attend to things *according to* the source, which is already there if you know how to recognize it. You could also say "according to the cause", but "cause" must be understood in a strictly present and simultaneous sense, meaning that which is the necessary basis for what you're attending to while you're attending to it. That's how one discerns *paṭiccasamuppāda*: as SN 12.67 puts it, it's akin to two bundles of reeds holding each other up. There is no temporal "sequence" involved, which would wrongly be implied in the "tracking things back" translation.

Hence Ajahn Nyanamoli translated it as "concurrent attention" in his book on jhāna. This essay goes into the principle of yoniso manasikāra in-depth.

Why is it that greed, aversion, delusion will go away with the right context?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** plucesiar 2023-12-04 16:44:07

In various talks, it has been expressed that if one were contemplating the nature of things in the right order/context, then greed, aversion, delusion will naturally subside, given that one is already practicing sense restraint, keeping the 8 precepts, etc. (apologies for any poor paraphrasing). Why/how is this the case? Is it because with the right context in mind, the "I-making" / "self-making" is (gradually) reduced, resulting in decreasing appropriation of sensual pleasures and concomitant increase in dispassion?

And is it fair to say that as long as there is greed, aversion, and delusion, then one is definitely not practicing with the right context? Or does greed, aversion, and delusion take time to diminish even if one is practicing right context correctly?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-05 12:20:32

It's because greed, aversion, and delusion (rāga-dosa-moha) all have their roots in ignorance (avijjā), so when there is knowledge instead of ignorance, they cannot remain. Those 3 things are basically just *symptoms* of ignorance, which is the core illness.

In the case you mention of sensual pleasures, it's the ignorance of their true nature, as impermanent and unsatisfactory, that makes one have lust for them in the first place. So that's why one should not be trying to get rid of lust directly, but only re-establish the right context regarding whatever one is lustful about, and so, again, treat the illness of ignorance instead of its symptoms.

And is it fair to say that as long as there is greed, aversion, and delusion, then one is definitely not practicing with the right context? Or does greed, aversion, and delusion take time to diminish even if one is practicing right context correctly?

If the context is *truly* there (which can only be the case for a person with the Right View and thus Right Recollection), the 3 poisons cannot be there at that moment. What takes time to diminish is the *liability* to greed, aversion, and delusion, meaning that while a sotāpanna or higher trainee can get rid of them in a finger-snap through the right context, they will still come back eventually. That’s what is referred to as “underlying tendencies”.

Yoniso Manasikāra and not wanting to endure whatever perception

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-12-04 14:29:33

Hello, as I was finishing reading “The Meaning of Yoniso Manasikara” by Bhante Anigha I came across the 6th point conveying the following idea:

So, one has to remind oneself and re-establish recollection only when the context has clearly been lost, not all the time neurotically. Then you also get to see that “losing the context” is a choice, because you are within that container, you are within the body even if you don’t think about it, so only ignorant choices by which the primacy of the “womb” is clearly disregarded and ownership is implied, can actually make you believe that you are the first, the master, and the womb is second. For example, it is impossible to seek pleasing experiences for the sake of sensual gratification or act out of indignation towards disagreeable experiences without tacitly assuming that you are the owner of the six senses and body. This is how you would automatically ignore, through your superficially unrelated actions, that this notion of “I” and “mine” is actually within that body and thus cannot truly possess it—and this is how yoniso manasikāra would be forsaken and ayoniso become established.

The foremost obstacle to yoniso manasikāra is nothing other than one’s own lack of restraint and unwholesome choices

[...]

Thus, if you simply recollect the context and know that the yoni is there, and doesn’t become overly engaged with whatever comes within that “womb”, including thoughts, you have not lost the recollection, even without actively thinking about it. Even if your mind is trying to hinder you and cause you doubt to revisit and rehash all your Dhamma knowledge, that’s still not an excuse to put the doubt first and the yoni second. **If the context is there, the discomfort of whatever perceptions and mental states come within that needs to be endured—not wanting to endure it would put you “outside of the womb”. You would willingly delight in “birth” again, and further sustain ignorance.**

- (1) Is the fact that not wanting to endure and acting out of discomfort from whatever perception or mental state puts me “outside of the womb” because that would mean I’m identifying with the feeling or perception, or identifying as the one feeling or perceiving?
- (2) I’m imagining how I could apply that to something trivial as having the knee hurting more and more when staying crosslegged for too long.

Can I—or rather, does that mean I should— endure that pain and not move to release the discomfort just by dismissing it as not being “my” pain but another feeling that doesn’t belong to me in any way and that is not important, ~~even though its existence is “felt more than real”~~, I can’t deny it, *(my bad it has nothing to do with denying its existence)* and my attention struggles to focus on anything else even though I keep this body being the womb of that experience as the context?

Would moving to release the pain be a choice to lose the context and be *ayoniso manasikāra*?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-05 12:05:46

- (1) Is the fact that not wanting to endure and acting out of discomfort from whatever perception or mental state puts me “outside of the womb” because that would mean I’m identifying with the feeling or perception, or identifying as the one feeling or perceiving?

The latter, although ultimately the whole reason why the assumption of self is gratuitous is because that sense of an “entity” that is feeling or perceiving is *also* just a feeling and perception of a subtler kind, which gets confused with it being more fundamental than the other feelings and perceptions, which is isn’t. The sense of self is real, it’s basically “the point of view that makes the choices” to put it colloquially, but the point is that *that* is also within the five aggregates, and it’s still impermanent, suffering and unownable, just like everything else.

- (2) I’m imagining how I could apply that to something trivial as having the knee hurting more and more when staying crosslegged for too long.

Can I—or rather, does that mean I should— endure that pain and not move to release the discomfort just by dismissing it as not being “my” pain but another feeling that doesn’t belong to me in any way and that is not important, even though its existence is “felt more than real”, I can’t deny it, *(my bad it has nothing to do with denying its existence)* and my attention struggles to focus on anything else even though I keep this body being the womb of that experience as the context?

Would moving to release the pain be a choice to lose the context and be *ayoniso manasikāra*?

You should certainly not be overly concerned with avoiding bodily discomfort, but that’s not really the level where *yoniso manasikāra* applies. It’s on the level of mental states, such as the one that’s pushing you to not move when your knee hurts, thinking that that’s somehow contributing to purification of mind. You would get more out of questioning that entire attitude than just going through with that coarse, and ultimately arbitrary determination (because why not go further and stop breathing? why stop at enduring the pain in your knees?)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-05 18:56:38 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

>thinking it was conveying the idea that not keeping enduring whatever perception was already *ayoniso manasikāra*. Probably failing to see something more subtle as you can ‘want’ to endure it (in the sense not assuming you shouldn’t feel/perceive that, not assuming you shouldn’t be liable to feel/perceive that) and still put an end to this enduring?

Yes, because enduring “everything” refers to enduring the root level where the craving actually is, meaning the attitude of your mind towards the experience *as a whole*. Not towards *every* specific thing within that experience. You can practice equanimity all you want of that specific level, and go to great lengths in putting up with discomfort as the Jains did, but you still won’t be enduring what needs to be endured: pressure in the most general sense, including towards these subtle actions.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-06 13:45:03 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

So that would be pretty much everything (this body, and the body within the body, and the world) except the choice one can make right here right now within the possibilities one has?

No, it would not be everything, since in the Suttas it is shown that even Arahant’s have preferences and do things to modify their experience (as does anyone who chooses to continue breathing), even things like seeking treatment when ill which are technically rooted in trying to make things not be what they are.

What craving really is can only be revealed by practicing the Gradual Training. It cannot be grasped in theory, because one will be either “overdoing” or “underdoing” one’s idea of what it is unless one has *actually* gone through that process of sense restraint and purification of actions and livelihood.

Contact is just “contact” for the Arahant?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** ConversationGlass17 2023-12-04 12:12:47

I listened to H.H.'s talk on Suttas entitled, "Overcome the Pressure". It's an older talk. The Bhūmija Sutta, SN 12.25 is featured for discussion.

In the talk, patticasamuppada is discussed and Ajahn Nyanamoli seems to use the word "pressure" as a replacement for "contact".

Question: I think he saying that for the pathujjana, contact with the senses IS automatically "pressure" (pressure to act out of feeling), whereas for the Arahant, contact with the senses is simply contact with the senses. ...Hence, for the Arahant, "the seen is just the seen, the heard is just the heard", etc.

Did I understand this correctly? Thank you

Edit: corrected the title of the talk

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-04 13:48:01

You could say that "contact is just contact" for the mind (citta) of the Arahant, but as far as the senses go, pressure remains pressure like before. As SN 35.228 explains, the Arahant, the one who has "gone beyond", has done so because they *withstand* the current of the 6 oceans, not because there is no current anymore. The latter is what people tend to implicitly misunderstand with the phrase "X is just X for an Arahant", which in theory is not wrong in itself, but being a puthujjana *means* not being able to even fathom what an Arahant is, so one must not forget that whatever explanation of an Arahant one hears will not be truly seen until one has the Right View.

Without the Right View, one cannot see the Middle Way, so if one hears that "there is no pressure for an Arahant", one will "overshoot" one's abandonment of the pressure to the point of interfering with phenomena that are not unwholesome, whereas if one hears "there is still pressure for an Arahant", the opposite will happen, and one will not be recognizing impurities as impurities.

So in the end, what matters most is to not take one's present understanding for granted, not to have the right idea right off the bat, which is impossible without seeing the Dhamma for oneself.

breath is default object!!

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-12-04 06:04:01

I understand and am not doing breath observation as a goal.

However I found that when there is no thought. naturally breath comes in foreground. and becomes object of attention. and it is peaceful too. I am also open to any thoughts. and I am watchful of my intention etc. however many time I find myself resting in breath observation.

is that ok. or some kind of delusion.?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-04 11:15:26

As you put it, this is “breath observation”, which is an entirely different thing from Anapanasati. It’s “OK” for as long as you don’t think that that’s getting you any closer to understanding the Dhamma, but that’s not usually the view people have. They think they’re practicing Anapanasati/satipaṭṭhāna by doing that, and *that* is the delusion.

Anapanasati is about discerning the body, feelings, mind and thoughts while you are breathing, not about observing your breath or bodily sensations (although of course those things come up on their own; the point is to not think they’re somehow important). The former is yoniso manasikāra; the latter is the opposite. The former is the abiding of the Tathāgata; the latter can perfectly well be taught by a mere psychotherapist.

Edit: Also, the breath is not a “default object”, as the title says. The *breathing body* is a background to whatever object arises, and the sensations of breathing involved in “breath observation” are just one among that infinite range of secondary objects, and there is nothing special about them.

Wouldn't you need a healthy sense of self to navigate an abuse situation?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** serculis 2023-12-03 15:02:16

... is the question my therapist asked when I started sharing my interest in buddhism and explaining the concepts.

She is starting to get very interested in it too and is asking me questions like this to gauge my understanding.

I still cannot answer this question. The western psychological literature does show that people with low self-esteem, failure to maintain boundaries, fear of abandonment etc. struggle immensely to escape from abusive situations. Psychotherapy aims to improve one’s sense of self-worth and self-esteem, understanding of what healthy boundaries are to ultimately equip the person with the understanding and knowledge necessary to escape abuse.

My poor attempt at answering this question:

Fear of abandonment is rooted in craving - craving against the unpleasant feeling of abandonment, an idea which implies a sense of ‘self’. If there was no sense of self felt, there would be nobody who would feel abandoned.

Failure to maintain boundaries is rooted in both ignorance and craving - ignorance of the fact that the choices you make to allow people to overstep your boundaries are pressured by craving for various things e.g. external validation. Failure to maintain boundaries is once again a subtle attempt at getting rid of the unpleasant feeling caused by the pressures of various unwholesome state (e.g. aversion towards abandonment, aversion towards angering the abuser) which only leads to further suffering.

poor self-esteem is pretty much having very negative opinions about yourself and why you might 'deserve' to be in an abusive situation. If you feel that you deserve to be abused, you become averse to the idea of being free from abuse.

Besides the management vs uprooting of dukkha, it seems to me that there are many similarities between monastic practice and psychotherapy when it comes to the *actions* you must take to free yourself from suffering, which all boil down to understanding the nature of your actions, recognising that ultimately you have to endure the discomfort and start practising the right actions no matter what thoughts and feelings might sway you otherwise.

So I'm thinking that a negative, unhealthy sense of self isn't the root cause of one's struggle to get out of an abusive situation. The negative view is just a symptom of the underlying illness - the self! If one extinguished their feeling of self, there would be no breeding ground for feeling abandoned, or having negative opinions about one's 'self'. The person would become aware of their responsibility to cultivate awareness, essentially practise a form of sense restraint and ensure they make the right actions despite the enduring unpleasant feelings that they feel.

But then the question becomes, if one had completely lost their sense of self, why would they crave to get OUT of an abusive situation if they are not resistant to the unpleasant feeling of being abused? This highlights my confusion with the motivations of an arahant when it comes to preserving their own life.

Another question is, why is having a healthy sense of self problematic compared to the ultimate goal of losing your sense of self altogether? Is this a management vs uprooting issue too? Are there traps that come with having a healthy sense of self where further dukkha is revealed?

Lastly, I imagine someone who gets into buddhism with a healthy skepticism might accept non-identification with the six sense base, but they might then say "aha! the self is that within you that makes these choices to either go with or against the grain of these pulling senses. Your autonomy is what the self is, and you need a healthy sense of self to realise that you have to go against the grain of your feelings to get of the abuse!"

This is where my already limited understanding falls apart. I would appreciate help on this as I know it would highlight major gaps in my knowledge I can start improving on!

P.S. I myself escaped domestic abuse, so if there are any questions you have about my actual experience that you think could be used as examples to illustrate the buddhist view,

please absolutely ask away.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-03 20:04:26

As others have pointed out, the main issue with this is the underlying misconception of what *anattā* is.

Self-esteem and the extent of one's boundaries are not on the same level as Arahantship and an Arahant does not stop manifesting those things externally. One Arahant might tend to have firmer boundaries and appear sterner externally, while another may appear to some like a pushover. And that's just based on the habits that they had developed before even taking up the practice (although the forms of enforcing boundaries or of failing to do so that were rooted in anger or fear respectively would disappear).

But then the question becomes, if one had completely lost their sense of self, why would they crave to get OUT of an abusive situation if they are not resistant to the unpleasant feeling of being abused? This highlights my confusion with the motivations of an arahant when it comes to preserving their own life.

One does not "lose" one's sense of self. That's not what the Suttas say. The Suttas say that one recognizes that the five aggregates are not worth taking as mine because they are impermanent and suffering. That may sound the same due to the contemporary wrong views that have muddled the Dhamma, but they're very different. "Losing" one's sense of self is the extreme of denial while recognizing that things are "unownable", as we like to say, is the Middle Way.

The idea that you "lose" your sense of self is actually still rooted in the unenlightened mind's misunderstanding of the self being possible to pin down to some specific thing, which is the only way you could "lose" it like you lose your car keys or something. But the suttas say that what one loses is upādāna (translated by us as "assumption"), in this case, the assumption of a view of self. So what one does is abandon a gratuitous *view/assumption* that was not even supposed to be there and was incompatible with the five aggregates all along. The idea of "losing" the sense of self already implies one misconceives it to be somehow "in" the five aggregates since that's the domain where gain and loss apply.

Here, householder, the uninstructed worldling, who is not a seer of the noble ones and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who is not a seer of superior persons and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards form as self, or self as possessing form, or form as in self, or self as in form.

SN 22.1

Thus, that which there used to be a view of self in regard to retains the capacity to intend to get out of abusive situations or anything of that sort when there is no good reason to put up with it.

Because of this, the idea of having a “healthy sense of self” does not even apply and is unjustifiable. The view of self establishes itself in regard to the five aggregates, and for a puthujjana who takes the five aggregates as theirs, what they’re really saying when they think of “healthy sense of self” is a healthy *view* of self, and that is nothing but an oxymoron. The view of self makes one’s entire existence unhealthy/unwholesome, while the absence of that view makes the experience of a noble individual automatically healthy, regardless of what takes place within it and how much they may choose to avoid certain situations that cause unnecessary suffering, or to put up with them if there is a purpose.

Lastly, I imagine someone who gets into buddhism with a healthy skepticism might accept non-identification with the six sense base, but they might then say “aha! the self is that within you that makes these choices to either go with or against the grain of these pulling senses. Your autonomy is what the self is, and you need a healthy sense of self to realise that you have to go against the grain of your feelings to get of the abuse!”

No, making choices is not what the view of self is about. The view of self is established in regard to the making of choices, which is an affair of the aggregates and does not need to involve craving. A puthujjana does not see this, and they either overly intend the choices and take them as theirs or try to not make choices so as to not have the view of self. They can’t see the Middle Way whereby choices are left where they always were and to the same extent without being appropriated in any way.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-04 05:49:37 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

So from what I’m understanding, the ‘feeling’ of there being an emergent phenomenon of self is always there - you just stop taking it to be ‘yours’ since it is a fluid process that changes over time without your saying.

anattā is not rooted in the fact that experience is constantly changing—that is not actually a fundamental truth of experience, since you could always find something if you look on a general enough level, that *has not* changed even since the day you were born. If *anattā* were about there being “no lasting entity”, then the existence of such lasting phenomena, many of which are very close and personal, would suggest that the self-view may have a sound basis. This view of *anattā* is actually one of the huge issues with contemporary Buddhism, due to people trying to make sense of the Dhamma through modern science, and ending up doing the opposite.

In the same sense, you can’t choose your thoughts, they arise and cease independently, so they cannot be yours as you have not willed them to be - all you can do is react to them.

You *can* choose your thoughts in a way, and you can do more than just react to them in the sense that you are not “locked in” to one single phenomenon every single moment, as a deterministic, scientific view would take it. You are free to think about whatever you want whenever you want, but what you cannot do is alter the range of options that are

offered to you directly. To illustrate, you can choose to move to another location where you expect certain thoughts to manifest, but even then that is not a guarantee, say if despite re-visiting a place where something important happened, you still fail to recall the event, or in insufficient detail. You were perfectly free to move to that location, as well as to try as hard as you can to refresh your memory, to not do either, or to do only one of them. Thus, ultimately the level where anattā applies cannot be recognized by reasoning alone, because reasoning is essentially within the same domain as the sense of control we all have that is genuine. The non-control part is on a more fundamental level than that, which is why science will never be able to “explain” anattā.

Is feeling of self the same thing as what it means to be an individual, to refer to yourself as ‘you’, ‘me’? Recognising that we require these conventional labels to communicate and navigate the world, but not to take them for granted? Not to take them “personally”?

That is the feeling of self-identity (meaning, something that can be said to be the same in two different occasions) and that is categorically not what anattā is about. The fact that the idea of “me” and “mine” should not be held on to is not because there is ultimately no self-identity and they are “just conventions”, but because to truly call something “mine”, you would need to have full ability to control its fate, and with the five aggregates/six senses, that is not the case.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the burden? It should be said: that the five aggregates subject to clinging. What five? The form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. This is called the burden.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the carrier of the burden? It should be said: **the individual (puggala), this venerable one of such a name and clan.** This is called the carrier of the burden.

SN 22.22

Could you clarify how perceiving the sense of self to be ‘in’ the five aggregates to be a misconception? From my unknowledgeable mind sense of self is a feeling that occurs within my consciousness, which is everything inside these five aggregates. Or do you mean the sense of being an individual is composed by the emergence of the five aggregates, so IS the five aggregates, rather than being “inside” them?

The very fact of asking this question already entails not recognizing what the sense of self is. As MN 2 puts it, a puthujjana’s theorizing about whether and to what extent their self exists will only lead to wrong views, so that sort of reasoning is not the direction that should be pursued. No matter what conclusions are reached, the view of self will still be somewhere in the picture.

Firstly, the idea that things occur “within” your consciousness is a modern idea incompatible with the Buddha’s teaching, and it’s fundamentally inaccurate. What you are calling

“your consciousness” on that occasion is just a group of form, feeling, perceptions, intentions and (actual) consciousness or *viññāṇa* in Pali.

By definition your view of self cannot be something that occurs “within” your five aggregates, for if it were, the view of self would be justified, and you would have to exert ultimate control over your five aggregates permanently to destroy it (and most people don’t realize this is what their practice is wrongly aiming at). So yes, it would be more accurate to say that the sense of being an individual is due to the emergence of the five aggregates as a whole, and that sense, as the sutta I quoted above shows, is not what the problem is. That’s why it’s inaccurate to talk about “sense of self” as that which needs to be abandoned, as the implicit idea there is that that sense of individuality must go (which is a defining characteristic of the experience of five aggregates and is also within them), whereas the real issue is the *assumption of ownership* of the five aggregates. “View of self” is the expression we should be using (*sakkāyadiṭṭhi*).

“But sir, is that assumption (*upādāna*) the same thing as the five assumed aggregates? Or is assumption one thing and the five assumed aggregates another?”

“Neither. Rather, the desire and greed for them is the assumption there.”

MN 109

You will never be able to find that assumption of ownership “in” form, “in” things you feel, perceive or intend, nor “in” your consciousness, yet there could be no such assumption if form, feeling, perception, intentions and consciousness had never manifested.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-05 06:01:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I actually was like “wait a minute” and started googling basic word definitions to find out whether I **truly** understand what “mine” entails. First I googled the definition of “mine” which means something that belongs to a person. then I had to google what “belong” actually means, which the definition states as being “an affinity for a place or activity”. Basic general definition of affinity is an attraction towards something.

That “affinity” results from the notion that the thing can ultimately be controlled. “Ultimately” means that, despite things changing to some extent on their own accord, which even the most unenlightened person can recognize, it is still (ignorantly thought to be) possible to ensure that one will obtain pleasure and avoid pain or neutrality arising from an experience at one’s behest. Eating your favorite food is pleasant in its very nature due to the agreeable tastes, but that does not mean that your *mind* will actually feel pleasure. You might feel just as depressed while eating the food and after as you did before, or you may not. That’s the “level” where the “non-control”, “not-mine ness”, and *anattā* really are. Nothing to do with the duration or continuation of the experience, as hypothetically you *could* do nothing but eat your favorite food for the rest of your life.

But I suppose even looking at these definitions is misleading because if “mine” logically means something that is naturally attracted to me, or naturally stays with me, I could mistake it for mine. Is this why it's called impermanence rather than non-ownership? The fact that even things that stay with you are SUBJECT to change, and *you could not do anything about it, even if you wanted to*.

So you just have to recognize it in the way above, and it becomes clear why “mine” is still accurate. The experience of the pleasant taste can stay with you indefinitely by some wild stretch of the imagination, but the actual pleasure on the mental level, whereby you would say “I am happy”—that is impermanent and thus impossible to exercise ownership over. (And technically, even the access to the agreeable food, as well as the continued function of your taste buds, are also impermanent).

What you are calling “your consciousness” on that occasion is just a group of form, feeling, perceptions, intentions and (actual) consciousness or viññāṇa in Pali.

I suppose out of habit I call it “my” consciousness, or “my” experience when really it is just consciousness or experience. And the idea of something being “inside” consciousness implies there is an outside, which I cannot possibly conceive of.

What I was alluding to there is that consciousness in the Buddha's teaching is not “the sum of everything that you experience”, as people nowadays often take it to be. That mixes up the aggregates of feeling, perceptions, and intentions with consciousness, which would prevent any understanding of the impermanence of those aggregates. *viññāṇa* does not “have things within it”, it is *the presence of things* most generally. Furthermore, there is not “one consciousness” as people usually believe, which would tend to imply the sense of self. The Buddha defined one consciousness for every single sense organ, meaning none of them can be the “central” one.

How would I go about answering the question of whether one would need a healthy sense of self to navigate abuse, or why the question is invalid? I don't know whether the issue is not knowing what the concept of “healthy boundaries” would mean in the context of the five aggregates, and as you've said, even theorising about what the sense of self is already leads to wrong views.

By recognizing that whatever you call a “sense of self” is not a problem if to you that means the ability to deal with such situations, and that it's the *view* of self, rooted in the ignorance of impermanence, suffering and non-ownership, that is the real problem. The lack of a view of self would allow one to deal with any conceivable external situation if there is a good reason for it, but the difference would be that if one does not get what one wants in the end, one would not suffer.

Question on discerning the right order and Anapanasati Sutta

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Fort_Dada 2023-12-03 00:01:02

When breathing in/out sensitive to the entire body, does it matter if one experiences the breath or the whole body as that which peripheral/in the background? In my attempts at practicing in accordance with this sutta, I, at times, experience the knowledge that the in/out breath is occurring in the background while the feelings associated with the entire body along with the perception of the body occupy the foreground. At other times, however, I experience the knowledge that the body is sitting in the background while the feelings associated with breath along with the perception of the breath occupy the foreground. Despite the seeming reversal in what occupies the background and foreground, it seems to me that in both cases rupa is discerned as the more fundamental aggregate upon which vedana and sanna depend. Am I discerning things correctly by looking at it accordingly?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-03 19:07:35

To add to what u/no_thingness wrote, what the Ānāpānasatisutta is referring to with “experiencing the whole body” is absolutely not what people usually expect, which leads to the contemporary practices that conflate attending to what is essentially just *more* bodily sensations with what the Buddha is here instructing (and which also turns the meditation of the Tathāgata into something quite trivial that anyone and their grandma can do with just a bit of instruction and practice).

“Whole body” refers to the “place” where the aggregate of form is recognized in its totality, and, although that *does* involve every part of your body in a secondary sense, it is impossible that you will ever be able to reach that recognition of the whole body *through* specific body parts and sensations.

MN 28 clearly states that the sixth sense base, whose experiences are often not even acknowledged as being equally real as the objects of the 5 senses by many “meditators”, also gives rise to form/rūpa. *And that is also part of the “whole body” that one is supposed to discern.* Not only that, but one sees the breathing as the background of *even that*, meaning that one’s recognition of the breath is even subtler than those already subtle mental phenomena. “Subtle” here means structurally more fundamental and thus *overlooked* in favor of the more “palpable” objects, despite that foundation being there the whole time; it’s not that you are perceiving some sort of “new reality” that wasn’t there before, which would just be another perception within the same not-fundamental-enough level of experience (and people usually mistake things happening on that level for insight or liberation).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-04 06:12:53 (in reply to a comment not included)

Good that you pointed that out, I should actually explain it differently to avoid confusion.

What I meant with the breath being the background is essentially the “breathing body”, not the foreground perceptions of breathing—which is what people’s sati usually (mistakenly) centers around nowadays. You could say that that breathing body is a background to anything that, referring back to my reply above, might pertain to the 6 sense base (and the specific perceptions of breathing are of course within that, but they’re not what’s relevant). You then get to see that “behind” that 6 sense base which itself constitutes “a body”, all there is is another, more fundamental body than that one—the latter being being the necessary, inseparable basis for the existence of the former. That necessary basis is the body as this thing that breathes, without which the more particular things that happen within the six sense base would never be possible.

Refer to my essay on the [4 satipaṭṭhānas](<https://www.hillsidehermitage.org/seeing-a-body-within-the-body/>) which explains this very principle.

And again, you could more easily walk on water than you could discern that peripheral breathing-body correctly through attending to *perceptions* of breathing and associated bodily sensations. The 5 aggregates fundamentally cannot cross into each other’s domains, and by trying to do that, you are essentially trying to use perceptions to discern form—a futile endeavor.

So yes, you could take the foreground act of breathing as that which you pay direct attention towards, but you have to recognize that thoughts and memories of all sorts will be coming up while you’re doing that, and all those movements of *mano* also need to be included within the body that depends upon the breathing body, not *replaced* with perceptions of breathing or bodily sensations until that’s all that remains, which would mean you’re not even understanding the full extent of the body (6 senses) anymore, but a tiny, irrelevant part of it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-05 18:28:00 (in reply to a comment not included)

The principle of mindfulness itself or *yoniso manasikāra* should be fully independent of any particulars, but the establishment of mindfulness at any given time is dependent on the enduring memory of a specific phenomenon that is more general than all others, *while* those others continue to manifest.

Counter-intuitively, not having a clear direction of what to recollect means still being caught in the particulars of experience, as the phenomena the Buddha spoke about as anchors for mindfulness are precisely those that *can* be discerned (not that the person will necessarily succeed though) regardless of what is taking place within the 6 sense base (specificity). The activity of breathing is one of them.

The Jhāna Method (Sutta)

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-11-30 20:29:30

“Before my enlightenment, while I was just a bodhisatta, not yet fully enlightened, it occurred to me too: ‘Good is renunciation, good is solitude.’ Yet my mind did not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I saw it as peaceful. It occurred to me: ‘Why is it that my mind does not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I see it as peaceful?’ Then it occurred to me: ***‘I have not seen the danger in sensual pleasures and have not cultivated that; I have not achieved the benefit in renunciation and have not pursued it. Therefore my mind does not launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, though I see it as peaceful.’

“Then, Ānanda, it occurred to me: ‘If, having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I would cultivate that, and if, having achieved the benefit in renunciation, I would pursue it, it is then possible that my mind would launch out upon renunciation and become placid, settled, and liberated in it, since I see it as peaceful.’ Sometime later, *having seen the danger in sensual pleasures, I cultivated that, and having achieved the benefit in renunciation, I pursued it. My mind then launched out upon renunciation and became placid, settled, and liberated in it, since I saw it as peaceful.*

“Sometime later, Ānanda, secluded from sensual pleasures ... I entered and dwelled in the first jhāna. While I was dwelling in this state, perception and attention accompanied by sensuality occurred in me and I felt it as an affliction. Just as pain might arise for one feeling pleasure only to afflict him, so too, *when perception and attention accompanied by sensuality occurred in me, I felt it as an affliction....*

—AN 9.41

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-02 20:58:46 (in reply to a comment not included)

The right thoughts are paramount in the suttas, but only when those right thoughts bear a significant relationship to the whole of experience, which is to say, such thoughts would already be routine (frequently considered) and not merely reserved for a meditation session.

Not only that, but you’re not just cultivating specific thoughts. It’s not that phenomena as course as this or that thought actually persist in your experience when the mind has been sufficiently “steeped” in the right context. Specific thoughts are impermanent and would not constitute an imperturbable establishment, which is what samādhi is. The establishment of samādhi is about the *mind* having been trained beforehand to have a certain attitude by default no matter what arises, even if you forget the particular themes

you used to develop that samādhi completely (and that's the point; active effort cannot co-exist simultaneously with that pleasure of total non-engagement with engaging things, although it will certainly never come about without a great deal of active effort, both on the macro level of one's entire life and on the more acute level of the reflections in MN 19).

A theme of contemplation “bears a significant relationship to the whole of experience” only if *you* are making the effort to apply that reflection to the whole of experience. That won't happen magically, and it's the result of grasping the sign of the mind, which is the result of the Gradual Training. You can be thinking about profound Dhamma all you want, but if it's not rooted in that “right level”, it's not doing anything to the present craving, and might even be making it worse if you're acting out of restlessness and doubt through it.

And yes, those reflections must certainly not be limited to a meditation session only. What matters most is that you are actually *living* those reflections to the utmost degree (as in, increasingly recognizing the signs of the mind and applying them to that more accurate “level”) and that your actions by body and speech are guided by them (meaning you use your intentions behind actions as the criteria, not that there is a particular behavior apart from the precepts that is always in line with wholesome reflections in itself). What you do in a “meditation session” is actually bringing the same recollection “to the fore” that you have been already developing beforehand. That's why in the Gradual Training, sitting down in a secluded place comes after all the previous prerequisites are in place.

One can certainly do it before that, and use it to dedicate more effort to clarify one's understanding in a more undistracted manner, and to question oneself as to how and why those prerequisites still have not been met. Still, one should not expect it to lead to the first jhāna unless non-sensuality has been thoroughly cultivated “off the cushion” well beforehand.

“When one abides uninflamed by lust, unfettered, uninfatuated, contemplating danger, then the five aggregates affected by clinging are diminished for oneself in the future; and one's craving—which brings renewal of being, is accompanied by delight and lust, and delights in this or that—is abandoned. One's bodily and mental troubles are abandoned, one's bodily and mental torments are abandoned, one's bodily and mental fevers are abandoned, and one experiences bodily and mental pleasure.

“The view of a person such as this is right view. His intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his recollection is right recollection, his composure is right composure. But his bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified earlier.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-03 05:52:48 (in reply to a comment not included)

What must be understood there is the level where *sensuality* and not *pleasure* happens in the first place. That's already what the recognition of the sign of the mind reveals, and is much subtler than any of the preliminary intellectual distinctions one might make.

The mind has sensuality when, in the face of the arising of the pleasure that naturally accompanies certain sense objects (which are experienced through none other than vitakkavicāra, even if you're just perceiving and not coarsely pondering on anything at the time), there is a sense of having to *do* something about that pleasure, be it welcome it or somehow deny it and push it away (including through very subtle mental choices to, say, contemplate Dhamma but rooted in wanting get rid of the pressure). Establishing that "even" attitude of the Middle Way is not a matter of choice, especially since the distinguishing characteristic of a puthujjana is their ignorance of their own intentions (sign of the mind) and thus inability to intend what they know is good for them at least in theory (imperturbability or non-lust in this case).

That means that when they *try* to neither welcome nor deny the pleasure of a sense object so as to abandon both sensuality and aversion, since they heard that that's what they should do, their citta at the back is actually still welcoming or denying something on a less obvious level. Not realizing that, they just continue doing what they're doing, thinking that they're practicing correctly.

Ultimately, that peripheral attitude of the mind is another phenomenon, which is why all it takes to disengage from it is to recognize it (this is what the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta means with the hindrances being present or absent "internally"; MN 119 also mentions the mind becoming stilled "internally").

Only by fully recognizing that peripheral attitude of the citta, which will never be visible even as a specific *thought* (which is not say that it's somehow hidden or mystical; it's right there but the default habit is look "past it" and see only the "palpable", external sense objects instead including thoughts), does one get to see what the full extent of "perception and attention accompanied by sensuality" means, and in regard to *that*, one then starts practicing "feeling that as an affliction", as the sutta above and MN 19 say. Anything less than that will entail misconceiving *arisen things* as unwholesome, not your citta's attitude in regard to them. This is how you end up with the idea that the first jhāna is about becoming *unaware* of the 5 senses.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-03 15:51:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

I see what you mean now.

so "accompanied by sensuality" seems to imply that desire and lust are occurring in jhana, where sensuality had been abandoned (at least as I understand the teachings of AN and his disciples)

so in this sentence, am I misunderstanding “accompanied by,” “occurred,” or do I misunderstand “secluded from unwholesome” in jhana definitions to be more strictly denoting total abandonment than is actually meant, or is it something else?

Yes, what I wrote is not that unrelated to this anyway. Fundamentally, the reason why a person who has *factually* entered jhāna, which the sutta here is not denying, and yet *still* be falling back to “perceptions and attentions accompanied by sensuality”, is because, as you put it, sensuality is “desire and lust in regard to things in the world”. That’s what I was referring to above with the “peripheral attitude of the citta”. Since it’s such a subtle thing (which, just to emphasize, does not at all mean that it’s somehow “hidden” behind a veil of illusion in some mystical sense), it’s very easy for one to not recognize that the mind is starting to fall back into delight and lust towards things in the world (which is to say, delight and lust towards vitakkavicāra). Also, as one gains an increasingly clear recognition of what the actual problem is (i.e., clearly distinguishes the world from the desire and lust towards it), the world often actually gets *more* pressuring/alluring, not less, meaning that it will require even more finesse to keep the mind within the right attitude described in SN 1.1, neither welcoming nor denying the world.

So despite the mind having become confident in renunciation, as the sutta puts it, if one loses sight of the actual “level” where renunciation needs to be happening, which is already where the “grain” of one’s mind is naturally going, or if one simply gets careless, the mind will start slowly drifting back in the direction of sensuality. But that equally takes time, just like developing the withdrawal from sensuality takes time, and thus the joy of renunciation would not somehow evaporate instantaneously-it could even take days for the mind to *fully* fall back to the sensual state. Hence MN 19 says that one inclines the mind through what themes one chooses to dwell on-it works in both directions.

That’s why there’s a whole Saṃyutta that describes all the different aspects that one needs to master to as to have full proficiency in samādhi. All of that is just about working on the different subtle ways in which one can fail to recognize that subtle “peripheral attitude” of the mind, what sort of things act as a support for establishing the *right* peripheral attitude, how one falls away from it, etc.

Things like “being skilled in remaining in samādhi”, the subject of SN 34.2, are most certainly not about skill in preventing the mind from wandering off of the one object, as it would usually be contemporarily conceived. That’s actually less of an achievement, because ultimately it boils down to luck to a great degree. Some people are never able to reach it while others get it very easily, even by accident.

What this sutta here is describing though *most certainly* cannot be reached by accident, and the Buddha himself is saying what the primary and indispensable requirement for it is.

Edit: Obviously, according to his own account in the suttas, the Buddha entered jhāna as a child, but that doesn’t mean it was “by accident” in the way absorption upon an object just “happens to you”. As he said in AN 6.73, it’s impossible to enter jhāna without seeing with proper wisdom the danger in sensuality, meaning that he must’ve had that recognition

already to a great degree. That's exactly why he achieved full enlightenment by himself after just six years of practice, whereas for everyone else, an entire lifetime (and more) wouldn't have been enough to see the Dhamma without any external help.

Confused as the difference between sati and yoniso manisakara

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-11-30 20:28:49

After watching this video : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NI0GVhw0bgs> it seems like sati and yoniso manisakara are more or less the same thing and are a bit overlapping, so I must be wrong somewhere...

According to the video sati is remembering the context, in which case how would it be different from yoniso manisakara ?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-01 05:18:52

sati is more general than yoniso manasikāra and everybody has it to some extent. Without it, you basically couldn't do anything. That's why the implicit perception of sati as some new thing you need to start practicing when you become a "meditator" is misguided. People might tell themselves that they always have sati out of common sense, but the practice that they're doing is ultimately an artificial construct regardless, and it requires interfering with the way that experience naturally works, which is the same both with and without ignorance.

yoniso manasikāra is what turns ordinary sati into actual satipaṭṭhānas and sammāsati, as it allows the recollection to sustain the perspective about the foundation of one's experience, thus opening up the possibility of eventually discerning paṭiccasamuppāda.

Thus, yoniso manasikāra (and the utterance of another) is the condition for the arising of the Right View (= Right Recollection).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-03 06:23:03 (in reply to a comment not included)

Sampajanna : clear awareness/comprehension of what one does. Would that be equivalent to Self-awareness or the reflexive attitude pointed at by Nanavira ?

Yes, but not in a sense that you start attending "more" to things or something like that. Rather, you become aware of the subtler attitudes of your mind, which is what grasping the sign of the mind means. You recognize the less obvious ways in which you're still welcoming or resisting the enduring feeling, and then you establish the right context that

will prevent you from owning that feeling while it's there. That would be memory-and-clear comprehension of the nature of feeling.

What do you need to add to the reflexive attitude to make it *satisampajanna* ?

The reflexive attitude *is* *satisampajañña*. *Ñāṇavīra* makes the distinction between “reflection” and “reflexion”. Basically, *satisampajañña* is the later, whereas *sati* alone is the former, which would range all the way from remembering what you did yesterday to profound philosophical ponderings, all of which are inherently forms of *sati*/memory. As he puts it, “reflexion” is a stricter form of “reflection”, meaning it involves “stepping back” from the currently enduring feeling more acutely, and thus it pulls you back from otherwise abstract thinking.

You could say for practical purposes that *satisampajañña* is essentially *sati* + a good level of *yoniso manasikāra*. That's why SN 47.8 says that even *satisampajañña* cannot be achieved without grasping the sign of the mind.

The Non Sensual .. Thought ?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** sahasaransi_mw 2023-11-30 03:41:03

Theruwān saraṇayai !

This is a question I've had for maybe a month now, but upon being unable still to resolve it myself I will ask it here.

There is a certain concept I've been seeing talked about in HH videos, as well as sometimes on here, namely the concept: Wholesome is not another “object” (like for example, thoughts of “wishing others well”), but rather, Wholesome is simply clarity in regards to the UNWHOLESOME OBJECT.

For example, in the video the Ultimate Method for Overcoming Hindrances - (<https://youtu.be/9volhZij5Io?si=E0hU-wk5sNQhZ5Zq>) at 27:00 minutes in, Sister Medhini mentions how in the Dvedhavitakka Sutta, the Thought of Renunciation/ Non - Sensual Thought is not just another object like the Sensual Thought is.

Rather, what constitutes the Nekkhamma vitakka/Thought of Renunciation is:

“the type of THINKING of seeing the danger of the Sensual Thought that has arisen”.

Although it does make sense that an object could not simply be Wholesome in and of itself in its own arising, manifestation, and nature - thoughts that arise about a certain content just so happen to be good, and thoughts about a certain content just so happen to be bad (by that logic, when Aritṭha the Vulture Trapper was at some point thinking about the suttas - that was also “wholesome” - since how could thoughts concerning the suttas possibly be bad??) - what I have trouble understanding is this:

1.) From what I can understand of the Dvedhavitakka Sutta, it seems to imply that the

Thought of Renunciation IS in fact, Wholesome IN ITS ARISING and IS a wholesome OBJECT.

“Then, as I meditated - diligent, keen, and resolute - a thought of renunciation AROSE. I understood: ‘This thought of renunciation has ARISEN in me’”.

It doesn't say that intentionally, volitionally THINKING and clarifying the danger of the arisen Sensual Thought is the Thought of Renunciation, but that the thought that ARISES (before and more fundamental to your intentional thinking/contemplation/clarification) is IN ITSELF, in its original nature and manifestation BEFORE your contemplation of it - a Thought of Renunciation.

In short, the Wholesome Thought is a Wholesome THOUGHT - NOT Wholesome THINKING (which is what contemplating and reflecting upon the danger would be).

Perhaps I may be conflating this in assuming that for the Thought of Renunciation to be wholesome in its ARISING, Wholesome must therefore be an “object”/ dependent on the content of the thought. Maybe it could be seen instead as - WHATEVER CONTENT that arises regardless of the object, whether it arises/manifests with DESIRE backing it or not - is what determines the nature of the thought?

2.) If the Thought of Renunciation is really just contemplation of the danger of an arisen Sensual Thought - this renders about half the Dvedhavitakka sutta completely useless and unnecessary.

The first part of the sutta is about when the Bodhisatta, while meditating, has a Sensual Thought arise in him, and he then contemplates on its danger.

If this contemplation of the danger of the Sensual Thought - is the Non-Sensual “Thought” in itself, the Bodhisatta could have stopped right here (since he has already explained the two classes of thought).

But then he also goes on, in the second part, to reflect on the BENEFITS of arisen Thoughts of Renunciation (so if the contemplation of the danger of a Sensual Thought constitutes a Non-Sensual Thought.... what exactly does that make this?). - - -

I will have to mention that all of this may be due to my lack of clarity in regards to Sensual thoughts and what they really are, as well. Maybe this is all wrong and neither the Non-Sensual Thought NOR the Sensual Thought even - are defined by the object of the thought, but simply by the presence/absence of desire? This would seem to sort out the issue?

I do apologize for my long question and if it is unclear. Thank you!

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-30 08:13:48

What the “wholesome thoughts” are cannot be understood accurately in theory alone because wholesomeness on that level that *arises on its own* is rooted in the present state of mind, which is not in your direct control. On that level, you can't at the same time relate to unwholesome thoughts *and* wholesome thoughts—it has to be one of the two that you

exist within at the time. That “level” is what determines where the mind will go if you just relax and don’t make any effort.

A background unwholesome citta is facing the direction of unwholesome actions by default, including by manokamma, and restraining yourself from that “pull” will be painful. A fully established wholesome state of mind, on the other hand, makes unwholesome actions impossible even if you try to commit them, because losing the perspective of danger is inconceivable for as long as that state lasts, and it makes not acting out of the pull be joyful and satisfying in a way that involves no craving.

For instance, choosing to eat the most delicious food instead of something simple could not possibly be rooted in sensual desire at that time unlike before, where you’d have to be extra careful to the point of abstaining from it if the mind is craving for the pleasure, or making sure that there is a valid practical reason for consuming it. You’d be able to experience the full “size” of the pleasure of the delicious food and still see it as a charcoal pit and not crave for it at all, and same with thoughts and memories about sense pleasures in general. (Sexual engagement of any kind remains perpetually and categorically out of bounds though).

1.) From what I can understand of the Dvedhavitakka Sutta, it seems to imply that the Thought of Renunciation IS in fact, Wholesome IN ITS ARISING and IS a wholesome OBJECT.

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It doesn’t say that intentionally, volitionally THINKING and clarifying the danger of the arisen Sensual Thought is the Thought of Renunciation, but that the thought that ARISES (before and more fundamental to your intentional thinking/contemplation/clarification) is IN ITSELF, in its original nature and manifestation BEFORE your contemplation of it - a Thought of Renunciation.

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Yes, you can imagine it in theory as how much pressure there is to **act** out of the content (craving) vs. how much pressure the content **is** by itself (feeling). It is by not seeing the difference between those two that one remains caught up in saṃsāra, pretty much. Not seeing that recognizing that craving is completely gratuitous, while feeling is not optional. And again, that will only be seen once the practice that the Buddha is describing there in MN 19 is brought to fulfilment, so that one can drop the active thinking of renunciation

and stay only with the *mental state* of renunciation that is now steady and does not require any maintenance at all. Otherwise, craving and hindrances will always be the mental state to some extent and all of one's active Dhamma reflections will still not be "on the right level".

2.) If the Thought of Renunciation is really just contemplation of the danger of an arisen Sensual Thought - this renders about half the Dvedhavitakka sutta completely useless and unnecessary.

The first part of the sutta is about when the Bodhisatta, while meditating, has a Sensual Thought arise in him, and he then contemplates on its danger.

If this contemplation of the danger of the Sensual Thought - is the Non-Sensual "Thought" in itself, the Bodhisatta could have stopped right here (since he has already explained the two classes of thought).

But then he also goes on, in the second part, to reflect on the BENEFITS of arisen Thoughts of Renunciation (so if the contemplation of the danger of a Sensual Thought constitutes a Non-Sensual Thought.... what exactly does that make this?).

Yes, that second part is also just as important, and it's the same principle as contemplating the benefit of abandoning hindrances shown in Suttas like MN 39.

Basically, once you start properly contemplating the danger—namely, you are trying to address your gratuitous need to *act out* of the pressure, not the pressure itself—the mind will begin to recognize the danger more by itself when the same things keep arising (i.e. whatever the mind is thinking about which you don't try to interfere with—as the simile goes, the cowherd doesn't put the cows on a leash, he just makes sure they don't eat other people's crops). You then need to actively foster that recognition of benefit so as to solidify that *mental state* of renunciation at the background, not to, again, do something to the *content* in any way.

Also, you could say that that which the Sutta does not explicitly name, being the contemplation of "this does not lead to my benefit, etc." is the "active thinking" that you are using to, as the Sutta also says, incline that *citta/mental state* in the right direction. Ceasing to make use of that reflection prematurely would entail allowing the wrong mental states to continue. Not realizing that it's that indirect mental state and not the direct experience of feeling and perception that needs to change will also mean no purification of mind, and proliferation of subtle aversion towards feelings instead.

Furthermore, the part that people often misinterpret, where the Buddha says "this thinking is tiresome, why don't I stop it", has an important nuance in Pāli. The expression is "—anu—vitakkayato —anu—vicārayato", and that "anu" is denoting the "(going) along with" nature of those active reflections, which is tiresome compared to allowing the wholesome mental state coupled with whatever feelings or perceptions arise to endure effortlessly. It does *not* mean that he stopped the vitakkavicāra as such that is paired with renunciation, etc., because that can only be done by either falling back into unwholesome thoughts or by entering the second jhāna.

Maybe this is all wrong and neither the Non-Sensual Thought NOR the Sensual Thought even - are defined by the object of the thought, but simply by the presence/absence of desire? This would seem to sort out the issue?

Yes, pretty much. Of course, even the senses will eventually incline less to the very coarse objects if the wholesome citta/mental state is protected, but that absolutely does not and should not involve volition on your part. That would be a way of trying to take a shortcut to the second jhāna pretty much, which will make you fall from the first if you had it and end up with neither.

At the end of the day, you can speak of wholesome and unwholesome both on the active and the passive level, but it's not perfectly clear cut. If the intention behind the superficially wholesome thoughts is unwholesome, they won't actually be wholesome. And if there is truly a wholesome intention at the back, nothing that arises can be said to be unwholesome *at that moment*. You can also have reached some level of a wholesome mental state, but then allow yourself then attend to sense objects carelessly on a particular level (which will still not be causing any suffering due to the pure mind), and this will gradually incline the mind back into unwholesome.

This and this are also about this same Sutta.

Discerning the body

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-11-29 13:37:30

Hello, in *The Only Way to Jhana* Venerable Nyanamoli addresses a chapter about *Discerning the body* as an entity there enduring on its own with his own cravings and that we should be “aware of it as a peripherally enduring bag of skin. An indirect image of the body that contains the sense organs that are attracted to the various types of sense pleasures in their respective domains”.

My “issue” here is that I tend to understand what is meant but not on the level of the body but rather of the brain (or mind).

I feel like I've been partially making myself aware of something peripherally enduring for a long time now with what I call “mental training”, essentially *going against the grain* of the mind and “going beyond the limits of what I can endure” or I guess in my mind it was rather trying some watered-down shaolin type of training to become the master of the mind, to be less controlled by it but gain more control over it. Little things like for example when doing sport, by not giving up and enduring when it gets hard physically; or endure the cold until the mind is not bothered by it anymore even though it feels it; or when I feel like the mind gets antsy or frustrated, by not following it where it wants to go.

Also, for a long time now, probably because of our understanding of the self according to science, I was thinking of myself as a brain, a brain which is connected to a body and able to pilote it partially (at least at the level of the muscles).

And all in all, I tend not to experience that awareness at the level of the body enduring on its own, but rather at the level of the brain, or the mind, enduring everything the body sends to it, on its own. Which translates into, for example, not thinking this is the tongue that wants good feeling with good tasting food but rather the mind that wants to feel delight with good taste by proxy of the tongue, or this is not the body that is cold and wants to be warm, but rather the mind that is averse to the coldness by proxy of the body.

So I would just like to know if this is a mistake and if this is important that I recalibrate this way of perceiving things to not possibly get things wrong as I go further into the practice, or, if maybe the important point is rather to see something here, over than “me”, enduring on its own and pulling me one way or another, be it the body and the senses or the mind by proxy of the body and the senses?

I tend to think that if Ajahn Nyanamoli puts it in those specific terms of “body” and “sense organs” and not of “mind” that’s for a good reason, but I would like opinions from people more expert than me on the subject

Edit: After putting it in writing, pondering about it gets easier and I’m starting to wonder if that was just too nebulous for me, because when I give the example of not giving up when doing physical exercises and that it gets difficult and physical pain arises, this is the mind not giving up by discerning the body as an individual entity going through a painful process, not the mind not giving up by discerning the mind feeling a painful process, right? I’m lost ☹

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-30 00:40:47

So I would just like to know if this is a mistake and if this is important that I recalibrate this way of perceiving things to not possibly get things wrong as I go further into the practice

It is, and that’s why it’s such an issue when people think the views about the practice are irrelevant and dismiss the need to clear out misunderstandings by saying “that’s all just thinking” and whatnot, and the only thing that matters is “meditation” (which, in the original, uncorrupted meaning of the word, is literally nothing other than exploring one’s views). Wrong view leads to wrong intention... which leads to wrong knowledge, which leads to wrong liberation.

Fundamentally, you could say that whatever is an arisen thing, no matter how subtle or ambiguous, is part of your body, whereas your attitudes, views, actions and assumptions in regard to arisen things is where the mind is (citta), and that’s why it’s always “indirect”. You can’t “see” your mind in the way of “me here looking at that” in which you perceive even your thoughts. Thus, it’s extremely wrong to say that the mind is in the

brain, as the brain is a material thing which has its own way of functioning/manifesting, and your mind has attitudes in regard to your body, which includes your brain. This is how an Arahant can get neurological disorders: whatever happens in the brain is what you liberate yourself *from*. Thus, the idea that measurable changes in the brain due to “meditation” are what development of *mind* is as ignorant as it gets, and that’s why that type of meditation—well, even the traditional Buddhist type too in the end, inadvertently—revolves around making your life better, not about abandoning attachment to life.

I tend to think that if Ajahn Nyanamoli puts it in those specific terms of “body” and “sense organs” and not of “mind” that’s for a good reason, but I would like opinions from people more expert than me on the subject

Yes, and one also must remember that there are two “minds”: *citta* and *mano*. *Mano* is a sense base and is thus part of the body/brain and belongs to *Māra*, whereas *citta* is that which gets liberated from *Māra*.

because when I give the example of not giving up when doing physical exercises and that it gets difficult and physical pain arises, this is the mind not giving up by discerning the body as an individual entity going through a painful process, not the mind not giving up by discerning the mind feeling a painful process, right? I’m lost

You could say either, but with the latter you would need to say that the first mind is *citta* while the second is *mano*, i.e. part of the body still (though way subtler, of course).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-30 10:35:06 (in reply to a comment not included)

Is *mano* the sixth sense organ?

Yes.

If so, I thought it was only sensitive to mental phenomena, not bodily ones.

That’s the scientific misinterpretation of experience right there. How can you perceive bodily phenomena (of the five senses) in any way other than as mental phenomena?

Friend, these five faculties each have a separate field, a separate domain, and do not experience each other’s field and domain, that is, the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, and the body faculty. Now of these five faculties, each having a separate field, a separate domain, not experiencing each other’s field and domain, what is their resort, what experiences their fields and domains?”

“Friend, these five faculties each have a separate field, a separate domain, and do not experience each other’s field and domain, that is, the eye faculty, the ear faculty, the nose faculty, the tongue faculty, and the body faculty. Now these five faculties, each having a separate field, a separate domain, not ex-

periencing each other's field and domain, **have mind (mano) as their resort, and mind experiences their fields and domains.**"

—MN 43

unless that's part of a chain of events I don't clearly discern yet, where bodily phenomenas leads to mental phenomenas being then sensed by *mano*

The expectation of it being a "chain of events" would be another result of the scientific misinterpretation that regards experience as somehow observable "from the outside", independently of consciousness. Viewing "bodily phenomena" as some sort of self-subsisting entities that exist **before** you experience them is one of many ways how you would block any opportunity to see paṭiccasamuppāda.

It is *because* of your mind (mano) that you get to experience bodily phenomena as bodily phenomena in the first place because there is absolutely no such thing as "bare perception", AKA "raw sense data", an abhorrently fallacious notion. Conversely, it is because the 5 senses are functional and the corresponding objects are given that mano can perceive bodily phenomena.

In fact, this principle is embedded into the Pali itself: the external counterpart of mano is *dhamma*, meaning "phenomenon/thing" in the most general sense. It's not "mānasika dhamma", meaning "mental phenomena". That's why it's wrong when "dhamma" gets translated as "mental object"—totally just reading alien Cartesian notions into the Pali.

In the philosophy of mind, mind-body dualism denotes either the view that mental phenomena are non-physical,[1] or that the mind and body are distinct and separable.[2] Thus, it encompasses a set of views about the relationship between mind and matter, as well as between subject and object, and is contrasted with other positions, such as physicalism and enactivism, in the mind-body problem.[1][2]

...And none of the views in that discussion, being outside the Buddha's teaching, involve any recognition of the citta. Thus, whatever distinctions they make between mind and body will be inaccurate, as they will be hopelessly mixing up citta and mano all the time.

.“Friend, what can be known by purified mind-consciousness released from the five faculties?”

“Friend, by purified mind-consciousness (mano-viññāna) released from the five faculties the base of infinite space can be known thus: ‘Space is infinite’; the base of infinite consciousness can be known thus: ‘Consciousness is infinite’; and the base of nothingness can be known thus: ‘There is nothing.’”

—MN 43

This makes clear that the default state is for mind-consciousness/mano to be (inextricably) linked with the five senses, and that's not unwholesome or wrong because an Arahant does not perpetually live in formless attainments.

Does anyone know of a resource on the subject, defining the outlines of *mano*, *citta* and *vinna*, and maybe the relationship between the 3 please?

You won't find a "resource" on the level of information, or at least it will hardly take you any further; it needs to be seen for oneself. Especially with *citta*, no matter how many accurate pointers towards it you get, it's still gonna be another dhamma within *mano* for as long as you're not trained in proper way of discerning it. Only by learning to live in and enjoy seclusion does one get to recognize where the *citta* is (*cittassa nimitta*), and enjoying seclusion will not be possible unless one has become accustomed to virtue, non-sensuality, renunciation, and sense restraint beforehand.

Furthermore, almost the entirety of the problem with contemporary Buddhism is due to the ignorance of the distinction between *citta* and *mano*, so you will be hard-pressed to find anyone explaining it accurately these days. And even if it were recognized in theory very rarely, in practice you are very unlikely to find accurate instructions on how to go about discerning the distinction in your own experience, which is what would make you a *sotapanna* whether you like it or not.

Nevertheless, some Sutta passages so as to show the nuances of the Pali (obscured in the common translations) that implicitly show the distinction between these three things:

If, friends, internally the mind (**mano**) is intact but no external phenomena come into its range, and there is no corresponding engagement, then there is no manifestation of the corresponding section of consciousness. If internally the mind is intact and external phenomena come into its range, but there is no corresponding engagement, then there is no manifestation of the corresponding section of consciousness. But when internally the mind is intact and external phenomena come into its range and there is the corresponding [conscious] engagement, then there is the manifestation of the corresponding section of consciousness.

"The form (*rūpa*) in what has thus come to be is included in the material form aggregate affected by assumption. The feeling... perception... activities... consciousness in what has thus come to be is included in the consciousness aggregate affected by assumption.

—MN 28

The highlighted part shows that the experience of phenomena by *mano* is also material, showing how the idea that *mano* perceives "only" mental phenomena, as in diametrically opposed to the material, is wrong.

Bhikkhus, if in any bhikkhu or bhikkhunī desire or lust or hatred or delusion or aversion of mind should arise in regard to forms **cognizable (*viññāṇa*)** by the eye, such a one should rein in the **mind (*citta*)** from them thus: 'This path is fearful, dangerous, strewn with thorns, covered by jungle, a deviant path, an evil path, a way beset by scarcity. This is a path followed by inferior people; it is not the path followed by superior people. This is not for you.' In this way the **mind (*citta*)** should be held back from forms cognizable by the eye [...]

Bhikkhus, if in any bhikkhu or bhikkhunī desire or lust or hatred or delusion or aversion of mind should arise in regard to phenomena **cognizable (viññāṇa)** by the **mind (mano)**, such a one should rein in the **mind (citta)** from them thus: ‘This path is fearful, dangerous, strewn with thorns, covered by jungle, a deviant path, an evil path, a way beset by scarcity. This is a path followed by inferior people; it is not the path followed by superior people. This is not for you.’ In this way the **mind (citta)** should be held back from phenomena cognizable by the **mind (mano)**...

—SN 35.246 (my more literal translation)

This illustrates also how purification does not involve stopping one’s thinking (as in getting rid of the phenomena perceived by mano), as it’s clearly saying that what one restrains is the **citta**, away from the phenomena cognizable by mano, whose arising is not, on the level that matters, in one’s control.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-30 15:44:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

Here the “corresponding [conscious] engagement” is contact between mano and the sense object, right?

No, that’s still the scientific view where mano and the sense object are supposedly conceivable by you *before* the contact. You can “see” contact happening from the outside only by introducing totally new sense objects to another person’s senses, but when it comes to your own, the only way you can relate to either the sense organ itself or the external object at any given time is the contact that *already* happened, allowing you to be exploring how it came about in the first place. If the contact were not already there, you couldn’t even designate it or describe it, let alone say where it came from, as that designation and exploration is an *intention*, and intention originates from contact.

What does “affected by assumption” mean here? The only time I heard about assumptions from Ajahn Nyanamoli’s teachings was when one assumes the body to be “me, mine, myself” and put it second, is it this idea that is conveyed here?

I explained the logic behind that translation here.

Here (the “mind” put in bold) I notice that you didn’t make the distinction between mano or citta, and I don’t see either of those in the Pali version, and I was wondering why? Can these mental formations be cognizable by mano but not arising “from” mano or citta? Are these conditioned thoughts and feelings arising “on their own”?

Actually, I should have highlighted perhaps even more than everything else but I missed it. “cetaso” is the genitive of citta, so that’s what it’s referring to there. It already implies that one needs to be able to discern the difference between *aversion of citta*, which is always defilement for sure, and an unpleasant phenomenon pertaining to *mano*, which in

itself will bring intentions of “shying away” with it, so to speak. As in, even for an Arahant, the displeasure of a grave illness has the same directionality that points him to look for a potential cure, so one needs to be able to differentiate *that*, which is fine (as when Buddha himself sought treatment when ill) and *aversion*, which is the assumption that you’re entitled not to experience unpleasant feelings, and you *suffer* if you’re not able to resolve the situation as soon as you desire.

what is distraction and delusion?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-11-28 04:40:57

HH always talk about Greed Aversion and distraction/delusion. And also talk against practice of focusing on one meditation object.

So If there is no predefined meditation object. how to discern distraction?. Distraction from what ?

and similarly how to discern delusion.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-29 05:23:12

So If there is no predefined meditation object. how to discern distraction?.
Distraction from what ?

There is no predefined “object” in the sense that narrowing down the scope of your attention *is* a form of delusion already, meaning that that’s not (right) meditation.

“Distraction” has in itself nothing to do with the movement of your thoughts towards this or that. True distraction is when your thoughts move towards this or that **and** you lose the fundamental context behind those things you are attending to, being that they’re impermanent, suffering and not worth appropriating. Otherwise, an Arahant would have to have some sort of perpetually constricted awareness so as to not be deluded/distracted, and constricting your awareness *even more* within the artificial environment that “sitting meditation” usually entails for people can’t possibly train your mind to be free from distraction in every possible situation. Rather, it misconceives a *particular kind of situation* (of a focused mind that has limited perceptions) as non-distraction, meaning your mind is distracted/deluded in regard to *that* simply due to taking that “meditative state” for granted.

So you abandon distraction/delusion by questioning your attitude behind whatever experience is already there, not by trying to have non-distraction as an *positive experience* in itself, which is impossible. The wholesome states are always “negatives”.

Has anyone in HH read Bhikkhu Bodhi's answer to Nanavira Thera's "A note on Paticcasamuppada" ?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-11-27 21:12:56

I don't have the skill required to assess the validity of this answer or to critique it but if someone already has I'd be happy to read it !

The answer of Bhikkhu Bodhi is here starting at page 40 and mostly takes aim at the one life DO understanding of Nanavira Thera :

https://www.bps.lk/olib/bp/bp437s_Bodhi_Investigating-Dhamma.pdf

Edit : Going down this rabbit hole I also found Bhikkhu Analayo's article on Nanavira here :

https://www.academia.edu/87275746/Clearing_the_Path_Continues_Notes_on_%C3%91%C4%81%E1%B9%87av%C4%ABra_Thera_s_Notes_on_Dhamma

And an excellent thread commenting on Bhikkhu Analayo's article here :

<https://www.dhammadownload.com/viewtopic.php?t=43925>

I post this only because I think it could be useful material if one feels the need to understand why some of the buddhist orthodoxy might take aim at HH's understanding of Dhamma.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-29 00:07:04

Apart from having failed at grasping the actual context of the argument and addressing only superficial points instead, Bhikkhu Bodhi (and critics in general) don't realize that the paṭiccasamuppāda "interpretation" of Ñāṇavīra actually includes the phenomenon of "rebirth" (a word that does not exist in Pali and usually carries wrong connotations) in a *simpler* manner, without needing to introduce alien notions that are nowhere found in the Suttas, and are inevitably there when you think in terms of a three life interpretation.

One of the main problems with that is the fact that the idea of anattā then becomes contradictory, as the "progression" of the paṭiccasamuppāda factors it's effectively implying that there is *some* sort of phenomenon that goes from one life to the next, while at the same time saying the fact that there is "no lasting entity" is what anattā is (which isn't the case). They then have to resort to this simile of the candle to say that "the first candle lights up the next one, but the fire is not the same", failing to see that there *is* still something being "transferred" there (literally, even in physics you can't create energy, so the energy of the first candle is what moves on to the next). In essence, it's implicitly *positing* an idea of

self and then proceeding to deny it because that obviously contradicts the letter of the Buddha's teaching.

Ñāṇavīra's interpretation, on the other hand, is so general and phenomenologically acute that you don't even need to go to the end of the sequence to "explain" how this life is not the last. Every single pair of factors is already in itself showing the principle of "rebirth" in a way that also simultaneously prevents even the suggestion of a self, while also not denying the obvious fact that there *is* some enduring identity.

(See Ñāṇavīra's note on ATTĀ explaining how the self-identity of things has nothing to do with anattā).

Edit: Also, I should add that the polar opposite of the three life interpretation, which is that it's all just a "process" happening here and now as experience unfolds, a la Thanissaro Bhikkhu, is equally wrong because it still involves time, just in a much shorter scale. As well, the connection to the endless wandering in saṃsāra is tenuous, as there is no inherent reason why the process should "start again", if you have supposedly stopped it by practicing meditation momentarily as a puthujjana, which is a common misconception that terribly waters down paṭiccasamuppāda.

Ñāṇavīra's interpretation is the Middle Way between these two misguided extremes.

Not acting out of the pressure

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-11-25 08:55:18

Hello, I will probably come off as a lunatic but I'm tempted to ask this question anyway to advance in my practice and clear the path, it should be known that my mind as a tendency to overthink a good bit.

The next four paragraphs are just to set the context but are probably not necessary for my issue if you want to skip them:

Lately I've been starting to read Ajahn Nyanamoli's *The Only way to Jhana* and to train for the gradual training. I'm at the second stage, doing sense-restraint, though I'm not sure of the criterion to know that I'm "seeing danger in the slightest fault" and therefore to know if I'm qualified to go to this next step. I just tend to summarize that danger by the fact that :

'It leads to hurting myself, hurting others, and hurting both. It blocks wisdom, it's on the side of anguish, and it doesn't lead to extinguishment.' (MN 19)

So I'm trying to detect when I feel the pressure of wanting to get or feel something pleasant; or of wanting to get rid of an unpleasant phenomenon; or to do something that's not urgent or only in order to distract myself with non dhamma related subjects.

I also read the eighth essay "The pleasure of boredom" and so I thought the stage of sense

restraint was quite compatible with the training of doing nothing, letting the mind wander around, allowing thoughts to come up and letting them endure without trying to get rid of them or cast them aside (as I reflexively often do) even when they are leading to unpleasant sensations, seeing them for what they are, sometimes as unpleasant phenomena that I don't really want.

So let's say one caused harm or bothered someone without even noticing it and without any bad intentions and during one's sense-restraint training the person to whom one have caused harm retaliates in one way or another by indirect means, and the thought came up to one to dissipate any unexpressed and unneeded tensions by clearing things up with the person instead of doing nothing.

What I'm questioning about is: in the context of sense-restraint and not acting out of pressure of the senses, since the need to act come from pressure from the mind, should one still act to dissipate the possible tensions/grudges or should one let those thoughts (thoughts that there might be grudges and to dissipate the grudges) endure until they eventually pass away, without taking action in order to cultivate dispassion towards these mind-phenomena even if it mean not diffusing a grudge?

All that in order to eventually not even be moved by the possible repercussions of such grudge anymore? Grudges not being my responsibility (not being in my control as opposed to how I react to such repercussions) even though I could try to act to lessen them.

In the end, should the aim of one rather be to cultivate dispassion towards these unpleasant thoughts all together, to eventually attain extinguishment, or should one rather cultivate good-will and harmlessness towards others even if it means acting out of unpleasant thoughts and feelings you decided to not act out of in the first place?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-25 15:54:14

All this could sound silly or over the top but it bring the question: should one cultivate dispassion towards these unpleasant thoughts, to eventually attain extinction, or should one rather cultivate good-will and harmlessness towards others even if it means acting out of thoughts you decided to not act out of in the first place?

The problem here is that before having the Right View, one cannot even fully fathom what "cultivating dispassion" actually means, because one does not see what *passion* is to begin with (2nd Noble Truth) on the right level and with clarity.

So yes, one should cultivate dispassion in every situation, but if you try to go all-in with that now, you will end up mechanically trying to just "deal" with individual thoughts and the way they make you feel, rather than *your craving and defilements* in regard to how they

make you feel, because the signs of the mind have not been sufficiently discerned, meaning that abandoning defilements is not possible. All one can do without seeing those signs is *suppress* the craving and—whether one is aware of it and thinks of it like that or not—that’s not the practice’. So first you need to never forget that you still don’t see what dispassion is, because of which will feel like at some point it’s too much (which is not the case for actual dispassion on the “right level”).

Moreover, true good-will and harmlessness are only possible from a dispassionate perspective, so it would be wrong to think that trying to develop dispassion is somehow “different” to developing mettā. If your dispassion is not resulting in complete lack of aversion, which is what mettā is, not “loving kindness”, then it’s not pure dispassion; it’s tainted with aversion and cynicism.

In this case, going out and trying to amend worldly circumstances to make people feel better has nothing to do with mettā. Mettā is about not resisting, not trying to get rid of the discomfort that *you are feeling* on account of other beings. That should be your only goal, and then, when the mind is fully established in the theme of non-aversion towards all upsetting circumstances you may possibly experience, *whatever* you do, even if it’s nothing, will be rooted in kindness. But if you try to reach the kindness through doing the external actions *first*, that’s putting the cart before the horse.

Also, keep in mind that you can’t possibly be analyzing which “stage’ you’re at, how long until the next one, etc. (and all that generally sounds like an overly achievement-oriented mindset that will lead to turning the Dhamma into something excessively clear-cut and methodical). The training is about sticking to the things that will over time make the signs of the mind become apparent on their own. That’s not something you can have a direct say in. The most direct influence you have over your “progress” is whether you allow yourself to engage with things that you know are rooted in craving.

If you *never* do that, then you can be sure that however slowly or quickly the practice may be unfolding, this is the highest “speed” that is possible.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-25 23:01:20 (in reply to a comment not included)

I get from this that I should only focus on cravings and aversions for now until being able to endure the phenomena that used to bring cravings and aversions, or rather endure all phenomena at least regarding other beings, and not be upset by them anymore

Then once there is no bothering whatsoever there is no possible way for harmfulness caused by a resistance to bothering

Yes, that’s pretty much it. However, in order to accomplish that, first it needs to become clear what craving and aversion (and thus the true “bother”) even is, and that’s something you don’t simply “figure out”. *Recognizing* the defilements is already like 99% of the work, contrary to the popular belief that we already know what craving is (implicitly and inad-

vertently acting as if we are all sotapannas from the start) and now we just have to keep performing these practices until it all just clicks together in some magical way.

If you actually recognize defilements, you can literally just abandon them by accurately recollecting the “extent” of the current defilement (as a peripheral context, not as an object) phenomenologically and concretely in your experience, because defilements are maintained by nothing other than *ignorance*. You can do “more” like contemplating danger and developing dispassion and so on, but it should never feel like you’re trying to “deal” and “respond” to stuff as it arises because that will always be rooted in subtle aversion and lack of endurance. It’s more like you’re sitting on a shore and waves (some tsunamis, some small) are coming to you, and you need to learn how to stop getting hit by them, not start trying to wrestle with the ocean or alter its workings.

gradually make them an important part of your life, cultivating them, and not ‘gradually’ in the sense one stage after another in a methodical way.

I suppose you could try to “gradually” become used to them if that’s what you mean. But it should also be understood as further refinements of the same thing—not acting out of unwholesome states—which starts with virtue and ends with jhāna, which is the same principle on a mental level where it’s way subtler and easier to over-do or under-do. They’re not like different “components” that are unrelated to each other.

You also won’t even be aware of which one you’re “doing” if you’re practicing properly and not just sticking to rituals and vows. You only know that you’re not acting out of unwholesome states fundamentally. That’s why in some Suttas some “steps” are omitted altogether, and virtue goes directly into right recollection and jhāna.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-26 23:01:51 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

But after this answer of yours I am wondering if this really is accurate in our interpretation of Buddhism because this description doesn’t mention recognizing the defilements, or maybe you were referring to the ‘attachments of rites and rituals’ of actively dealing with thoughts as an object?

Well yes, of course it’s not gonna be mentioned verbatim all the time, but it’s implicit in so many teachings in the Suttas. For instance, the most classic which is the Four Noble Truths has implicit in it the idea that to the extent you have *recognized* what the problem even is, you are already free from it. So you can’t see the 2nd NT without seeing the 3rd. That “recognition”, if it happens on the right level, which the puthujjana does not have access to, is the destruction of ignorance, and with that, everything else has to fall away, as the paṭiccasamuppāda “sequence” illustrates.

Though yes, I must admit I too am guilty of that — maybe not thinking I’m a sotapanna because of the ‘abandoned identity view’ of that wikipedia page and I’m still trying to figure out how could that be achieved — but I tend to think I had already one foot on the path from the get go without even knowing it (and

kind of lost on it), one of the reasons of such belief is that I am pretty sure I can recognize and see to some extent the signs of the mind after having battled with restlessness (what I see as anxiety and worry) and ill-will/hatred (mostly by way of frustration), though maybe less so, or not yet enough, to the other 3 defilements

Yes, this is one of the main obstacles: the keenness that all of us have in the beginning, especially as Westerners I suppose, to be able to *feel* for ourselves as soon as possible, even if we don't say it or explicitly think it, that we're already *somewhere* on the Path. Even if when pressed, one admits to not being a sotāpanna, the fact is that there is this deeply rooted reluctance and discomfort in the face of the idea that whatever one is doing (for many years, especially) until stream entry *has* to be wrong, and not being able to stick to the practice *through* that recognition ensures that at some point one will overestimate oneself (again, not necessarily in claiming an attainment all the way, but in simply not being distrustful and realistic enough, you could say “humble”, about one's own practice and abilities). And that's already a result of not recognizing the signs of the mind, since it would otherwise be seen to be a defilement, a form of delusion, and thus be abandoned.

The idea of the signs of the mind can make sense, and some people naturally see those signs more than others even without having practiced at all (the people with “little dust in their eyes” the Buddha talked about). But one has to tell oneself that even if at all makes sense and one seems to be getting “results”, a little dust is no better than a lot compared to perfectly clear vision (i.e., that of a sotāpanna). That's what “humility” is essentially: it's not about *denying* or *hiding* your good qualities, but about always insisting that **it's never even remotely enough**, even if you are second only to the Buddha like Ven. Sāriputta.

Bhikkhus, I have personally known two things: **non-contentment in regard to wholesome qualities** and indefatigability in striving. I strove indefatigably, [resolved]: ‘Willingly, let only my skin, sinews, and bones remain, and let the flesh and blood dry up in my body, but I will not relax my energy so long as I have not attained what can be attained by manly strength, energy, and exertion.’ It was by heedfulness that I achieved enlightenment, bhikkhus; it was by heedfulness that I achieved the unsurpassed security from bondage. —AN 2.5

The opposite, “contentment with wholesome qualities” is what sneaks up on people, because of which they are not harsh enough with themselves. And you *absolutely* do not want to ever be in that position of any degree of contentment and satisfaction with your practice before you are a sotāpanna, because it's so easy to get stuck there, *not knowing* that you're stuck there since a puthujjana doesn't recognize their own shortcomings and defilements by definition.

Is the “*extent*” of the current defilement having a sense of knowing or feeling where this is going to lead to before it had the chance to lead you there?

That's one way of presenting the *theory* of it, but the point is that no matter how much that makes sense, for every puthujjana, (relatively) subtle defilements of one kind of another are always *necessarily* escaping their grasp. So you might've seen the principle in the

case of like coarse sensual desires or full-on anger, but the less obvious ways in which the same exact principle is still there has to be unclear without the Right View. Point being, when a puthujjana “recognizes” one defilement, there is necessarily a “new” defilement *somewhere* that they don’t see. They by definition can’t recognize the *entire domain* of defilement so that the whole thing actually “ceases” even for a moment. Hence I used the word “extent” to specifically describe the true understanding (and the paṭiccasamuppāda “against the grain” always begins with, “with the **complete** fading and cessation of ignorance...”; that applies even to the sotapanna whenever they’re being heedful and making use of their wisdom correctly, but never for a puthujjana).

Also, “where this is going to lead to” needs to be seen on the same level of the sign of the mind, as in how giving in to this defilement will incline the citta in a certain direction, not in terms of “if I pursue gain then I’ll have to work hard to maintain it and that’s dukkha” kind of thing. From what I’ve seen, a lot of the people who do meditation techniques can’t go further than this. But even if you’re not *that* wrong and you start getting an inkling of how *giving in* to defilements affects the mind, and what “being affected even means, you need to always tell yourself that that inkling is insufficient and is nothing at all to rest with.

I guess this is how you could put it: one needs to stay perpetually “on one’s toes” in regard to one’s practice to ensure that that premature contentment never sets in. And to the extent you don’t see the signs of your mind, you don’t see the signs of your own resting and sitting down prematurely instead while it’s happening.

Edit:

They by definition can’t recognize the *entire domain* of defilement so that the whole thing **actually “ceases”** even for a moment

Just in case, with this I don’t mean some sort of special, palpable “experience” that comes to you where your mind goes blank or something like that. That “cessation” is in itself something that, say, if hypothetically a puthujjana were to experience “by accident” (which of course is impossible if it’s the real thing and they’re still puthujjanas), they would not *see* that that is Nibbāna. They would instead be craving for some sort of esoteric, out-of-this-world, “more palpable” meditative experience where they become so unaware of everything that suffering ceases (and this already is underlied by their lust for pleasure).

Nibbāna and saṃsāra look the same *on the surface* (the 6 senses/5 aggregates doing what they always do), and since all a puthujjana sees is that “surface”, even if in some alternate universe puthujjanas could “experience” Nibbāna for a moment they wouldn’t even recognize it (that’s why MN 1 speaks of conceivings even in regard to Nibbāna).

“Here, bhikkhus, an untaught ordinary person, who **does not see** the noble ones and is unskilled and untrained in their Dhamma, and does not see true men and is unskilled and untrained in their Dhamma...

—MN 1

(Note: Had to correct the translation, which illustrates the very point I'm making. It was originally "who has no regard for noble ones", implying that the ordinary person *can* recognize them but just doesn't respect them or something like that, but the Pāli *literally* says "does not see" (adassāvī). That distortion is an example of the insistence on exactly that wrong view that doesn't put the Dhamma "far above" enough from the puthujjana, forcing them to actually *elevate themselves* towards it instead of bringing it down to where they are).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-28 00:27:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

I'm kind of afraid of when the early enthusiasm I'm experiencing right now, ready to go all out in the practice, will inevitably fade, as I know my mind as the habit to be enthusiast at the beginning, then slowly lose interest in the matter to go find enthusiasm somewhere else, though I feel like Theravada Buddhism is the doctrine that could suit me and that I've been looking for all along, there is probably going to be a point where the temptation to become more lenient and just ending up "being lukewarm" in the practice will present itself.

That's true, and that's why it's so important not to ride that wave of enthusiasm carelessly. The practice should not depend on *wanting* to do the practice in the same way one wanted to pursue sensuality. It should depend only on the recognition, which will need to be increasingly solidified over time, that *not* practicing the Dhamma is absolutely not in your best interest.

Once that recognition is sufficiently strong, it becomes *impossible* to not want to practice the Dhamma, even on days where you have no inspiration, so to speak. In the end you can never wish suffering for yourself (you can only on the surface, but never at the *core*), so from then on you see that the only thing that *actually* causes suffering in this world is lack of development in the Dhamma, and it's impossible to regard something else as more worthy of effort (not to say that you never do anything mundane, but you'll never have that attitude of thinking that "you'll be fine" without the Dhamma; a sotāpanna is incapable of that and gets heedless sometimes because of the degree that they *already have* the Dhamma and do not need to actively maintain it at all so as to not suffer).

Presented like that it seems like one or multiple defilements, do you know these "journeys through the desert"? Do you think this is just something to be learned to be endured like the rest, see it for what this is (especially already knowing what this is going to lead to) and just not act upon it even if it lasts one month or more? Or something to act upon to "revive the embers" towards the Dhamma, strive to keep and refine the right context?

The unwillingness of the mind to practice needs to be *endured*, in the same way you would endure any other mood without trying to interfere with it through aversion. That's because even if you manage to "revive the embers" successfully *every time* (which is prac-

tically impossible), you practice will always be dependent on a *mood* of inspiration, and you don't want that at all—you want to be independent of all moods. You want to be able to not act out of unwholesome regardless of what mood is there, be it inspired or uninspired. Only then can you know that you've truly seen the danger in unwholesome to the sufficient degree.

See these two relevant comments I wrote:

<https://reddit.com/comments/16wf0s3/comment/k2zlyx2> <https://reddit.com/comments/15q3al2/comm>

Formal Practice to help in day to day life

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Large-Marionberry639 2023-11-24 14:02:39

How can a beginner incorporate a formal practice that will help in enduring the intense pressure arising during the day to day life while acting according to “seeing danger in the slightest fault”? Could endurance during formal sit in a controlled environment help in endurance during day to day life? Any practical advices?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-24 23:21:41

To add to what u/bodily_heartfulness wrote:

The very act of considering to take up a “formal practice” is already something you would not be “seeing the danger in the slightest fault” in regard to if you just take that idea at face value and go with it, assuming that it can't possibly be unwholesome (because it's about practice, right?).

That serves to illustrate the gratuitous divide between “formal” and “everyday” practice which causes you to exclude certain choices from your attempts to flush out greed, aversion and delusion. On the basis of that, you may well be able to abandon almost all coarse, *external* acts rooted in unwholesome intentions, which very dedicated technique-meditators are often able to do, but the entire thing for them would still be underlied by their attitudes towards the “formal practice” which they exempted from investigation and careful “observation” in the same way they spend their time observing irrelevant *sense objects*.

Thinking about the ways in which you're still acting out by body and speech in unwholesome ways and then reflecting on *why* such actions should be avoided, not just taking it as a sense of duty, until you feel no desire to commit those actions anymore is a practice everyone should be doing. It will be abstract in the beginning and you will probably just be giving overly rationalized reasons without actually seeing the danger of defilement within yourself, but over time, especially if you make the effort to restrain the actions anyway, you get to see the “right level” where contemplation should apply and where it ceases to be abstract. That means it begins to work every single time at purifying the mind, to the point where all you'd need to do to put defilements to rest is think/remember (*sati*), regardless of what you're occupied with (unless it's unwholesome, of course).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-29 23:29:02 (in reply to a comment not included)

Is it then possible for someone who is not a monk to attain stream entry without engaging in the formal practice of the Anapanasati Sutta?

Not only that: a layperson who is not restrained from sensuality in their daily life will not be able to practice (the Buddha's) Anapanasati. Something many people generally don't know today is that the Buddha is never shown teaching Anapanasati to laypeople in the Suttas, as several instances make clear that profound teachings were not given to the laity back then. They had way stronger faculties than us today, given how they so often reached stream entry on account of hearing one discourse (and people today remain unenlightened after a lifetime of practice and learning the Dhamma), and yet they didn't receive Anapanasati instructions even *after* their stream entry, but things like this instead. Anapanasati was also most certainly not involved in their stream entry, as that is a Buddhist teaching, and they were most often listening to the Dhamma for the first time. They made the breakthrough on account of *understanding*, not on account of a meditative experience.

If you read carefully, for example in MN 56, you see that what led them to stream entry was that the mind was first confident in the renunciation of sensual pleasures, and there was no "formal" practice involved—they simply heard the Four Noble Truths after the mind was settled in that absence of interest in sensuality (and they were listening to a Dhamma talk, meaning that achieving that relative freedom from hindrances did not involve what people think it does, but rather recognizing the danger of sensual pleasures as the Buddha pointed it out to them).

Anapanasati is an advanced practice, so if one is actually succeeding in it (and not something else that's not relevant), there must be equally advanced results to show for it, such as abandonment of sensuality not just at the present instant of "formal practice" (just as a person might find themselves not wanting sensuality when they have something else to keep them occupied) but in the future as well. And this is the *basic* development of it, without going into the full description of the Anapanasati Sutta.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-30 02:10:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

If a layperson does succeed in attaining permanent abandonment of sensuality, can they go on to practice the Buddha's Anapanasati?

Certainly. Ultimately the robe doesn't matter; it's the total absence of commitment to the pursuit sensual pleasures that matters.

Such a person would be incapable of doing anything *but* the Buddha's Anapanasati, as all other practices that fall outside his teaching don't do so because of some methodical nuance as people might think, but because they don't actually address sensual craving at its root, and instead just shift it over to a much subtler level where it can be satisfied

more reliably than the craving for coarse sensual objects. As AN 11.9 shows, the only right meditation is when the hindrances, the foremost being sensual desire, are completely transcended.

I should perhaps mention that I ask this as a retired, very private single person 80 years of age living alone with no living relatives.

In such a case it would be particularly important to remember that the hindrances are *one domain* (see “Truth about the Five Hindrances” in Dhamma Within Reach, and that the 5 specific “types” are just particular symptoms of one and the same thing. In later stages of life the symptom of sensual desire will tend to stop manifesting itself, as even the highest degree of pleasure that can be derived from engagement with the senses is comparatively little.

It is then the other 4 “symptoms” (aversion, sluggishness/lethargy, anxiety-and-worry, and doubt) which one will need to look out for to see whether one’s mind is truly developing or not. Anapanasati or any other practice should then be aimed at *enduring* the pressure of aversion without being averse, for example, instead of trying to generate a new, more comfortable experience where the same pressure is not there.

This latter way of practice shares the same principle as sensuality, as when you give in to the pursuit of a sensual object, you do it so as to wriggle out of the pressure it exerts on the mind. Thus, both actions rooted in sensuality *and* that type of meditation make the mind more feeble rather than more imperturbable, and that is exactly the “wild cold meditation” that AN 11.9 is referring to.

It doesn’t say that there is *no* meditation happening and that’s why the five hindrances are there (i.e., that *any* meditation clears up the five hindrances, a wrong view that seems to be common), but that the meditation being performed remains within the domain of the hindrances.

Reflection on a daily basis

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** According_Clerk2745 2023-11-22 15:34:37

Throughout the day I try to reflect on my thoughts as per the dhamma that I’m learning from ven Bhikkhu Anigha, ven Thaniyo Thero and ven Ajahn Nyanamoli. How I’m trying to reflect is the beginning, endurance and the end (without thinking or going into details of the thought). But there are so many thoughts that arise, and I get distracted to which one I should reflect on. Then I tried the main / strong thoughts that arise out of sensuality and anger etc. Is this the correct way?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-23 00:12:44

Don’t approach this through the usual attitude of trying to “observe” things that are present in almost all forms of contemporary meditation. That would ensure that whatever you are discerning is irrelevant to the Four Noble Truths.

When the Suttas talk about “arising, enduring and ending” that’s not to be understood as a linear process that you can, as an uninvolved witness, watch as you would a projectile being launched into the air and falling. The reason for that is simple: if the thought has truly *ended*, you would not be able to recognize that it has ended. In order to say *anything* about a thought, including the fact that it has supposedly disappeared, you need to be thinking it still, which means it’s still there.

In the case of the arising, it’s impossible for you to say “when” the thought arose, because time itself is measured by the endurance of whatever you’re thinking, meaning that there is no way for you to conceive of a time when a particular thought was not there at least as a possibility. Even if you look at the past, you will be doing so through the thoughts that you have right now, meaning that those thoughts will now be the way in which you experience those memories, regardless of the fact that those thoughts “arose” later from an external, objective, and irrelevant scientific viewpoint.

It’s important to abandon the view that thoughts are “in my head”, which is what would incline one towards these gratuitous misapplications of science to the domain of the mind and consciousness. Rather, “thoughts” are phenomena in the most general sense, including the perceptions of your five senses that you may not be engaging in a narrative about. So even if you supposedly shut up your thinking and just have pure perceptions, *you’re still thinking* (this is why the view that meditation is meant to stop or even diminish your thinking is so ridiculously wrong: it’s rooted in the ignorance of the extent of what a thought/vitakkavicāra really is, meaning that the **whole** “jhāna sequence” that those “meditators” are going through is actually not even the first jhāna—which is the comprehension of the full extent of thinking as it happens—no matter how special and blissful it may all feel).

Instead, recognize that whatever “thought” is there right now, you are totally enclosed within and you have no way of knowing when it started or when it will end. As well, you need to take it on the most general sense, on the level of what thought is currently pressuring you and being felt the most. So when you’re sitting there “watching” these thoughts supposedly coming and going without your involvement, there is actually a thought behind *all of that* that is not being recognized, a thought of “I want to be doing this practice” for example, and that is being ignored. Such thoughts are also there the entire time when people are supposedly not thinking and focusing on an object instead.

The “arising” of that more general thought that truly matters and where your craving and actions are cannot possibly be something you pinpoint, because as soon as you start “observing it” like that, it won’t be the more general thought anymore, and *another one* will be behind it, whose arising you now overlooked, and so on ad infinitum.

But to actually get to see this correctly, I would advise not even trying to think in terms of thoughts in general for now, and instead use things like the recollection of the body to “outline” the nature of thoughts. Instead of going “into” the thoughts to investigate them and start categorizing them and measuring them, use the recognition of the body as a peripheral anchor to see that *whatever* you may be thinking about, with no regard whatsoever for its *content*, is still a thought, defining “thought” as any phenomenon, internal or

external, light or heavy, inferior or superior, coarse or subtle, clear or ambiguous that is secondary to this body, and that changes in various ways while the body remains mostly the same.

Pair this with what I wrote above that it's the thoughts were the craving and pressure are that matter, and thus it's not about observing every little secondary perception that comes up about this or that like the sound of the birds or the memories of what you were doing yesterday (unless those memories start exerting emotional pressure). That's why it's always about recognizing the "intentions behind one's actions", meaning you start to see those peripheral thoughts that you're welcoming and taking for granted, and start to include *that* as well as secondary to the body and remove the perversion of the right order. Without that (which means seeing the signs of the mind), you will just be seeing that random, irrelevant perceptions that have nothing to do with craving are secondary to the body.

Edit: Regarding how contemporary meditators are not actually even in the first jhāna, that's what I meant with this comment which some people seem to have misunderstood. It's not that the *content* of the experience is not changing (and because content is what our intentions influence, that content can very well become just what you expect based on what you know about jhānas). It's the fact that that background level of the *domain* of thinking and pondering has not been transcended at any point, *because*, ironically, of the starting point of wanting to suppress the thinking.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-23 11:06:20 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

By re-reading I'm also wondering if this is not a mistake of trying to keep being conscious of the peripheral at all times or when it's not needed which leads to this overfocusing, rather than only "forcing" or "recollecting" the consciousness of that peripheral when a pressure for greed, aversion or distraction is felt on the mind to enable the mind to not stay enclosed in that thought pressuring it but put the pressure in perspective and allow dispassion for it?

This is the answer. The only purpose of all this is to overcome greed, aversion and delusion. One does not do it for its own sake and constantly like a "meditation" method, in which case it will be rooted in craving and constitute excessive, "overtight" effort, using the simile of the lute that needs to be neither too tight nor too loose.

You will also have to resist the tendency to try to "figure it out", because whatever you manage to "grab" with your intellect like that will not be the peripheral, and you will be overlooking it whenever you try that.

Think about "the peripheral" not as something that comes from *you doing it*, but as something that the mind "keeps" there for you by itself when you train it. You "train it" through virtue, sense restraint and then trying to practice yoniso manasikara within that whenever defilements arise internally, correcting mistakes in your way of recollecting the context as they are gradually recognized over a *long* period of time.

For example, the danger in sensuality would become “the peripheral” of every beautiful sense object you come across once you have trained in first *not acting towards* those objects, and second by repeatedly remembering (sati) their nature and the unnecessary suffering that craving for them brings about, *without* trying to get rid of the objects, in which case you would be making the context a new foreground to replace the old one, and the true context behind *that* is now one of craving, aversion and lack of endurance.

This may be helpful.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-23 14:08:56 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

by forcefully (1) not act towards the object and (2) remembering their nature and the unnecessary suffering

The first one which pertains to body and speech should be “forceful”, the second one which pertains to the mind should be just forceful enough, not more, hence the “right tuning” of the strings.

and with the aim of eventually adopting new reflexes when facing sense objects leading to greed, aversion, distraction that you come across. Is it a misunderstanding? I can’t help but associate this process with science understanding of the mind, and the training being a way to remove and replace old neural pathways (habits) by new ones, but as I understood from previous answers of yours, the understanding of the mind by science might not be completely accurate (with regard to citta for example) and therefore this way of seeing it might be wrong (or maybe the misunderstanding of science towards the mind is not relative to that subject in particular?)

It *is* a misunderstanding. You can’t change your “reflexes” or “neural pathways” completely, and sometimes not at all, which would mean that something that’s not in your control would force you to be lustful, averse and deluded, and that’s luckily impossible, which is why Arahantship *is* possible. That’s why it’s “beings are owners of their actions”, and not “reflexes *make* beings commit actions and thus they are not really the owners of them”. Furthermore, attempting to modify your reflexes is what we call “management” as opposed to *uprooting* of suffering., and it’s what people nowadays confuse with “equanimity”.

Different reflexes and neural pathways are what distinguish one Arahant from another, and none of that has anything to do with what makes them enlightened. The citta that is liberated is the dispassion towards reflexes (which are an affair of the six senses) that is developed by first not acting out of the reflexes in unskilful ways and then by understanding that entire sense domain and its tendencies as impermanent, suffering and unownable. This is basically the subject of this whole discussion.

That’s probably just overthinking and not important for the practice in itself but that’s raising interrogations on my understanding of the mind according

to buddhism and some clarifications would be very welcome

Yes, it can be a form of overthinking if you think that it will fundamentally change the practice in any way. Theoretical understanding has its place, but it doesn't take precedence over not acting out of unpleasant feeling (which includes doubt) here and now. If you practiced the latter long enough and properly, views about science and similar would not be seen as "wrong" but as simply irrelevant, no matter how true they may be. Whatever science describes is within that which you're *overcoming* through practice. Science can therefore not even hope to describe what Nibbāna is: the overcoming of the entire world and the science that describes it, if you want to call it that.

Psychology also can only lay out the irrelevant content of that which you need to be dispassionate towards (emotions and ideas), never the *practice* towards that dispassion nor the nature of feeling and views in general. So the Dhamma is also the overcoming of psychology, not a "form of" psychology, a *catastrophic* water down of what it really is.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-25 07:54:32 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

However, what almost always happens in this process of restraint for me is that after some time has passed since my decision to restrain (sometimes even hours past), I become aware of the fact that for some time now, the intention that was previously swarming and picking at and bothering me has gone away on its own, and I have no idea of "when" it left or anything, since it did not leave through my directly making it do so, nor did it leave informing me.

Almost like if a guest at a gathering at your house stayed for a bit and, upon feeling ignored and invalidated by your refusal to engage with him, left when no one was looking for fear of embarrassment. You would only realize he had gone when you noticed he was no longer there - NOT when he was visibly walking out the door.

Yes, that's exactly how it works. That's how the view that samādhi is concentration on an object is completely wrong: you can certainly be *anticipating* and *expecting* the moment where the mind will be "locked into" the object, whereas true abandonment of defilements is something you cannot even predict, because your imagination is *secondary* and *enclosed within* those defilements for as long as they are there (thus, anything that is possible to anticipate beforehand, including that supposed absorption "jhāna" people get, is equally enclosed within the same defilements). That's why, if you truly understand what abandonment is, you can't even crave for it. All you do is endure things here and now without any expectations, and that results in them being abandoned who knows when, no idea. Maybe in 10 minutes, maybe in 10 years (and once you truly *establish* that right endurance on the right level perfectly, the defilement is automatically gone, counterintuitively. It's just that there must be no expectation or hope involved at all; otherwise you're still "paying attention to the guest" even in a subtle way, and he won't "leave" for that very reason).

Would this count as recollecting the “ending” of a thought, Bhante? I do not think it would make much sense to say that this recollection/awareness of the fact that the earlier intention of anger/lust is now no longer manifest - would count as - “thinking it still, which means it’s still there”....? The thought you are recollecting NOW, or the memory of the intention of lust/anger THEN, is NOW no longer underlied and backed by the same anger/lust that it was EARLIER, when you decided to restrain. Thus, when the defining characteristic (anger) of the intention of anger is no longer present when you recollect (WITHOUT anger) the previous intention of anger no longer being there - how can that possibly constitute “still thinking” the intention of anger?

The confusion is due to semantics. What I meant with “the thought is still there” refers specifically to when one has the view that for example, the arising of a memory of a sensual object in one’s mind is a defilement, and that that must be somehow suppressed, or in general the idea that you can stop having certain specific thoughts and “see” when they ceased (which is fallacious—for as long as any thought is possible, *every* thought is possible, even remotely, and thus nothing has truly “ceased” in that misconceived way). What you are referring to as what has “ceased” with the analogy of the guest is the *intention* to act out of the thought, which can be called “a sensual thought” too as a shorthand (which is how people get confused on terminology), but it would have to be distinguished entirely from vitakkavicāra about sense objects, which is present even in the first jhāna which is utterly and perfectly purified of sensuality.

That’s why we emphasize how the practice is about *enduring* things, no matter their “content” (having been withdrawn from the degree of “content” that arises due to lack of sense restraint of course). When you do that correctly, the thoughts and memories remain the same (because they are part of “the All” just like the senses), but that deeply rooted impulse to *do* something (even very subtly by mind) when those thoughts, memories and images arise is completely gone (and *that* is the reason for the profound calm, ease, and joy of burdenlessness, **not** the lack of movement and thinking, which is a problem only when your mind can’t help but crave to *act* out of that thinking in one way or another, the default state of a puthujjana).

Recognizing the citta-nimitta means seeing the “level” where that “impulse to act” is, and being able to differentiate that from thoughts and perceptions that are pressuring in their very nature (which, as AN 6.55 which I often quote points out, would continue to arise even for an Arahant). Even that pressure is part of the “All”/the five aggregates, and it’s one’s gratuitous need and assumption that *something* must be done about it, be it indulge in it or deny it, that is the craving and defilement there.

Being mindful with the breath

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2023-11-21 18:39:08

Sorry that’s a repost, the first one wasn’t as accurate as I thought.

Hello, I was listening to the HH video titled “Why did the Buddha say”Sensuality” to be an Assumption?” and at one point (<https://youtu.be/WNotZXYWV-0?si=avxKzNf3snKgh5j-&t=2895>) Ajahn Nyanamoli mentionned that the first time he read a text about an arahant named Anuruddha on whom a woman had tried to force her charms by getting naked, dancing and trying to sleep with him, and he stated that at first he didn’t understand why it was written that an arahant became mindful of his breath, but finally came to understand that the arahant though unperturbed by the acts of the lady was aware of the significance and that it was harassing.

So I was wondering, what does “being mindful of the breath” mean in the suttas?

From what I think I understood from Ajahn Nyanamoli teachings, he doesn’t think it is recommended to do breathing exercises or to force the breath and think at the same time “I’m breathing in, I’m breathing out”. If I’m not mistaken he rather talks about it as something to be kept peripherally, so I don’t think here “being mindful of the breath” is specifically related only to the breath, so what could be meant here? Being aware of the phenomenon arising within the 5 aggregates maybe?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-22 07:31:40

From what I think I understood from Ajahn Nyanamoli teachings, he doesn’t think it is recommended to do breathing exercises or to force the breath and think at the same time “I’m breathing in, I’m breathing out”. If I’m not mistaken he rather talks about it as something to be kept peripherally, so I don’t think here “being mindful of the breath” is specifically related only to the breath, so what could be meant here? Being aware of the phenomenon arising within the 5 aggregates maybe?

Yes, Anapanasati is not about breathing exercises or about the *perceptions* of breathing, because that has nothing to do with cultivating dispassion towards the five aggregates (the only true measure of progress). Watching one’s breath and mechanical mental exercises may give rise to some insights, but those insights do not pertain to what actually disturbs the mind, meaning greed, aversion and delusion. Instead, one just hopes that going through these motions and getting these “experiences” will magically clear out the defilements, which means not only does one not know what the defilements are, but one is also not trying to find out, or is assuming them to be some trivial things that are addressed to any extent simply by sticking to this formulaic practice.

What such practices reveal is always on the level of *perceptions*: you will hear teachers describing the “flashes of sankharas”, “flow of particles” or “discontinuous stream of consciousness”, or “insubstantiality/emptiness of *objects*” that one is supposed to see at the end of one’s breath-observation efforts (or any similar object-centered practices not found in the Suttas). Those insights are then *inferred* to be the discernment of the Four Noble

Truths through some tenuous connection, if any.

In the best case scenario of teachers who try to be loyal to the Suttas at least superficially, you will hear them saying that craving is the problem, but they will tend to explain it in terms of a “tightening up” of your body that happens when you are not properly aware of the breath, or any more elaborate ways of saying that if you just attend to this or that *sense object* (which includes random mental phenomena gratuitously regarded to *be* insight, such as experiential perceptions of flux) your problems will be solved.

Now onto the story you mention about Ven. Anuruddha:

It actually doesn’t say anything about him practicing anapanasati, so Ajahn Nyanamoli mixed it up with some other Sutta or simply remembered it wrongly. The actual passage in Pali only says “indriyāni okkhipitvā taṃ itthiṃ neva okolesi napi alāpi” meaning “having put down his faculties (which does not mean he cowardly”buried his head in the sand”), he neither looked at that woman nor spoke to her”.

However, the fact that AN mistakenly inserted that into the story actually goes to show what anapanasati should be about and what its actual purpose is.

So I was wondering, what does “being mindful of the breath” mean in the suttas?

Not to nitpick on your question specifically, but it does in itself point towards the answer: the Suttas never talk about “being mindful *of the breath*”. That’s the false premise that people often don’t even realize they’re starting from. This is what the Suttas say:

so satova assasati, satova passasati. dīghaṃ vā assasanto ’dīghaṃ assasāmi’ti **pajānāti**, dīghaṃ vā passasanto ’dīghaṃ passasāmi’ti **pajānāti**...

Remembering, he breathes in; remembering, he breathes out. Or, breathing in long, he **understands** “I am breathing in long”, or, breathing out long, he **understands** “I am breathing out long”..

—MN 118

(pajānāti is the verb form of paññā, understanding/discernment)

To most this will sound like a distinction without a difference, but it’s absolutely crucial. If the Buddha wanted to convey the idea that the breath as an **object** is what the practice revolves around, he would have said something more like “dīghaṃ assāsaṃ **paṭisaṃvedeti/manasi karoti**”, meaning “he experiences/attends to **an inhalation**.” or something along those lines which points to some benefit in observing perceptions and sensations per se instead of *understanding*.

What the Buddha is saying here is that one must understand the act of “[I am] breathing in long”, and “understanding”, even in mundane terms, is not about the object or perception that you attend to directly. It’s always about knowing the *nature* of that thing in an indirect manner (really, reflect on that for a moment). If you’re a mechanic, your understanding of cars is not determined by some specific *object*, but by having a whole bunch of meanings

and peripheral significances that your mind naturally remembers and serve as an implicit background to whenever you look at a car.

In this case, that “peripheral” understanding of the body and its breathing (*kayasankhara*) automatically brings dispassion towards anything that pertains to that body, most especially the six sense base. It has nothing to do with stopping or suppressing the six sense base in favor of breathing sensations.

True anapanasati leads one first and foremost to overcome the default identification with the pull of the six senses, so that no matter how hard they pull towards this or that, the mind remains established and anchored in the *simultaneous foundation* for that sense domain in its entirety. The entire world of pleasing and displeasing sense objects exists “on top of” the breathing body, hence Ajahn Nyanamoli wrote that one must be recognizing the breath “underneath” one’s experience in the “How to Calm Your Mind” Chapter in *Dhamma Within Reach*.

So, when the situation with that woman happened to Ven. Anuruddha, the mind would be able to “withdraw the faculties” not by becoming oblivious to what is happening and shutting it out forcefully (already rooted in the wrong view that you are the master of your experiences and feelings), but by becoming anchored in that peripheral recognition of what determines his senses (because even if he were to close his eyes and cover his ears, that wouldn’t make a difference; the six wild animals already know exactly what’s going on), and that would make him dispassionate towards the entire thing, not feeling any sort of internal agitation while the full force of that significance of offered pleasure is still there, attacking *the same body that is also breathing and is being discerned through that*.

Thus, what anapanasati—if it is to be a “Buddhist” practice in the first place like everything else found in the Suttas—has to lead to is this:

“Bhante, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly liberated in mind, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into range of the eye, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he recognizes their liability to decay. Even if powerful sounds cognizable by the ear come into range of the ear ... Even if powerful odors cognizable by the nose come into range of the nose ... Even if powerful tastes cognizable by the tongue come into range of the tongue ... Even if powerful tactile objects cognizable by the body come into range of the body ... Even if powerful phenomena cognizable by the mind come into range of the mind, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he recognizes their liability to decay.

—AN 6.55

And **not**:

“Bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly concentrated on the breath, there are no forms cognizable by the eye. The sensations of breathing and bodily pleasure are what obsess his mind, so there is no chance for anything else to arise and disturb him.”

The former is unshakable samādhi, the latter is pleasant oblivion and **loss** of awareness (AKA “absorption”).

Last but certainly not least, it must be noted that anapanasati, as any other form of Right Recollection, requires the Right View to be done properly (APS is called “the abiding of a Noble One” in SN 54.11 and taught to an ariya-only Sangha in MN 118) and most certainly it requires not *acting* out of the pulls of the six senses towards sensuality and ill-will, which will inherently mean that you will not be able to recognize that which is “underneath” them. Every time you act unskillfully with the body you are already overlooking its sankhara by a longshot, and are involved with the sankharas of desires, which are way coarser.

Edit: By *learning* what Anapanasati truly is, one is learning what the Right View is by extension, and it is only from that lens that one should approach it. Not as something that one is *already* practicing rightly.

How to live virtue according to the Dhamma

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-21 07:51:47

Could you recommend a text, book, or transcript by HH that provides a more detailed and practice-oriented explanation of the first step of gradual training, virtues, sense restriction, and endurance?

Could it be useful to read the Vinaya?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-21 22:34:29

provides a more detailed and practice-oriented explanation of the first step of gradual training, virtues, sense restriction, and endurance?

Could it be useful to read the Vinaya?

If my sense of what you’re asking is correct (especially with your mention of the Vinaya), you will not find “detailed” explanations of the practice of virtue in HH teachings.

That’s because that’s exactly what one needs to avoid in order to truly become “accomplished in virtue”. If your virtue and restraint depends on adhering to any more specific instructions than that of not breaking the 8 precepts, it will still be a form of adhering to virtue and duty.

The “accomplishment in virtue” that the Suttas refer to as a prerequisite for samādhi and as that which characterizes the stream-enterer is *defined* by the fact that one has learned what is wholesome and what is unwholesome on the basis of one’s mental state, not on the basis of specific guidelines. Even the Vinaya in its current legalistic and highly detailed form is actually not supposed to exist ideally. It exists only because monks over

time started losing perspective, and people of increasingly lowly character began to join the Sangha. In the beginning, “don’t do anything unwholesome” would’ve been enough for monks to keep perfect virtue, because they had the criteria of their mental state as the determining factor which, without even thinking about it, made them incapable of breaking the still-unexistent rules that were actually addressing unwholesome actions and not just cultural expectations and circumstances.

So, if you’re still keeping the 5 precepts only then the more “detailed” practice would be to work towards keeping the 8, gradually if you must. As part of that effort, you would also need to work on abandoning doubt on a mental level, the other of the first 3 fetters, that will often arise when your mind feels that the precepts are somehow “not enough” and wants to over-clarify what unwholesome is, in the way the Vinaya does in its commentary (which did not come from the Buddha) under each rule.

The whole point of that “noble aggregate of virtue” that a sotāpanna has is that they’re not *doing it*. They need absolutely no “details” anymore in order to keep their virtue unbroken, not because they memorized the entire Vinaya and commentaries and sub-commentaries, but because they thoroughly discerned what is the criterion for wholesome and unwholesome *internally*. And that is something that will stay with you even after you die, whereas the intellectual “details” that you learned will be gone even in this life if you get some neurological disease, meaning the core of your practice of “virtue” would go with it (which is the case for many monks, unfortunately).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-22 11:59:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

This is the practice of virtue in its entirety.

While that is being brought to fulfillment, simply never break the 8 precepts. They are obvious enough. Not killing does not mean never eating meat or devoting your practice time to saving lives, for example. It means not killing.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-23 10:40:43 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The first thing to point out is that, if the definition you suggest for “an animal being killed for you” were correct, the Buddha should have never eaten meat. If anything, given the much smaller size of ancient India society, and based on the sheer number of monks that there seem to have been according to many suttas, monks accepting meat back then were contributing by a much larger margin to the local meat industry than today. I’m not totally sure if that was from a sutta, but I remember someone mentioning that back then there were days where no animals were slaughtered because there was no demand for meat on that day, and that was mainly possible because of course there was no way to store meat for very long unlike now. That just goes to show how much every individual was *actually* contributing to the slaughters.

That means that by simply allowing the Sangha to consume meat, the Buddha was intentionally choosing not to decrease the demand for meat, and was (*in your definition*) responsible for the slaughter of many thousands of animals during his lifetime that perhaps *actually* wouldn't have died if he had prohibited meat for monks, not to mention Buddhists in general, given that even 5 precept laypeople—which by the time the Buddha died probably made up a sizeable chunk of many parts of India—are expected to keep the precept of not killing just as strictly.

And that's just in his lifetime, without thinking about the consequences of his decision as the founder of a major world religion that was to last over 2500 years and counting. On top of that, he was more than once prompted to make vegetarianism mandatory (e.g. the incident with Devadatta), and not only did he not take the chance to make it a part of his teachings (say if it hypothetically “slipped his mind” initially because he was only thinking about the internal aspects of practice)—he outright *refused* to prohibit meat in the face of such requests.

The natural conclusion from this is that what the Buddha meant with not accepting meat that you suspect has been killed for you is not what Buddhist vegans think he meant, in which case not only would've he been breaking the rule all the time, but also there would basically be no way to eat meat blamelessly unless you stole it from somebody else who bought it or ate exclusively roadkill.

On to the more internal aspect of why eating meat or not is not relevant to the overcoming of suffering, greed, aversion and delusion, nor even to the development of the 4 brahmaviharas:

Today more than ever, people need to learn to make the essential distinction between *ethics/morality* and *virtue* in the way the Buddha taught it (the rendering of *sīla* as “morality”; “ethics” in some translations of the suttas is disastrous). Ethics and morality are a fuzzy, mediocre approximation of virtue, and in a lot of situations the ethical thing to do goes *against* *sīla* (understood specifically as the first of the three trainings that lead out of craving and suffering). A good example of this is how it would be generally regarded as unethical to refuse to kill one person who will kill a million people, or to refuse to tell a lie to save someone from severe pain or death, which from the lens of purity of *sīla* are *unequivocally* the right things to do.

The definition of *sīla* in the Buddha's teaching is the abstinence from actions that are rooted in an internal resistance to emotional discomfort in any shape or form, and both of the actions I just mentioned would originate from just that, despite the fact that the whole world would regard them as ethically and morally justifiable—even *necessary*.

In the case of veganism, despite one's *stated* and internally visible intentions towards non-greed and compassion, it is usually rooted in craving against displeasure, in this instance that of knowing that animals are dying in order to produce meat (which seems to be at least partly where you're coming from too).

And, not by coincidence, the defining characteristic of the undeveloped mind is its inability to be aware of what it actually intends (in terms of craving and non-craving), and

thus as corollary, its tendency to recognize only superficial, rationally pleasing ideas—all secondary to the craving that remains unseen—as “my intention behind this”, and taking *that* to be wholesome (thus it’s said in the suttas that only a sotapanna and above truly knows kusala as kusala).

A person who is free from resistance towards displeasure is incapable of being emotionally moved by anything in the whole world, and that includes the fact that animals get slaughtered to produce meat, because fundamentally that bother is a reaction of *your senses*—that’s why you need to *look* at the slaughter videos to really get the motivation for veganism going—which an Arahant has fully understood as unownable and perilous to be domineered by.

It’s also paramount to distinguish, just like with virtue vs. ethics, *empathy* vs. *compassion*. The former is about implicitly regarding certain types of suffering as “good” and taking them willingly onto oneself (namely that of oppressed groups), while the latter refuses to recognize any form of suffering in *one’s own mind* as justifiable. Only when standing upon the latter does truly helping others without compromising one’s own welfare becomes possible, although that severely limits in what ways and scenarios one is able to help (see below). Empathy is about *feeling more*, while true compassion takes you in the direction of being imperturbable by feelings, be it yours or others’ (which is why it’s skilful and contributes to Nibbāna—no other reason).

A person who is *empathetic* is “scratching an itch”, as we say (acting out of craving), by going out of their way to save beings from dying, and they would suffer if they cannot do so, while a person who is compassionate would also try to prevent deaths whenever they can but without feeling any sort of discomfort or remorse if they don’t for whatever reason (bearing in mind here as well that their individual choice and of everyone they have influence over will not put the slightest dent in the demand for meat).

So, the first thing a person should learn to do is stop resisting discomfort, *no matter where it comes from*, and abandon the view that certain types of suffering/craving are wholesome, which all too many people today have. Then, once one has fully seen the way out of craving against pain and one has become at least a sotāpanna, one will know what true compassion is, and one will be free to choose to eat or not to eat meat that is bought from a market, because one will see that that’s has nothing to do with cruelty or non-cruelty. On the contrary, the seeds of cruelty lie latent within you, although they may not have sprouted yet, for as long as you crave against discomfort of *any kind* (evidenced perfectly by how some vegans are terribly hostile towards meat-eaters, and would even say they deserve to be slaughtered like the animals). Craving to prevent the external misfortunes of animals or any group *automatically* means not caring as much about the misfortunes of all others, at least by a tiny bit, which means one’s mind is fundamentally limited and bounded.

Hence the Suttas say that the brahmavihāras need to be applied in “every direction”. That doesn’t mean you go through some mechanical process of visualizing individual groups or people as is the standard and misguided way, but that your attitude, if it’s right, applies *all at once* to the entire world without any bias. From that perspective, you would

be incapable of feeling any less compassion for the people who will lose their jobs and the thousands of companies and family businesses that will go broke if the meat industry collapses.

And it's precisely because a person who has that true, boundless compassion is fundamentally "locked in" from every direction too, so to speak—in the sense that they cannot possibly become involved and biased towards one faction in a conflict or dispute because they have equal compassion for all—that they are not only wary of but also *incapable* of "activism" and of trying to change the world, which necessarily involves taking things from some to give them to others, in the broadest sense. That's why you didn't see the Buddha using all his wisdom and influence to change society.

I will also point out, going back to the topic of morality/ethics vs. *sīla*, that being concerned with the former at the cost of the latter prevents one from grasping the signs of one's mind, as that involves leaning even more into the view of regarding external relations and facts to be the determining factors for kusala and akusala and not one's attitude towards the present feeling, thus also reinforcing the attachment to virtue and practices. *That's* why he rejected compulsory abstinence from meat without hesitation.

Lastly, veganism and a lot of what is considered "ethics", involving trying to influence the world but without violating the five precepts (in which case it's *both* unskillful and demeritorious), can be said to be meritorious actions, whereas the virtue of one who strives for liberation is for the most part neither meritorious nor demeritorious (referred to as "imperturbable" in SN 12.51). Meritorious (*puñña*) actions that compromise non-craving are *unskillful* (*akusala*) when it comes to the Path.

Have a look at this, an interesting example of the Buddha not immediately rushing to prevent every single being from dying that he could. One should err on the side of caution more often than not, especially in the beginning, but it goes to show that what people think of as perfect compassion is not a Buddh-ist idea.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-24 14:53:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Sure, I'll shamelessly admit that I read a lot of things into what you wrote (although most of it was just general points that I expected to indirectly make you recognize where you were going wrong). I do that every single time I write anything, since I can't afford to dig into everyone's precise beliefs in order to write something constructive, and it should generally not be necessary unless my educated guess happens to be wrong. I'm willing to take your word for it that it was in this case, although that wouldn't change the main point at all.

I am not saying that it not permissible to eat meat under any circumstances and it does not follow from my logic that the Buddha increased demand by not banning meat. I never suggested banning meat.

My point was that by not prohibiting monks from accepting meat altogether even when

asked to do so probably more than once, the Buddha was implicitly OK with the fact that lay followers would be buying that meat from *somewhere* if they were not killing the animals themselves (and furthermore, because I guess back then you paid the butcher directly, it would've been even worse than what happens today when someone buys meat; if anything could be regarded an indirect breach of the precept by your logic, it would be that).

If a monk receives a gift that happens to be meat that is fine, if a person buys a product from a store that happens to have an animal product in it its fine.

If with “happens to have an animal product in it” you don’t include meat, you would still contradict how the Buddha did not ban the purchase of meat for all Buddhists. If he intended something as radical as what you argue, “only when the animal was not killed for your sake or suspected to have been so” would’ve been an extremely roundabout and inefficient way of saying “don’t eat meat unless it was offered to you randomly”, which is what I presume you think he meant.

What is the difference between asking someone to kill an animal for you to eat, which you obviously can’t do if you have done the requisite internal work and that HH doesn’t do and asking someone to kill an animal so you can eat their eggs? which HH does, even though the rule about suspicion is very clear and you never disputed it.

Buying animal products, let alone asking someone else to buy them, does not constitute “asking someone to kill an animal” (as per Pācittiya 39, a monk is outright *allowed* to request meat if he’s ill and requires it or if it’s not for himself, or if it’s “from those who have invited him to ask”; note also that it’s unlikely the list of suggestions in the Samanadipa website was written by monks, since one generally doesn’t feel comfortable interfering with such matters. Not to say that there’s anything inherently wrong with the list though).

What it all boils down is the fact that the animals that are dying to produce those products would still have died no matter who buys them unless changes in society or even on a local scale took place that monks and monasteries who are actually focusing on seclusion and practice have no hope of effecting. The amount of eggs or meat that would or would not be purchased for a small monastery makes no difference.

To me what constitutes a reasonable suspicion that the animal was slaughtered for you is if you give someone money or ask someone to give someone else money for specifically an animal product and that person says openly they will use that money to kill more animals, we have been using this money to kill animals, it is what we are all about, then that constitutes a reasonable suspicion.

So, suggesting animal products as a donation is absolutely not the same as directly giving money to butchers (which, again, is probably much closer to what the laypeople back in the Buddha’s day were doing and he doesn’t seem to have had a problem with that). The money nowadays is being given by the lay supporters to the supermarket or whichever intermediary, and those intermediaries would continue to pay the animal farms exactly

the same amount regardless of whether the *entire* tiny fraction of fortunate and well-off monasteries spread all over the world—that have even a remote possibility of adhering to a healthy vegan lifestyle—were to refrain from encouraging animal products as offerings.

The fact that Samanadipa lists eggs and not meat actually goes to show that at least they're trying to be as scrupulous as is feasible. I think we would all agree that at least *in theory* that action on their part contributes (although in reality it doesn't at all) to less total deaths, or at least not as many in the same span of time, as asking for poultry. I doubt that the amount of eggs they end up receiving on account of that mention is even sufficient to meet nutritional needs of animal protein, so they're actually willing to be somewhat deficient for the sake of extra scrupulosity and not asking too much. You can't eat more than a few eggs when you have only one meal a day anyway.

A separate point that seems similarly obvious to me is what constitutes a legitimate reason to need meat, if you need to eat meat to meet your micro-nutrient, macro-nutrient or caloric requirements and there is no viable plant-based way to do that, then its fine. I hope that atleast would be uncontroversial.

This allowance would be arbitrary and would constitute heedlessness based on how the Buddha said virtue should be practiced (if the points you make were truly relevant to the precept on not killing):

Just as the great ocean is stable and does not overflow its boundaries, so too, when I have prescribed a training rule for my disciples, they will not transgress it even for life's sake. This is the second astounding and amazing quality that the bhikkhus see in this Dhamma and discipline....

—AN 8.19

If your arguments were valid, a true monk would be **compelled** to not only not ask for meat, but to actively discourage all Buddhists from offering meat at all so as to not allow even a chance for being “complicit” (in your definition) in the killing of animals, even if it means death or illness. Death should be preferable to committing one of the 5 actions an Arahant can never do for one who is intent on liberation, and one who is willing to do those for the sake of their life, let alone their health, should not hope to reach it until they get their act together.

Nevertheless, to use this admission you yourself made for the sake of argument: it's easy for a relatively well-off (and particularly Western) individual layperson to ensure they get access to all the supplements and workarounds that are needed in order to lead a healthy vegan lifestyle. But providing that for *all* the monks in *one* monastery, let alone all of them, considering that the well-supported places are actually quite few, would be a pipe dream.

A Vinaya rule requires a layperson to have offered themselves *explicitly* to provide what monks may need for requesting things to be allowable. It is rare for such people to actually keep up with and renew those invitations for the monks to feel comfortable to, say, call the responsible lay supporter to tell them the place ran out of tofu or vitamins *specifically*, and *on top of that* dissuade them from bringing meat (in your definition, assenting to unpurchased meat being purchased in this case would mean being complicit in killing,

and thus one would be *forced* to ask the layperson to spend more when it's not strictly necessary, a blameworthy act for a monk). In fact, even putting expensive and unconventional things like supplements and vegan protein on a list of *suggested* offerings even if it's not outright demanded would be considered reprehensible on the part of monks.

On top of all this, this would apply to the best case scenario in a Western country, but in Asia people would certainly not be able to support the monks with healthy vegan diet. A monastery needs funds for a lot of other things like electricity bills, maintenance of buildings, other consumable items monks use, salaries for workers, etc., so they would have to divert funds and support away from that in order to get by well without animal products.

I will mention now in passing, which I couldn't in the first comment due to being limited to 10000 characters, that I have no horse in this race. I have barely consumed meat or eggs in the years since I went forth, as in Sri Lanka usually all monks get is milk (powdered to boot, meaning less nutrients, and even that is a luxury for many). I don't enjoy it, nor animal products in general, as I have a sensitive gut. Thus, my only interest here has been to refute a *view* that is an obstacle to becoming accomplished in virtue, seeing the signs of one's mind, and knowing wholesome as wholesome and unwholesome as unwholesome. If I argue against veganism, it would only be because, more often than not, *insisting upon it* is rooted in that wrong view that completely misses the true threshold of unwholesome and projects it in the external world. Not because I care about what I eat.

Finally, I will point out (in a friendly manner and not to provoke you) that your visible upset here is evidence of my overall point that abstaining from meat beyond the specific cases where it's not allowable (which I am showing are much less numerous than you seem to think) does not in the end bring unwholesome states to decrease, but often the opposite when it's paired with a fixed view. As I said, the purpose of the practice is to be emotionally undisturbed in every situation, not to be disturbed "for the right reasons". If one is not willing to accept that as the goal then that's fine, but it cannot be then called the Buddha's teaching (and again, I am not "aiming" this at you, but just expressing a principle).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-25 06:48:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

You have absolutely no concept of the practicalities of vegan nutrition.

I can also say that it seems you don't have much familiarity with how monasteries work. The fact is you will receive meat and animal products unless you openly announce that it's discouraged (and either way you will certainly not receive enough vegan protein unless you very strongly announce the need in a manner unbecoming of renunciates), and the decision to allow gifts of meat that were given randomly without your influence would be entirely arbitrary and unjustifiable if purchasing parts of already dead animals and having others do so for you were a breach of precepts. As I said, you would be compelled to do something monks should not do to stay clean, which is *make demands* to supporters,

in this case not to offer meat at all. You would be complacent with your (in this definition) virtue otherwise, exploiting a loophole. (Knowing the average monk, he would also find a way to get around this if it were the actual rule, so that the chance of the receiving meat he craves for can be increased without even indirectly asking for it at all).

Even if we put that aside, the point still stands that *even* if you were to openly ask for meat, which back in the day would've likely entailed a layperson going and paying a butcherer directly as I said, there would be no breach of virtue. That is the Buddha's own standpoint, as he himself made that rule in Pācittiya 39 I mentioned in the previous reply for *monks*, who must keep their virtue pure as a crystal even in the face of death and illness, not for laypeople who generally are not expected to be as strict.

If the layperson's paying that butcher would've resulted in an animal being killed that wouldn't have died at that moment, say if he killed it after the customer arrived, that would constitute grounds for that meat to be rejected. The fact that the animal would've died anyway is actually **not** an excuse in this case; same reason why euthanasia is not allowed. Even if the death will definitely come about eventually, *you* should never be the one responsible for precipitating it. It means that your *intention* was involved in that death—an *option* to act in your mind that you could've rejected and chose to act upon it regardless—and intention is what action is, as the Buddha said. Nothing beyond that is relevant to virtue, only to ethics (not to say the latter is bad, but when it's mixed up with the former, the Dhamma is obscured).

Unless one sees it on this level, one will always be able to doubt and “increase” one's purity more because it will always be *external* (taking the same principle to the extreme, Jains got into all their excessive and ridiculous rituals and abstinences in the name of “virtue”). Perfection (Arahantship) is impossible for as long as one operates on that external level. The idea that veganism is inherently more virtuous is a—much less radical than the Jains but still similar in principle—form of seeking that same external purity, which is why the Buddha refused to make it compulsory along with Devadatta's other suggestions like living under the root of a tree and eating only alms round. Making any of that compulsory would entail encouraging attachment to rites and rituals, thus obstructing the way to sotāpatti.

In fact, all the other things he suggested the Buddha to enforce were things he and the chief disciples repeatedly spoke praise of, whereas you don't find praise for the avoidance of meat anywhere. (On the contrary, all you find on the topic is Suttas that *debunk* the idea of it being necessary, like MN 55 and Snp 2.2.)

That's because these other external habits like eating only alms food and living in the forest *do* least contribute to effacement and non-craving in those who know how to implement them (which is not everyone and hence they cannot be generalized), whereas avoiding the meat of animals that weren't killed for you does nothing inherently (unless you like meat a lot, in which case it would still not necessarily be right because it'd be likely rooted in the wrong view that things being agreeable to your tongue is what craving is).

The arahant and his baby

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Handsome_God123 2023-11-19 07:57:43

During minute 7:35 Ajahn Nyanamoli talked about a sutta where a mother bring her baby to her ex husband who's an arahant. He said the arahant didn't even look at the baby until the mother realized "He would leave this baby to die" and take the baby home.

I wanna know which sutta this is. And also I'm wondering, Ajahn talk about how the Buddha said "it's how every arahant should behave" but isn't it neglecting the baby? What if the mother didn't come back? The baby would really die.

What is the difference in taking care of a baby and dogs?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CvQRbVs3oIY>

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 13:13:19

And also I'm wondering, Ajahn talk about how the Buddha said "it's how every arahant should behave"

Yes, he uttered a verse in praised of that monk.

but isn't it neglecting the baby? What if the mother didn't come back? The baby would really die.

He probably knew that she was going to come back, but either way he wouldn't have been emotionally bound to the baby.

It's not that he would have been *unaware* of the significance and the feelings of "this is my son", and register only "bare perceptions" of a lump of flesh like a robot, but that his mind would always instinctively recognize that as a lovely but poisonous drink. Thus, it would be impossible for him to even *mentally* act out of that arisen significance in the murderous five aggregates and "love" the baby, due to always fully withstanding and remaining unmoved by the force of any significance that comes up. By extension, it would be even more impossible for him to act out of it bodily or verbally and start playing with the baby and so on, happily chugging down that tasty venom and letting the 5 amicable murderers inside his home.

But, in the unlikely event that the mother didn't come back, and if the significance of "he will die" became strong enough, which it wasn't at that moment, he would go through the hassle of doing something to prevent it from dying, and finding someone else who can

take care of the child as soon as possible, without ever swallowing the poisonous drink being offered to him internally at any point.

What is the difference in taking care of a baby and dogs?

Dogs can't talk. That's a huge one.

They also don't need to be raised, and your behavior has only a limited influence on their internal development. They won't start doing drugs or killing people if you neglect them. They are easy to feed and can pretty much take care of themselves for the most part, and don't need an education. You can even neuter them and make them even easier to take care of while also greatly diminishing their suffering.

Besides, they die pretty soon, so you have to be foolish and shortsighted to allow yourself to become attached to them too much.

In comparison, the hassle of raising a child is so large that it *requires* the perversion of perception of suffering as happiness in order to willingly take it on.

Also, as a human, if you have a person who is asleep with you, your mind will not feel truly alone. But you can be with a dozen dogs and you would still be able to feel internally secluded if you're not attached to them. That's just how the aggregates work.

But of course, if you become attached to the dogs, or to anything, then you're still ingesting poison that tastes good, and will pay the price eventually.

Edit: And, the point of the video is that mettā is not "loving kindness". True mettā would be the fact that he would prevent the baby from dying if the mother truly never came back, without "loving" it at all, and that mettā would apply to that baby exactly to the same extent as any other being, without a bias.

In contrast, the modern idea of mettā as "loving kindness" has you picture a person who is skilled in it *loving a baby that's not even theirs*, and even expanding that attitude towards all beings. As in, going out of your way to ingest the noxious cocktails of others.

The problem is evidenced by how they would be horrified if the being they're spreading "loving kindness" towards were to be killed next moment, and *get angry* at whoever did it, proving that there's a bias. But if it's true mettā, whether it's towards humans or animals, you wouldn't be disturbed and angry with anyone if that happened. Hence, it's a form of complete non-attachment that actually brings you closer to Arahantship instead of away from it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-21 05:43:21 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Would people who have kids and then go on to be a monk gets bad kamma? I know Buddha did it but he was a prince so his wife and kids would be taken care of in his absence but what about normal people?

It's not about "getting" bad kamma; that's a wrong notion people have today. It's about *doing* bad kamma (kamma literally means "action").

Any action that is rooted in greed, aversion and delusion on the level of your mental state doesn't "give you" bad kamma, it **is** bad kamma. It might sound like a mere semantic difference, but if you think about it, you'll see that it changes your attitude and sense of responsibility completely, and only then do you get to understand the famous "beings are owners of their actions, heirs of their actions...", etc.

So yes, whether it's abandoning your children or staying with them, you are performing bad kamma if there are unwholesome intentions behind it.

That being said, it is very unlikely that you would be able to abandon your children knowing they might die and there's no one to care for them *without* unwholesome intentions.

If the other parent is technically able to carry the burden but doesn't *want to*, then if you have a profound sense of urgency you should be at least willing to leave it all behind and never look back, like the monk in this Sutta obviously had done. That action will be rooted in craving on your end initially, but if you have a clear context about what the practice is, and recognize that ordination is not for the sake of running away and *forgetting* about your problems but about *facing them* relentlessly on the internal level, then it could be more beneficial than the other, *also-rooted-in-craving* option of continuing lay life.

If your sense of urgency and zeal for the practice is not that strong or if ordination simply is not in the cards then the best thing would be to move out, take on the eight precepts and refuse to provide anything other than financial support, and there is even a possibility that your spouse may find someone else soon enough.

Also, you don't get asked at the ordination whether you have a wife and kids, but you do get asked whether you're in debt or serve the army. So if you're from a Western country where there are child support laws, you are technically in debt if you leave your children, and thus wouldn't be a suitable candidate for ordination.

Thus, better to never have neither kids nor a partner in the first place if freedom from suffering is truly the priority.

Where to Visit/Ordain

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Various-Junket-3631 2023-11-18 14:34:10

This question has been asked before but with the growth of this community, I think it may be worth asking again, especially with the addition of Bhante u/Bhikkhu_Anigha

I believe an appropriate monastic environment would have the following:

- 1) Plenty of time for seclusion/study/contemplation and away from the city
- 2) Strong adherence to and training in the vinaya
- 3) Meditation instruction that is either absent, optional, open-ended, or not strict
- 4) (for foreigners) A visa situation that is not overly burdensome

5) (optional) Internet access

I am interested in monasteries that fulfil the above criteria. I am curious if there is a decent way to vet monasteries for these qualities (esp 1-3) relatively quickly. Maybe some general qualities to look out for. For example, I have heard Dhammayut monasteries are generally strict about vinaya.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 00:22:24

I'll give advice from the perspective of someone who's only lived in Sri Lanka so far:

Here you should be able to find places that meet at least the first 4 criteria (not sure what you meant with the 5th. They usually wouldn't confiscate your phone unlike Thai places, if that's what you're referring to, unless it's a "Meditation Center"; more on that below).

The visa situation is generally better than in Thailand, since it is at least possible to get more than a one year visa in special cases if you're already a monk.

There's also not much of a strong emphasis on "teachers", and they tend to be a lot more relaxed than in Thailand, as far as I've heard about how it is there. That applies even more for foreigners, who would hardly ever be "forced" to do things, and would generally be able to avoid most of the unnecessary duties and distractions the local monks happily engage in (which is still less than in Thailand; I've seen monks there meticulously polishing *floors* with handkerchiefs, let alone the large Buddha statues. That former would never happen here; the latter only every once in a while at most). And there's only a few monasteries, usually more in the "Meditation Center" style, that have teachers of the "Guru" type, in the sense of an infallible spiritual leader. I ordained in one of those places and they confiscated my phone/SIM Card (though I got it back eventually) and even there it was possible to not participate in most of the unnecessary fluff like group meditation without repercussion long enough to get my higher ordination, after which pressure to conform started to increase.

I don't think you would even be getting "Meditation Instructions" in the majority of places here, or at least they wouldn't be enforced, more so as a foreigner.

For strict Vinaya you would have to look here for the "Galduwa" forest monasteries, the sect that is roughly equivalent to the Dhammayut (and in some areas not so similar, which can be good). "We" keep strict Vinaya—monks who use money are for instance not allowed in the Patimokkha—although it's mostly based on the Commentaries and can sometimes be pedantic and clearly made up. But it's not too bad and a downright heretic like myself has been able to go along just fine, not trying to defend "the right way" of Vinaya free of Commentarial influences that would equally be just as much of a rite/ritual, and even more so because then you're *going out of your way* to make sure it's followed.

This pdf was useful when I was starting out, although there's probably a lot of outdated information. By the time I got here it was already not entirely accurate, not to mention now.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 02:30:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, I ordained in Na Uyana. What Ajahn Nyanamoli might have said about it would've originated from my own reports, I assume.

I would now not advise anyone to ordain there, although the place goes up and down in terms of strictness, so it's possible that now it's better than that exodus period back when I left. But they certainly want to turn it into an international Pa Auk meditation center, so they won't rest until that goal is achieved, gradually if it must. Before I arrived right at the start of Covid, it was much more relaxed and it was the most popular place for foreigners, and it was based on those reports including from friends of his that AN suggested me to go there. Once I got there it was OK but was already tightening up. By now there's hardly any Western foreigners left AFAIK.

Na Uyana is the only place here that ticks all the boxes of "international; large; Pa Auk 'meditation'; ordination-centric; strict Vinaya", so it's pretty much unique, and like I said most monasteries don't have a meditation program. The only advantage of going there now would be the easy visas, but I wouldn't be surprised if they've become more careful now to ensure they only give long extensions to people who are religiously following the teaching there, knowing how many people deliberately took advantage and left.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 02:35:47 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

You mentioned only living in Sri Lanka - are you not at samanadipa with the other HH sangha?

No, I've never been there, and never got to visit the old place here before they left either. But I'll be there with them in several days.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 14:16:02 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

In order to give a more comprehensive answer—what do you mean with "far more sensuality than I'd ever deal with in lay life?"

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-20 00:26:25 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

If I understand the principle correctly, it's that a *genuine, perpetual* dependence on the laity is what will produce enough pressure to motivate consistent samadhi. . However, I must admit, my opinion is moreso that it's the

distractions of lay life (work, family) that prevent one from long-term practice of jhana, this being the main determinant of whether one destroys the three defilements.

The point I made was not about samādhi, and money per se is not an obstruction to jhāna (unless it's being acquired with sensual intentions, and *that* would be the obstruction internally). There were anāgāmis in the Suttas who still used money and were the head of a household, like Citta the Householder. What I wrote was more about Arahantship and complete relinquishment, hence I mentioned that access to wealth is why laypeople cannot become Arahants, defining “layperson” as one who doesn't keep the 10th precept.

Nevertheless, that *does not mean* that one is “justified” or spared from the consequences of **not** keeping the 10th precept if one is a layperson. Fundamentally, every bit of non-renunciation that you engage in is adding more fog and obstacles to the path towards liberation whether you wear a robe or jeans, and the failure to accept responsibility and the weight of remorse of such compromises, *insisting* in finding reasons why it's “fine” and one shouldn't feel the burden of that responsibility, is actually the primary way in which those choices would become an obstacle, because now the *internal value* of non-renunciation is being cultivated, and the honest recognition of akusala as akusala is being shoved under the rug.

So the fact that other monks use money would be even less justification for one to do so if one is truly taking on the robe so as to destroy all possible external compromises that are making even the Right View more difficult, even if the 10th precept does not become absolutely indispensable until later on. It would defeat the purpose, and you would be subjecting yourself to all the downsides of ordination without getting the main benefit. You would only do that if you believe that the robe magically gives you spiritual powers or something that don't depend on your rigorous, no-matter-if-I-die adherence to the rules.

“Just as the great ocean is stable and does not overflow its boundaries, so too, when I have prescribed a training rule for my disciples, they will not transgress it even for life's sake. This is the second astounding and amazing quality that the bhikkhus see in this Dhamma and discipline....

—AN 8.19

(We could make a case that this does not apply to most of the 227 rules since many of them may not have even existed when the Buddha said this, but the 10th precept was always part of the “training rules”).

Also, I did forget to mention the thing about staying a novice, which is certainly an option that would prevent most of the hassle involved in the ordination process.

Although one should also be careful to be honest with oneself about *why* one is not taking higher ordination. If it's because there is genuinely no place suitable for practice that will ordain you without the expectation that you will stay with them for the entire nissaya period, then that's a good reason to stay a novice and prioritize your practice and suitable environment instead. (Though I can't say that scenario sounds likely, not sure about Thailand but in Sri Lanka I don't think so).

If you stay a novice because deep down you still want to have the freedom to do whatever you want within limits, that's another compromise you would be making, and it would become another form of "finding safety". Again, not that it would be a total deal-breaker, but if you already went that far, you might as well make yourself fully incapable of ensuring that you will stay alive (relinquishing the ability to cook and store food), and also make yourself unable to do certain things and just hide them (such as masturbating). You are forced to confess, go on a probation period, and then be admonished in front of the sangha before your status is reinstated if you do that. And of course, at least *some* of the other lighter offenses do involve things that are actually unwholesome and not just cultural.

Technically the practice is always on you, but the thing is that external "barrier" actually adds more pressure into the mix and raises the stakes, it doesn't make it easier (assuming you have basic self-transparency and responsibility of course, which unfortunately can't be said for many who ordain). The way that the interdependence of bhikkhus for things like confession was organized by the Buddha makes it so that it should put a hole on your sense of safety more than it should reinforce it (although the way communities are structured today, centered on a lopsided idea of "harmony" involving metaphorical group-hugs makes it be the other way around, usually).

Edit: So what I would do is find a place that gives novice ordination reasonably easily (which should be most except the Ajahn Chah ones) and then at least eventually start looking for a place that can make me a bhikkhu without too much inconvenience and a 5-year contract. There are downsides to it obviously, but for one who knows how to take advantage of it, it should be a net win. And of course the code of discipline is designed so that it falls squarely within the Middle Way, despite how it may nowadays be misused for overzealous denial and scrupulosity, or for the justification of monk-ly indulgence.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-20 03:51:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Right, doesn't sound surprising as far as the things I've heard about Thailand. That's why I've never even considered going there, although I imagine for someone who is already past their nissaya period or someone who is staying a samanera there may be some suitable places to stay.

Edit: I also forgot to mention some of the reasons why I don't like the Thai tradition: the whole intoxication with "the form" and the overall ideal and demeanor of the monk that I can smell from miles away whenever I see somebody who ordained there, or even in a Western branch (or perhaps *because* of that). I've even seen monks who were visiting here trying to walk perfectly in line and synchronize their steps when going on alms round, presumably in the way they used to do where they ordained (which monks here would find extremely strange and over-the-top). And the obsession with the neat requisites and the perfect color of the robe that *has* to be dyed with jackfruit and the way of folding the sitting cloth and insisting in doing the Patimokkha "the Thai Way" and the very particular method of folding the robe and the dark chocolate in the evening that's not allowed here...

pretty much being finicky about everything, using every opportunity they can to flaunt the fact that they're not just monks, but *Thai* monks.

It also seems to be more of a thing there for senior monks to admonish juniors almost as an obligation, and it's more like a military command in general with absolute authority. Some Western monks also start internally enjoying that when they become seniors unfortunately.

Here it's much more relaxed and less uniform in comparison, except in the monasteries of the Galduwa tradition that are specifically "Monk Training Centers" (and even then, Sri Lankans kind of *can't* be so obsessive on average). Even in places like Na Uyana there is a lot of heterogeneity and room for non-conformity, whereas I've met Thai-ordained monks who get offended if I don't keep my hands in añjali throughout the entire Patimokkha, the way they do it there. In fact, pretty much all the faults of Na Uyana come from those contexts where the abbot is trying to be more like the Thai/Burmese, and laments the fact that Sri Lankans usually can't conform to that.

So I can see it being very easy for a person in Thailand who is not already extremely self-transparent to develop an attachment to "my tradition". But that's just what I've observed.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-21 00:16:03 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Goodness, sounds awful.

Have you tried going to a "meditation" place?

I remember finding this a while ago.

I think a good option might be finding a "meditation" environment that's not too strict, which at least technically should ensure less expectations of involvement with mundane stuff. As long as it's not compulsory, Burma-style group meditation boot-camp then you might be fine even if you have to attend meditation interviews, if they can see that you're not slacking around, although you may need to learn the subtle skill of discussing your meditation practice without explicitly calling out whatever they're teaching as wrong. Focusing on the very few similarities rather than the differences assuming you are trying to practice according to the Suttas if you end up having to engage in discussions. I suppose if push comes to shove, you could describe what you are doing to an untrained ear as an "open awareness practice". Technically that's not what it is, but that's accurate enough for that situation, and it's enough to know whether they're OK with it or not.

If you end up considering going to the West, my advice would be to avoid places that are too politically-inclined and that will be pushing hardcore feminism down your throat. I haven't explicitly heard of that happening, but based on what I see Western nuns writing on the internet sometimes, I wouldn't be surprised.

There are certainly injustices, but no one who has liberation as their #1 priority has time to become involved in that battle with the few years of valuable practice time they have

left. In the best case scenario that *your* engagement turns the tide changes the world, by the time the goal is achieved, you will not only be old but will have cultivated a lot of ill-will and righteous indignation along the way, as well as further fueled the view that **things that happen to you** are what suffering is, not your **craving** in regard to things that happen to you.

If you had trained your mind to see things in the latter way, you could not even muster the willingness to become involved with such things no matter how many injustices you experience, because that willpower is only present in someone who is *suffering internally* due to external circumstances, and you wouldn't be one of those people if you understood the Dhamma.

Certainly nobody should be contributing to the oppression, but sacrificing the priority of wholesome states of mind for the sake of fighting against it is not a good idea if Nibbāna is truly the goal, and if one has remotely any clue how hard it is to attain it. (Interestingly, this is one of the ways in which adherence to meditation techniques makes you do things you probably wouldn't do otherwise. I am willing to bet that it's because of the underlying view that Nibbāna just "happens to you" if you become skilled enough at narrowing down your mental space and practicing forgetfulness that people are willing to engage in political activism while being "meditators" at the same time. The criterion of intention behind one's actions as what truly determines beneficial or unbeneficial, as that which you are *meditating on* and "feeding" your mind with whether you like it or not, is either not there or ignored).

So I suppose it's possible that most places in the West would have that slight political bias, but as long as it's not strong enough interfere with your practice then it should not be a big issue.

I would also mention just in case that if I were you, I wouldn't disrobe even if I weren't able to find a place. It's unlikely that there is truly *nothing* (even though it may not be absolutely optimal in every regard), but also, putting up with these difficulties while **still** valuing restraint, true renunciation and non-craving is developing your mind to some extent, in a way that even an 8-precept laylife, assuming you would keep it with the same rigor, probably wouldn't, or at least not with the same intensity, assuming you are matching the external robe with internal authenticity, heedfulness and not tolerating intentions of lay life.

Ultimately, you should definitely try to get seclusion, but that doesn't mean that even in this situation if you stand your ground against the flood of sensuality at least *internally*—refuse to lose perspective and the recognition of akusala as akusala, to fall into complacency together with the rest **while** also refusing to tolerate ill-will against them when it inevitably arises—no progress at all is happening.

Trying to get seclusion ASAP without resisting the pain of not having it is the way to go, because if you die today, that's the best possible mind state to have.

I'll also be asking the abbot of where I am and another one I'll be visiting before I leave if they know any places for nuns more akin to our forest monasteries. I'll send you details

of any recommendations.

Edit: Also, I'm not sure if Thailand or Burma which are more "practice-oriented" generally may have better and more variety of places in the case of nuns, relaxed "meditation centers" at the very least, with less insistence on useless duties.

Yoniso Manasikara

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** ComprehensivePin6440 2023-11-17 19:42:54

I have doubts that I understand Yoniso Manasikara correctly.

I attended a talk about Yoniso Manasikara at the Samanadipa monastery. Bhante Phasuko gave an example of how one should try to see their own face and, in a way, see behind one's experience. Just like how you can't see your eye, but you know it's there because of its absence. The moment I turned around and tried to look at myself, I discovered this hollow, empty place devoid of any possibility of ownership void. It felt as if might as well be dead, as far as it looks like. Another example was given that if you put pressure on your finger to cause yourself a bit of pain and establish yourself in that order, you would not suffer. So that place is where suffering can't follow.

After the unavoidable existential dread and full-on anxieties of meeting with the void and the literal uprooting of my assumed external sense-based ownership independent from the body, some time passed and I found myself again taking automatic ownership in the experience and hence suffering. Since then, I have been experimenting and trying to always have that establishment, but suffering still persists. It felt like I was managing my suffering with this kind of establishment and avoiding the responsibility of the pressure. And ironically, the greatest fruit of the practice!

This is why I was so thankful that Bhante Anigha took the time and explained to me about what samadhi really is and how to endure the pressure, and that pressure is actually rewarding you by enduring it correctly. I can't say that I have a good understanding of this because I am still missing the correct understanding of Yoniso Manasikara and how it all fits into the puzzle.

Another thing that confuses me is that I have heard Ajahn Nyanamoli speak about it, and what I understand from him is that Yoniso Manasikara is the context of whatever is happening in front of you, hence the diminishing of unwholesomeness because of that higher perspective.

But I have seen Bhante Anigha making a clear distinction between Yoniso Manasikara and the context. The context, to me, seems like it needs to develop from the painful lessons, and then if pondered sufficiently, it endures in the background, which should be Yoniso Manasikara.

Or is it just the ability, for example, to recollect the body posture, and that space is already Yoniso Manasikara?

So now, my practice was simply asking myself, “Do you want this?” while that image in my head endures. And it works - my mind initially touches it, but then it goes back like it has been burned as soon as the significance of the situation becomes apparent. It feels like the mind becomes dispassionate and doesn’t want anything to do with that image. So experientially, it would be like things still appearing to you as the lack of something, and your senses reacting, but they pass right through you, and you’re still at peace somehow. Not only that, but because of those pressures, you get more peace. Who would have guessed that such an absurd principle of chitta? This also helped me see exactly where that line is between the reactions of the animals and the mind’s craving aspect. As soon as I see that the mind is latching onto something, I ask again, “Do you want this?”

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-18 08:00:33

Since then, I have been experimenting and trying to always have that establishment, but suffering still persists. It felt like I was managing my suffering with this kind of establishment and avoiding the responsibility of the pressure.

Yes, this is why it’s always essential to remain self-honest, and to tell yourself that no matter how much you feel like you understood things, there *has to be* some way in which you’re not even fully self-transparent yet unless you have the Right View. In fact, no matter what happens, even if you suddenly enter the fourth jhāna and get the triple knowledges and psychic powers one night, assume yourself to have made no progress whatsoever. That is the way to keep making *actual* progress.

Another thing that confuses me is that I have heard Ajahn Nyanamoli speak about it, and what I understand from him is that Yoniso Manasikara is the context of whatever is happening in front of you, hence the diminishing of unwholesomeness because of that higher perspective.

Yes, that’s what it is. “In front of you” also needs to be understood in a very general sense, as pretty much anything that you are aware of. Anything that is pressuring you.

You could put it this way: instead of trying to *determine* “this much is that which is in front, and this much is that which is behind”, which would leave your sense of self untouched, take *absolutely anything* that you find already there, arisen, including subtle things like restlessness, doubt, views, ideas, expectations, confusions, and and take that as your “in front”. Then, your recognition of the *nature* of that whole experience is “the context”. That’s why that context ultimately doesn’t have to be anything elaborate, it could just be a recognition that “I am thinking”, *regardless* of what that thinking is about and the pressure it carries. That’s how you would abandon doubt, for example, no matter how unpleasant it feels, and without trying to *stop* the thinking either.

But I have seen Bhante Anigha making a clear distinction between Yoniso Manasikara and the context. The context, to me, seems like it needs to develop from the painful lessons, and then if pondered sufficiently, *it endures in the background, which should be Yoniso Manasikara.*

Or is it just the ability, for example, to recollect the body posture, and **that space is** already Yoniso Manasikara?

It seems you partly misunderstood. I don't recall saying that yoniso manasikāra is a *result* of practicing the context (if you remember where it was I can clarify what the statement actually meant).

If anything it would be the other way around, yoniso manasikāra, which is what you need to be diligent with, is what would eventually make the context endure on its own without you needing to think about it.

Regarding the phrase “that space is” that I highlighted above, I can't be 100% sure what you mean with that phrase but I will mention something just in case.

It's better not to think of it as a “space” or something that you access or anything along those lines. That's because that will inevitably carry the implication that *you are doing it*, so to speak, and that's exactly why it's not actually the sufficient degree of yoniso manasikāra. That sort of attitude would turn even our descriptions of yoniso manasikāra into a “technique” that one would assume oneself, to one's misfortune, to already be doing rightly.

Instead, again, as I wrote above, think of it as the practice towards overcoming your existence, and always tell yourself that there is a very large chance that you're not doing it correctly and that there is a part of your sense of self that is still “leaking out” of the container of the context, even if yoniso manasikāra “makes sense”.

It's about having an attitude of constant dissatisfaction with your practice, which is what gives rise to the right sense of urgency to develop it. If you do your best to be self-honest, it will always be obvious that the whole thing is still built on sand for the most part. And if you keep going like that, one day it will not be built on sand, but not because you were looking forward to that occasion. As the simile of the hen and the eggs in MN 16 goes, wishing distracts you from actually sitting on the eggs.

Having said that, yes, recollecting your body posture on the right level, in the way that does not leave your sense of self out—i.e., when the inevitable thought of “I am entering this space” manages to gratuitously not be seen as within the context in one subtle way or another—is yoniso manasikāra.

So now, my practice was simply asking myself, “Do you want this?” while that image in my head endures. And it works - my mind initially touches it, but then it goes back like it has been burned as soon as the significance of the situation becomes apparent. It feels like the mind becomes dispassionate and doesn't want anything to do with that image. So experientially, it would be like things still appearing to you as the lack of something, and your senses reacting, but they pass right through you, and you're still at peace somehow. Not only that, but because of those pressures, you get more peace. Who would have guessed that such an absurd principle of chitta? This also helped me see exactly where that line is between the reactions of the animals and the mind's craving aspect.

As soon as I see that the mind is latching onto something, I ask again, “Do you want this?”

Based solely on the verbatim description that could be along the right lines, but if *internally* it’s right would depend. You would have to ask yourself to what extent asking yourself “do you want this?” is diminishing the pressure instead of adding a different significance to it.

Also when you say “while that image in my head endures”, I can’t know for sure what you mean by that, but that could also mean taking the principle I referred to above of “yoniso manasikāra in regard to what’s in front” too literally (a mistake which I initially made).

If you want to ask yourself “do you want this?” on the right level, it would have to be something like your *entire experience and pressure* of being restless about something that’s gonna happen tomorrow. You’re not asking yourself whether you really want to go to that job interview after all, or something like that (that sort of coarse decision would be covered by sense restraint and virtue).

In order to develop yoniso manasikāra, you need to be asking yourself whether you want to *welcome the possibility of trying to get rid of this situation of restlessness (in this example) in any way*, including looking at the particular images you are restless about and telling yourself they’re not worth it. That would already be a form of acting out of restlessness, and would be the “wrong level”.

Going back to this comment I wrote yesterday, sensuality is in fact the first hindrance also because if you understand what is the hindering aspect in it, you understand all the others too.

One has to be delusional to believe that one can volitionally stop perceiving the pleasure of an agreeable sense object, so by trying to overcome craving without denying that the pleasure is there, you force yourself to deal with the problem on the right level. That’s why I wrote “you see **this body** as a charcoal pit”, not “you bring up the pleasant image and tell yourself that **that** is a charcoal pit”, which will force you to do the same thing again when the next image comes up.

In the same way, whenever a pressure of any other kind is there, “do you want this?” should mean for you “do you want to try to wriggle out of what is already given—the “lack” of a pleasant object in this case which is itself a valid experience no matter how unpleasant it is—subjecting yourself to frustration on account of impermanence?”, and **not** “how do I make what is already given, the “lack”, not be there through asking this question?”

In this way, you learn to be content and free from suffering in regard to torturous feelings, instead of evoking contentment so that torturous feelings don’t arise, the “wrong level”.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 04:45:08 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

What you are asking from me is to take my whole life and just be observant of the characteristics of the experience regarding as if it's not my life. And not to let even a little bit of identification with any of it or any type of possibility of any alleviation of any situation that comes my way, no matter the severity of the situation.

Yes, while also recognizing that that doesn't *have* to be unpleasant and anxious. It's not up to you to decide how severe the situation is, and how much alleviation will present itself as "needed". For a person who has not been keeping the precepts and restraint, there's probably gonna be pretty severe feelings arising, but either way it's not about *trying* to have those feelings so that you feel like you're progressing "faster" or something. Up to you is to be aware of whatever you're feeling it on the "right level", having established the strict virtue and sense restraint beforehand. Sometimes severe feelings will be there, sometimes not, and wanting to have only severe feelings is also a craving for certainty.

So, i should look at myself as this operating system that is happening by itself and trying to study it in an attempt to overcome it?

It would depend what you mean by that. I would avoid phrasing it that way, since it gives off an implication that you can just "choose" to step back from the "operating system" and see it for what it is like someone who actually understood the five aggregates would. People would usually then end up trying to "look at the entirety of their experience" as another "doing"/technique, and they would be doing that *with* their sense of self.

Describing the correct understanding of the experience as an "operating system" can also be misleading since it tends to imply that the feelings and significances of things are not supposed to be there. At least to my ears it's hard to use that sort of designation without it meaning that you're supposed to become a robot.

Rather, the experience you're trying to be aware of on the right level is that of emotions, preferences, and internal reactions to things that have been conditioned by your past (and are now restrained from being lived out if they're rooted in craving), and you won't stop having those things internally no matter how "not mine" you learn to see them as, or at least it's utterly irrelevant where you stop having them or not because none of that needs to be denied. What needs to be abandoned first and foremost is the actions that "express" those emotions and preferences into the outside world to an unacceptable extent, addressed by 8 precepts and restraint, and then furthermore both the over-doing and under-doing of the context by repeatedly, hundreds of thousands of times, recognizing how you're missing the mark and re-adjusting the "right level" of yoniso manasikāra. That is the way of addressing your human emotions "internally" so that there is no craving in regard to them.

The issue here is, when I say "context in regard to the entirety of the experience", you can't just sit down and start "zooming out" of your experience by choice. Recognizing that "entirety" requires a level of finesse, and if you overshoot the "stepping back", you

will actually leave room for the sense of self still, and same if you undershoot it.

And the difficult part is that no amount of instruction can directly ensure that you will reach that “balance point”, because *internally* you can always be misinterpreting what you hear in the direction of either extreme, and being a puthujjana guarantees that. So it’s a matter of relentless drilling and repetition, never assuming that you already got it (because assumption is always irrelevant).

But that is more uncomfortable because it forces you to endure the uncertainty of the fact that you may not be “getting it” any time soon. And the mind has the tendency to only want to work if the reward is in sight. But then you include *that* uncertainty within the experience, and see it in such a way that you don’t need to do anything about it no matter how intense it is. The true “balance point” is actually (subtly) unsettling for the undeveloped mind, (“feels incomplete” as Ajahn put it in the newest talk) and it finds even over-doing the effort more comfortable, because that allows the sense of self to find stability at least to some extent.

So the main focus is on understanding and not looking for a way out or going with something agreeable in your experience. That would be difficult because now there will be no rest, as I have to disregard even the comfortable safe zones that my mind provides me with and not delight in them.

Yes, but you need to be aware that “going with something agreeable in your experience” doesn’t mean agreeable things coming into range. The pleasure you should never go along with is the pleasure of *acting out* of the experience even mentally. In other words, you need to recognize where the “pull” on the level of background intention is, because that’s the “reflexive”/peripheral pleasure the sense of self subsists on; the pleasure of the objects is secondary.

If the “pull” is towards denying the pleasure that arises on its own and that has nothing to do with you, then following that intention would be “going with something agreeable in your experience” *on the level that matters*. If the pull is towards welcoming the pleasure then of course that will be wrong too if you follow it.

If the pull is towards making an unpleasant feeling more intense because you think that’s somehow “speeding up” your practice, then that would also mean giving in to that peripheral level of pleasure. This is what the Jains were doing on a very coarse level, but it can be so extremely subtle that even the best Buddhist puthujjana is doing either this or indulgence by definition without realizing it, and they would realize it only by getting the Right View.

One might even have heard the description of “existential anxiety” and “dismantling of the sense of self” on account of it, and one now derives a peripheral form of pleasure from making oneself stew in that emotional discomfort, and that means it’s not the “right level” anymore, and the sense of self is still there. And *that* is a “safe zone”, potentially even worse than all the others if one doesn’t recognize it.

Like someone who was stranded in a jungle and was given directions of how to get out, and was told that at a certain point they would start seeing a certain kind of landscape if

they were going in the right direction. But then they are too quick to assume that they're already out of the woods and cannot psychologically bear the thought that there might still be a long way to go, so they become delusionally complacent, and at some point some jungle predator gets them.

Is that why my “practice” is failing me and I’m not able to see the structure of my experience because I always try to interfere with it or always try to find a way out of the pressure. And although I have been following the 8 precepts for more than a year now, I have not been practicing correctly on the mental level?

So no, your practice is not “failing you”. The good news is that *because* you have taken on the 8 precepts and restraint, you are practicing rightly *to some extent* even in the worst of moments.

But yes, on the mental level you need to keep telling yourself that it’s still wrong. That’s because you have no criterion yet to determine what “right” is, and you’re still in the jungle. So you have to be prepared to accept that this is just 10% of the journey if that ends up being the case, because you *genuinely* have no idea and nobody else but you in the future if you manage to become a sotapanna can know in hindsight. You include *that* anxiety within the context and endure it, and stay on the lookout for any other ways in which you might be *reflexively* finding a sense of safety, meaning on the level of your choices in regard to your own mental states (immediacy).

Because that’s what the “safety” is ultimately—the wrong view that you are outside of your own experience in any level of subtlety, **including** as the unrecognized outside agent who is here and now practicing “no outsideness” on the wrong level, seeing not-self with self.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 05:08:18 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

and then furthermore both the over-doing and under-doing of the context by repeatedly, hundreds of thousands of times, recognizing how you’re missing the mark and re-adjusting the “right level” of yoniso manasikāra.

“Just as, Pahārāda, the great ocean slants, slopes, and inclines gradually, not dropping off abruptly, so too, in this Dhamma and discipline penetration to final knowledge occurs by gradual training, gradual activity, and gradual practice, not abruptly. This is the first astounding and amazing quality that the bhikkhus see in this Dhamma and discipline because of which they take delight in it.”

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-19 23:43:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

Needless to say, this helpful feedback loop encouraged the mind to continue pulling in the direction of relentless concern, but I am starting to come to terms with the fact that I may have raised and let loose a wild animal that seeks out and ferociously feeds on concern and urgency for its own sake. Although highly useful at first, its overall incompatibility with the aim of developing supreme composure is becoming apparent.

It's kind of normal that one cannot just reach the Middle Way right away. Since almost everyone starts far in the direction of indulgence these days, it's almost inevitable that they will have to go equally far in the direction of denial so as to contain the sensuality.

Not acting out towards sensuality always necessarily involves more composure than acting towards it, but yes, one needs to recognize that one is abandoning one hindrance with another, moving the problem somewhere else.

The key seems here not to raise and let loose another wild animal - one that feeds on safety and certainty - in order to destroy the original one, but to instead direct my efforts to starve out the original beast by subjecting it to the very same container of patient endurance that it helped to establish. This is how the knowledge and vision that is perpendicular to this potentially infinite and on-going beast-raising campaign arises, isn't it?

Yes, you need to start recognizing how and to what extent whatever you're doing is actually a form of yielding to some "pull" or another, be it going with the grain of the world, or going too hard against it. The pull of sensuality might have diminished, but if it's because you're giving in to this other pull of "practice", then that's still needs to be upgraded **(although it is certainly necessary to start with)**. For as long as one is not able to endure the pull of defilements without the help of another form of pressure, one cannot be free from the grasping at virtue and practices.

In the Suttas you see those laypeople who went back to live their lives almost as if nothing happened after getting the Right View, and that's what a person who is still misusing their practice against unwholesome as a form of distraction from the more unsettling, "silent noise" of the neutral feeling of *neither* indulging *nor* rejecting would not be able to do, because deep down they know that their progress will fall apart if they stop actively practicing.

And the knowledge and vision that is "perpendicular" to the whole thing, as you put it, is that of the nature of choice as such, on any level of subtlety, and whether it's to welcome or deny things (this is what grasping the hints of the mind enables). As a puthujjana, one cannot help regarding denial as that which is wholesome if one has decided that indulgence is unwholesome, but a sotapanna is able to fully recognize *both* indulgence and denial as unwholesome and rooted in craving, and the Middle Way as wholesome.

The idea that "craving is to be overcome by craving" applies only in the very broad sense

that whether or not you practice, craving will be there either way. But it never means that one should, having already *taken up* the practice, justify forms of craving that one is aware of. The craving will be there inevitably if hypothetically an Arahant were to “examine” your mental state, but from *your point of view*, it should feel like you’re not acting out of craving in either direction of indulgence or denial, because that’s the only way to make progress instead of shifting the issue .

At the point where one is sufficiently restrained and distant from the possibility of indulgence, one needs to then start developing that “perpendicular” direction, but for that, the coarse type of choices that one is used to will not work, and refining them is not a matter of choice either. It’s a matter of trial and error and correcting course, always being self-transparent about one’s shortcomings and subtle ways of acting out, never justifying craving, and being perpetually discontent with whatever progress one has made, coupled with **never** breaking the restraint and precepts no matter how much you relax the over-tight effort. The actual restraint part never changes; what you’re upgrading is your attitude and context behind it only.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-28 00:12:09 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, that’s pretty much it. When you focus on an object, for instance, instead of practicing yoniso manasikāra, you are barring yourself from being able to include the sense of self within the context/mindfulness, as the range of what you’re mindful of is so tiny and constricted, plus applying to an entirely different and irrelevant domain like bodily sensations, that it cannot possibly include the sense of self within it so as to start truly seeing what anattā is. Instead, you will be just seeing not-self with self, as MN 2 puts it, and getting all sorts of transcendental releases, experiences and “insights” of the wrong kind, which accord with the Buddha’s teaching only *on the surface* (which is already the only thing a puthujjana sees).

That is the coarsest way in the case of a meditation technique, but that principle of not recognizing the full range of the experience so that even the sense of self, no matter how subtle, is seen as depending on a “nutriment” can be much less obvious, and will be there for as long as one is not a sotapanna.

Question about this HH video ???

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Print-Remarkable 2023-11-17 18:30:58

At the 58 minute mark in this absolute gem of a Dhamma discussion they go really deep about not assuming an external self to your present experience. Upon repeated listens I think I’m starting to get it. But can someone give me a good example of a typical wrong assumption of an external self that I’m sure we all have the habit of doing. If I’m making any sense here?? lol

<https://youtu.be/wZoIwMQHoc4?si=7ZCPesLcsIApAeL0>

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-18 06:50:49

I think I'm starting to get it.

Maybe in theory if you hadn't before, but it's important to note that truly "getting it" has to result in the destruction of the first three fetters.

It is the general nature of every assumption that when you recognize it, it *cannot* come back. That's exactly why we call it assumption, whereas with "clinging" and similar, although it's technically not an inaccurate translation, the problem is it gives people the idea that as puthujjanas they can simply choose not to have upādāna for things and that they're basically in the same position as a sotapanna at that moment, and that assumption is catastrophic. You could talk about "clinging" and say that it's something that a puthujjana should avoid doing, but then you would have to be referring to something other than upādāna, which requires actual knowledge and vision to be removed and is not a matter of choice. And that "clinging" that they can avoid by choice, which could at times be beneficial as a form of Gradual Training, certainly wouldn't be on the level of the sense of self. It would only pertain to sense objects and coarse attachment towards opinions (which don't equal views; views are much subtler). So one should practice that sort of "non-clinging", but without confusing it with the abandonment of upādāna.

But can someone give me a good example of a typical wrong assumption of an external self that I'm sure *we all have the habit of doing*.

So what I'm saying is, yes, there is a "habit" of doing it, but , it won't actually be stopping even temporarily until one gets the Right View. You couldn't possibly take that habit back up once you actually abandoned it, since it would be like deliberately picking up a 100-pound load that you had absolutely no reason for carrying, having finally noticed that you had it on your back and dropped it.

The implication of wanting to get "outside" of the experience is there to be recognized most acutely when there is the pressure of agreeable or disagreeable things. What the puthujjana's mind in either case (both of which are **painful** in the ultimate sense automatically assumes is that there is some sort of "base" where it can stand that is outside of the pressure being experienced, and that from that "base" it has the ability to control the feelings that arise.

When the feeling is pleasant, it will assume that it has the power to increase that feeling, when it is unpleasant, the opposite.

And why is it an assumption?

In dependence on the eye and forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; forms are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and tottering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

"Eye-consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-consciousness is also impermanent,

changing, becoming otherwise. When, bhikkhus, eye-consciousness has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

“The meeting, the encounter, the concurrence of these three things is called eye-pressure. Eye-pressure too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-pressure is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, bhikkhus, eye-pressure has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

“Pressured, bhikkhus, one feels, pressured one intends, pressured one perceives. Thus these things too are moving and tottering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

—SN 35.93

Here is where it's crucial not to think that impermanence and dependent origination are “processes”, which would only re-introduce the assumption.

What the highlighted part means is that that “base” that a puthujjana assumes to be outside of whatever they're experiencing can only control the experience *through* intentions. So, if those intentions are provided by the experience/pressure, how could it be possible for those same intentions to be “applied” to the experience from the outside, so as to guarantee, in the way you assume, that the experience will change in the way you want it to?

This is not to say that you can't choose to get up and start walking if you simply decide to do so. It's that the “level” where the pressure, the way it feels, you fundamentally can never change through the actions and intentions that are already *within it*. It would be like scratching the back of your hand with its own fingers. So you can basically do anything with those “fingers” (the arisen intentions/cetana) *except* do something to your hand, which is, in this case, the only thing that could guarantee your happiness.

So, in a sense, it's not that there is “no outside” in some absolute sense, but rather that no matter how “outside” something feels, how much it feels like it will rescue you from the pressure you are experiencing, fundamentally it's still within that experience here and now. When you think about the brighter future and hope to bring it about through your intentions, that is within that situation here and now, and the outcome will be determined by that situation as a whole (including both internal and external factors) regardless of how much you crave for it to come about.

Thus, it's not about determinism, as in saying that everything has a fixed course and thus whatever you do makes no difference, but that the outcome of your choices is always ultimately and fundamentally uncertain. That's because even if all the external factors are in place, fundamentally what you want is not an “object” in the world, really. What you want is a *specific form of pleasant pressure internally* in regard to the objects of the world. So even if you get exactly whatever *objects* and *perceptions* you want every single time, there

is always plenty of room for the *experience/pressure* of the object to not be what you actually wanted, e.g. because you're in a bad mood now, and you have no say in that.

If you truly had that outside “base” from which you can control what you feel the way that the mind naturally assumes, you would never suffer. You can certainly re-claim your happiness *sometimes* by committing certain actions, but you should never lose perspective about the fact that every single time you succeed in that, it's pretty much by accident. Then you will realize that, even if there is a 99.9% chance of succeeding in getting what you want, it's never worth getting drunk on that possibility. Since you are not “outside” you will also have no escape from the increased unhappiness of you not getting what you wanted or losing what you had *at some point*, when the streak of luck ends, and you will be confined within that displeasure.

(This is one of the reasons why people in the Buddha's time had less difficulty seeing the Dhamma on average. Now it is easier for the same or lesser amount of effort to lead to a greater amount of rewards, thus, on average, reinforcing the ignorance of the uncertainty of choices.)

Edit:

This is not to say that you can't choose to get up and start walking if you simply decide to do so. It's that the “level” where the pressure, the way it feels, you fundamentally can never change through the actions and intentions that are already *within it*.

So you can start walking all you want, but there is ample chance that you will *not* stop feeling the displeasure of restlessness, for example, or that going where you want to go will not make you feel good.

Praise and blame

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-15 05:30:39

I realized right now I've always hated being wrong because I always associated being wrong with blame from others. And the same is true for why I've loved being right; an implicit love for praise. I used to go out my way to get praised by others, at least that coarse level of behavior is not longer present in me. But love for right and hate for wrong are still really just disguises for praise and blame.

How to overcome praise and blame? What are the drawbacks, danger, and escape with regards to praise and blame? How does one see them? I can list the drawbacks on a mundane level, but I'm tired of mundane stuff.

Wanting praise and not wanting blame are still sensuality, so I suppose seeing the danger in sensuality would have to result in overcoming praise and blame?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-16 03:03:56

Wanting praise and not wanting blame are still sensuality, so I suppose seeing the danger in sensuality would have to result in overcoming praise and blame?

Not all the way. You could lay out two types of concern for praise and blame:

The first is related to the first three fetters, and is basically the fact that one is affected negatively when one's *views* are criticized and elated when they're praised. Abandoning that *through knowledge of the nature of views*, not through *deciding* to stop holding them or to not be attached, would make one incapable of being moved by praise and blame on that domain. In fact, if you were to *directly* try to not hold any views so as to not be concerned about praise or blame, you would have to prematurely relinquish mundane Right View and the utterance of another.

Furthermore, concern for place and blame on the ultimate level is something that only an Arahant has overcome. In fact, the craving for being and craving for non-being of an anāgāmi could be illustrated best by their concern for reputation, family, honor- that sort of thing. It's a consequence of the 5 higher fetters still being there: "formless" lust, conceit, restlessness and (very subtle) ignorance.

How to overcome praise and blame? What are the drawbacks, danger, and escape with regards to praise and blame? How does one see them? I can list the drawbacks on a mundane level, but I'm tired of mundane stuff.

It's essentially the same as with feeling in general. Do your best to completely understand feeling in the utmost general sense and your gratuitous attitude of welcoming and resisting it, and you become a stream-enterer (you don't become an Arahant yet), meaning you will be able to endure praise and dispraise without being affected. Then do the same thing again, you become an Anāgāmi eventually. Repeat once more, and *then* you become an Arahant, completely unaffected.

So there's nothing special you need to do in this case, and it's not like you need to stop experiencing displeasure when other people criticize you or feeling pleased when they praise you, because that's not on you. What is on you is the lack of context of that feeling not being in your control, which will then mean that if it changes, if suddenly everyone begins to think you're an idiot, you will suffer. If the context in regard to feeling is established, then no matter how nice it feels to be praised or annoying to be criticized, there would be no suffering.

Elated by causes of pleasure,
cast down by causes of pain,
fools are destroyed by both,
not seeing them for what they are.

While those who, **in the midst of pleasure and pain**

have gone past the “seamstress” that is craving
stand firm like a pillar,
neither elated nor dejected.

Gain or loss
status or honor,
praise or blame,
pleasure or pain:

Everywhere they are not “stuck”
like a water drop on a lotus
Everywhere they are happy, the wise
everywhere undefeated.

-Theragāthā 14.2

Re: The Foundational Reality of Humans as Primates, and the Justifiability of the Path

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-11-14 11:34:32

Replying to u/DhammaGhoul's reply to my question on this thread:

I mean, what else is on offer exactly? We observe what appears to be other entities existing independently of our perception, or at least are part of consensus reality. We observe that they have occasional mutations that affect biology or behavior. We know that various environmental demands for survival and reproduction are more or less favorable for some of the newly cropped up traits. Because they are more favorable to survival and reproduction those traits get reproduced at a higher frequency and slowly spread across the population and over time form organisms with bodies and behaviors exquisitely tailored to their environment niche. Those behaviors seem to include aversion to harm or loss of resources and seeking out of benefit (or sex) and acquisition of resources.

Sure, but ultimately none of this proves that there is not a “foundational reality” (of the Four Noble Truths) *in regard to all of this* which you are talking about and which is infinitely more fundamental than it.

You could argue a solipsistic or extreme idealism view that the material world is nothing like our perceptions and so all of that biological evolutionary conjecture is built on sand, but this seems rather odd to me and I'm not sure how it provides reason for behaving with non-harm towards these fake people and

animals. Or you could argue for some sort of creationism, but I don't see good reason to believe in that and lots of reason to believe in the contrary.

Yes, and that solipsism would be built on sand too.

Here's the gist of it:

All of us are entirely biological entities.

This does not invalidate the Dhamma; rather, it makes practicing it not optional if one seeks one's own welfare.

The behaviors and biological drives that you describe are an undeniable reality of *even* in the Arahant's experience, and there is basically no need to deny anything that science says as far as the body, biology and chemistry go (except when it gets into the realm of "explaining" consciousness and the mind, at which point it necessarily fails to be coherent, given that you would be (mis)using it to explain that which you're using to (mis)use science to try to explain that which you're using...)

A male or female Anāgāmi or Arahant perceives a prospective mate or a meal if they're hungry, and their body still reacts on a physiological level, and, if you insist, you could argue that this has been conditioned by millions of years of evolution (although the Suttas give a different story of how the world and humans came about, but we can put that aside for now), and they have no say in it for as long as their body lasts. And whatever processes take place "in the brain" when they perceive something disagreeable, say when they hear insults directed at them or come into contact with repulsive things, are also not in their control.

Every single phenomenon that serves as the *basis* for delight and aversion arises due to chemicals in your body, if you want to say it that way. This is why you won't be having even the pressure to think certain thoughts until you've gone through puberty, for example, or when you're gravely ill as an adult.

The Buddha tended to summarize all this with the following sort of statement:

"Form, Rādhā, is impermanent/suffering/nonself, feeling is impermanent/suffering/nonself, perception is impermanent/suffering/nonself, volitional formations are impermanent/suffering/nonself, consciousness is impermanent/suffering/nonself.

And "Māra", whose existence we also don't need to take on trust, or whom we could, for all intents and purposes, call "Mother Nature", expressed the same thing in different words.

So, in brief, everyone's problem on this earth, including animals, is that they are a *victim* to their biology/internal chemistry. This is a problem because, fundamentally, it is impossible to guarantee that one will always be able to satisfy these biological urges, and the actions one is forced to undertake in order to quell them put one at risk of experiencing loss and displeasure that would not be there otherwise (this is not the most fundamental reason why sensuality is harmful, but it should suffice for this discussion).

What the Suttas are offering us is the way to cultivate the understanding of “gratification, danger and escape” with regard to our biology, so that despite still feeling a shadow of the impulse to engage in the behaviors that biology dictates necessary, we are entirely at ease with saying “no” if we know that they’ll lead to suffering (i.e., if they’re rooted in passion or aversion). In other words, we not only stop listening to our biology in cases where lust, aversion, and distraction are involved, but we also learn to no longer resist the displeasure that arises on account of this, which was the entire cause of the suffering, *not* the fact that the biological urges were being unmet (*craving*, not *feeling*, is the root of suffering).

This is basically why the Suttas refer to the 4 paths and fruits and even samādhi states as “**superhuman** attainments”. It’s not mere poetry.

name *any* behavior you engage in between waking up in the morning and going to sleep at night that is not governed, fundamentally, by the “three poisons” (or at least the craving/aversion poles). Are there any at all? Look closely at the best candidate example- is there not a subtle pleasure being sought or discomfort being avoided? Aside from involuntary responses (sneezing, etc) I can think of none. [...] My concern is that I’m not sure freedom from craving and aversion is really a possibility for biological organisms in our planet.

This is losing sight of the forest for the trees, and it’s very common among modern Buddhists. People would resolve to not change posture even if their knee hurts during a meditation session in the name of “not acting out of aversion”, while in their daily life they don’t bat an eye when they engage in actions of a blatantly unwholesome kind (i.e., rooted in passion or aversion, even if not outright immoral).

There are fundamentally only five things (explained in MN 76) that an Arahant is incapable of doing, and those are the things that one categorically needs to abstain from in order to practice towards that goal. Why is that? Because they’re the things that *cannot* be done without taking ownership of your biological drives. Basically any other action can *at least in principle* be performed while still seeing the drive towards it as “not mine” (which is practically measured by how the Arahant’s mind wouldn’t suffer at all if the arisen bodily urge went unmet; that is not to say that no feeling of displeasure would arise, since even affectivity, not only “sensations”, is inseparable from one’s physiology, and craving is something additional to that).

The main issue when people bring up biology in the context of Dhamma is that they use it to justify indulgence in their desires, as if evolutionary conditioning and whatnot absolves them from responsibility for the actions *they* choose to make when their bodies try to coerce them to. But if we can take our biological conditioning as a given, while *also* recognizing that we are utterly and fundamentally free to choose to give in to it or not, regardless of how hard it tries to assert itself, then the Middle Way becomes intelligible at least in principle.

The only thing that really needs to be taken on faith in the beginning is that if you continue to restrain your *choices* without trying to suppress the biological drives themselves, at some point you will stop experiencing even a desire to act out of those drives *while*

the drives remain. That's because initially it will inevitably seem like the pressure of the bodily drive and the mental inclination to succumb to it are one and the same thing. But fortunately they aren't.

Edit: Updated on May 2024 for style and conciseness.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 13:23:05

I should also add: this is why the Buddha always regarded the going forth “in one's youth, in the prime of life, with fully black hair” as more beneficial, and completely disagreed with the common Indian view that the holy life should be lived *after* enjoying sensual pleasures and growing old.

The “drives”, “reactions to pheronomes”, “impulses” have become weaker by that time, and thus it is more difficult to measure what really needs to be done: i.e., make the mind completely dispassionate *while* those things are there.

An old person can much more easily dupe themselves into thinking they don't have much craving and possess equanimity.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 23:53:36

Reply to u/Various-Junket-3631:

So while it is tempting to say that these symptoms will last for the remainder of my life (and into the next lives), I can't definitively say that they will, even if I have the sense that they will. And yet I am not bothered by this. In any case, I am not sure how to describe or explain the “permanence” of the stream enterer's attainment. I would like to hear your thoughts.

That is a good criteria for what actually constitutes stream entry and not simply a mundane insight. One needs to have understood the fundamental nature of experience in such a way that one is perfectly certain that, if one's memory were to be wiped or one were to get Alzheimer's, there is no way that the insight would be forgotten. This is because only such an insight has gone beyond “the All”, beyond the range of “Mother Nature”, and by extension, beyond saṃsāra.

One can technically have understood the body and so on even as an ordinary person, but for as long as this knowledge of the body depends on a specific *thought or memory*, one's understanding is still “biological”, i.e. tied to this specific form, and will thus perish when it does.

Note that I am not equating freedom here to some mystical truth behind the 6 senses that is “beyond description”. It is something that one would be able to both see for oneself beyond doubt and also accurately elucidate phenomenologically in many ways, which is all the Buddha did for 45 years.

Then there is the question of actually being reborn as a stream enterer. Anathapindaka notably was reborn as a deva and was even heard to praise Sariputta. However I see both knowledge and memory as conditioned. It has struck me as quite odd that someone might be reborn with knowledge of dhamma. And yet the first question is cause for curiosity here.

A human would certainly not be “reborn” (I should note that this term and “rebirth” are actually inadequate, but I will continue to use them here for simplicity’s sake) with any knowledge of Dhamma at all. It would be a blank slate. Hence what I wrote above.

Since devas inhabit a naturally more elevated state of mind (citta), they also have unobstructed recall of many things that an ordinary human could not ever hope to remember. But that’s something one may choose to be agnostic on without repercussions, and focus instead on the fact that things can only be remembered as a result of this body having a functioning nervous system (which would begin to reveal the impermanence of everything, including the fruits of Dhamma practice that are still not “on the right level” as in a noble disciple).

After all, wouldn’t such a person be capable of assuming a Buddha’s position in the next life if this were the case?

A noble disciple assuming a Buddha’s position later on would not be possible. A Buddha is defined by the fact that he finds the way out without anybody’s help, and that is simultaneously the reason why his wisdom (if we put aside claims of psychic powers and such) is far beyond what anyone else could attain. The fact that a Buddha discovers the Dhamma by himself, transcends “Mother Nature” without any outside help, **and** is able to then teach it well (unlike a Paccekabuddha) acts as a filter to ensure that whoever achieves that will have to be a one-of-a-kind individual.

So perhaps it is something else that persists beyond rebirth—this detachment maybe?

You could say it that way, but it is inherently impossible for one to understand what that “detachment” is without noble insight. That’s because up until that point, whatever one calls “detachment” is ultimately still biologically determined, and is linked to the memories and notions that have been accumulated in this body, even if, with the proper functioning of the body as condition, such notions seem to remain steadily of their own accord.

Now a comment on “rebirth” in general:

The reason why I said the term itself is inaccurate is because it creates a connotation that your “soul” or something along those lines, sort of “went” somewhere after “leaving” this body (and we may imagine some sort of smoke or ray of light rising out of our corpse after we die and entering a fertilized egg in another part of the world immediately). The Buddha would’ve ridiculed this idea, and it’s not how it works. Even the term “new life” is questionable, and neither this nor “rebirth” actually exist in Pāli.

An account of how a noble disciple would be totally confident about the existence of past and future lives could be made in the following way:

Transparent, bhikkhus, is this mind, but it is defiled by adventitious defilements. The uninstructed worldling does not understand this as it really is; therefore I say that for the uninstructed worldling there is no development of the mind.”

“Transparent, bhikkhus, is this mind, and it is freed from adventitious defilements. The instructed noble disciple understands this as it really is; therefore I say that for the instructed noble disciple there is development of the mind.”
—AN 1.51-52 (my translation)

This is not referring to some mystical, luminous mental image, but to the understanding of the fundamental structure of existence. When one learns how to overcome the five hindrances, which is what makes one a noble disciple, one gets to see that whatever can be called a “defilement” is actually gratuitous, as in, there is no inherent reason why it has to be there at all, and once you recognize that, *it can't be there*.

To give a practical example, going back to the topic of biological drives, when your mind is overcome by the desire induced by the smell of your favorite food, if that mind is not developed, it will automatically fall prey to that pull, not necessarily through coarse actions, but mentally at the very least. Even if you do your very best to restrain yourself, there would still be a tacit assumption that *the pull itself* is the defilement.

(continued below)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 23:53:51

But the noble disciple has fully understood that the defilement there is *not* the force of attraction experienced by the body towards the food, but rather their tacit **assumptions** (*upādāna*) in regard to that force (assumptions of “mine”, fundamentally, which is the only way that it can be felt necessary to satisfy the urge in any way).

The fundamental nature of assumption is that it's there because the truth has never been known. You cannot at some specific point begin to assume that the Earth even theoretically could be flat (as the ancients did), unless you have never gone into outer space and seen it. If you assume that at all, you have been assuming it always, even before you ever explicitly thought about it. All assumptions are inherently *beginningless* in that sense. Similarly, assumptions cannot come to an end by themselves, without a new piece of knowledge being introduced into the picture.

In this way, a noble disciple would be able to know, through an inference made possible only by their new understanding, that there cannot possibly have been a first point to this situation of being pressured by biological/bodily impulses and tacitly assuming them as “mine” (not even as an embryo, where the word “mine”, “pressure”, “assumption”, and all abstract concepts for that matter, were beyond their grasp). It's impossible that at one point he would've not been ignorant, and then he *became* ignorant, because it's an

ignorance of the most overarching kind that encompasses one's entire existence from top to bottom. It's not like the ignorance of the meaning of a passage in a book or of somebody's name, which can come to be when before it was not. Such is the case only for ignorance that happens *within* biology/the body/aggregates, whereas the fundamental *avijjā* is in regard to the nature of the aggregates as a whole.

Edit: Updated in May 2024 for style and conciseness.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 16:19:54

Related reply: <https://reddit.com/comments/17s4wti/comment/k9czock>

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 04:35:40 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

This “superhuman” understanding that is not dependent on biology - as I currently see it - is known as such precisely because it contains the domain of thought itself (i.e. the peripheral image of the body is itself dependent upon a nature that is always necessarily “one step ahead” of that image).

Yes, you could say at that point you are not even “arranging” things on the level of thought, body, peripheral, image, etc. There simply is “this”, and no passion in regard to it, no matter what that “this” is. That “this” needs to apply to *everything* and *anything*, including any implications of the past and possibilities for the future.

Bhikkhus, do you see: ‘This is present?’ —“Yes, venerable sir.”—“Bhikkhus, do you see: ‘Its presence is with that as nutriment?’”—“Yes, venerable sir.”—“Bhikkhus, do you see: ‘With the cessation of that nutriment, is what is present subject to cessation?’”—“Yes, venerable sir.”

“Bhikkhus, does doubt arise when one is uncertain thus: ‘Is this present?’”—“Yes, venerable sir.”—“Bhikkhus, does doubt arise when one is uncertain thus: ‘Is its presence with that as nutriment?’”—“Yes, venerable sir.”—“Bhikkhus, does doubt arise when one is uncertain thus: ‘With the cessation of that nutriment, is what is present subject to cessation?’”—“Yes, venerable sir.”

—MN 38

(Note the absence of doubt, indicating these bhikkhus saw it clearly and must’ve had at least the Right View, thus needing no specific definition of what “this” is).

So:

An image *appears*, and to that extent it implies an enduring structure fully outside of one's ownership, which is always based *upon an appearance*.

Yes, that's what one needs to start seeing, by first trying to understand yoniso manasikāra intellectually and gradually learning how to depend on that theory less and less while still

very much seeing the principle on a concrete level. You basically want your understanding of the structure of experience and its unownability to transcend even the biological basis of memory and reasoning, which is the only way to be your own guide (sotapatti), and for that understanding to carry over even after you die.

(In the process of that, you would also cease to depend on things like phenomenology and existentialism, which are ultimately biologically-determined ways of making sense of the task to be done: overcoming your own very intellect while it's there).

The mind established on this structural level is no longer *subjected to* the coarser biological images and ideas of birth, death, dementia, “what-if” or “is it the same, different, or neither the same nor different?” etc.

You could say that ultimately the mind that truly sees Nibbāna is not even “established on a structural level”. That's why a sotapanna can become an Arahant at the moment of death if they make the effort and had enough wisdom beforehand.

The *structure in its entirety* is what needs to be overcome. Establishing the mind in a more fundamental aspect of the structure is what samādhi and jhāna is, not Nibbāna.

Edit: Updated for style and conciseness.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 15:11:01 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

It would indeed be a misunderstanding to take the fact that your citta is not within your 6 senses to be a good thing. Literally, if you were to have only 6 senses and no citta, or if they were to intermingle, there would be no issue at all (and you wouldn't exist either).

All your suffering is due to your citta, and the main problem is that you can never directly control it like you can turn your head, not even as a result of practice. You can only train it to do what's good for you, but because even if you “train it” it's still a separate entity, so to speak, you can never actually take any form of refuge in it. Or rather, you'd better not try to.

You can reflect on how no matter how much control you may exert, you don't know if you'll be in a good mood one hour from now. That's because neither the sense objects nor the way your citta responds to them is in your control. Your actions and control are *made possible* by the experience of sense objects, and choosing certain actions (restraint, recollection of right context, avoidance of unnecessary exposure to temptations) over others indirectly tames the citta.

[This here is related.] (<https://reddit.com/comments/17909gs/comment/k580iqb>)

Edit: Also, the fact that the citta is not in your control does turn into a good thing once you develop it. That's why we say when the mind is developed, unwholesome things and craving cannot arise “even if you want them to” (similar to what I wrote above about how whatever an Arahant does cannot rooted in craving, even if they were to start doing stuff that would agitate a normal person when there is a purpose).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 23:09:30 (in reply to a comment not included)

So, it sounds like from what you're saying that a puthujjana must by necessity always act (when acting at all) out of craving and aversion, **but that the gradual path is one of choosing the lesser cravings and aversions wherever possible?**

Not quite; I would expect to hear that from contemporary Buddhists generally, who are far from the Middle Way.

What I am getting at here is that “lesser” craving and aversion will be truly and ultimately determined by a more developed mind. There is no way to *truly* have less craving apart from that, and that is something one does not have direct control over. One can only cease to *fuel* craving, pretty much. One cannot “have less of it” from one moment to the next by simply choosing a different action.

The idea that a different action can be said to involve “less craving” is founded still in the notion that actions somehow carry their own intrinsic properties in terms of wholesome and unwholesome. They don't (even the 5 precepts and celibacy are pre-determined as out of bounds for an Arahant not because of the *actions* but because of the mental attitude they necessitate beforehand) and choosing to, say, contemplate the Dhamma, read Suttas and keep the precepts will not be rooted less in craving than the occasion when the same person goes and acts out of lust or aversion. Hence the person who regularly commits actions which *fuel* craving, would be doing the former inadvertently with a very different attitude than the person who has been abstaining from such actions for a long time, and there is absolutely no way that they would be able to tell, because for a puthujjana craving is “hidden” (because they don't know how to recognize it right in front of their nose, not because it's “subconscious” or something like that).

In other words, their *Dhamma practice* would be that much more affected with sensuality and craving, illustrated for example by how they may choose to invest effort in things like setting up a beautiful shrine or trying to inform everyone they can about how wonderful Buddhism is.

So you could say the gradual path is one of choosing things that will inevitably be rooted in the same amount of craving, but will not be fueling the craving *in the mind*, so that as the obstacles (5 hindrances) to understanding gradually diminish over time, and one is also making effort to recognize the lack of benefit in the actions that one has for the moment only superficially abandoned, eventually the recognition that the mind is fundamentally “transparent” can take root, as I explained above, and *then* a person can have less craving in the ultimate sense. Before that, we can speak of “less craving” in an ordinary person only inasmuch as the present circumstance is not arousing it (which is good, one should set up one's circumstances in order to have less symptoms of craving to deal with, without falling into the extreme of running away from everything).

Fundamentally, the same degree of craving is always there, waiting to spring into action, unless superhuman attainments are present (including the jhānas which can be attained

by a puthujjana without ceasing to be one in rare cases). What can happen for an ordinary person is that the craving “moves” from one thing to another (e.g. a still ignoble Dhamma practice), the new thing being inherently less risky and less impermanent, and thus there is less suffering felt. Or it “spreads out” over more things, so to speak. Thus, the “symptoms” of the illness can be allayed, almost without limit (which is what happens in anyone who is skilled at contemporary meditation, pretty much), without the actual illness changing one bit.

The illness of craving cannot *actually* diminish without at least a true jhāna, “true” being defined by its transcendence of the entire “All” without getting rid of anything within it, hence the Buddha compared it to Nibbāna in the AN 9.47 I’ve been quoting, meaning that there is no room for craving to “shift” somewhere else within that All, and so it has no choice but to *actually* decrease.

This is why such a person would probably not become a stream-enterer, but an anāgāmi upon hearing the Dhamma for the first time if they were skilled in the practice of jhāna (whose very development would have resulted in stream entry long ago in *most* cases if they’d received Buddhist instruction).

Furthermore,

Thank you Bhante, I always enjoy your writing and I appreciate you adopting the frame reference

Sure, but I would also point out that it’s not just “a frame of reference” in the sense that it needs to be taken as a provisional way of approaching the Dhamma, or that I sacrificed accuracy here in order to present a compelling argument (which would be counterproductive). You could literally use this as your framework from now onwards and it wouldn’t make a difference from the way traditional Buddhists think in terms of obstructing you from understanding the Dhamma, for as long as you never forget the part I wrote about how biological drives are never justifications for *actions*, and that the latter are always utterly in one’s responsibility (this is the “Mundane Right View”).

This goes to show that the Dhamma is a “foundational reality” that will continue to apply *regardless* of what sort of “reality” you believe in, so to speak. Whoever says that the belief in the reality that a traditional Buddhist puts their trust in, shaped by cosmological principles and by assertions that scientists would generally roll their eyes at is somehow necessary has not understood what the Dhamma actually is. Fundamentally, that belief of theirs, being not rooted in knowledge-and-vision, is to the exact same extent rooted in the minuscule threshold of recognition of what the physical world is that I mentioned above, they are simply choosing to go in one direction instead of the other.

So to finish off, I would mainly advise not to try to interpret all this according to anything you’ve heard been touted as “Buddhism” before. It would lead to confusion.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-16 00:20:06 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I recall Buddha telling that a puthujjana can only have two views in regards to the self - annihilationism and eternalism.

That is true.

I am falling prey to the second one. I don't even know if this line of reasoning is something I should continue with since honestly I can't even discern where this citta is and signs of it.

That's because you're still most likely trying to "wrap your head around it". That will never work, because your head and your citta are not in the same domain (literally, your mind is not "in your head").

It could also be that if you think it's leading you to "eternalism" then it's because of a misunderstanding of what eternalism and annihilationism are, which is necessarily concomitant with the adherence to either of them (for otherwise they are both transcended). For example, Buddhists who have the view that anicca and anattā are about things having "no substance" and being "empty of intrinsic essence" (lord knows whatever that even means), that "nothing really exists", would hear us saying that there is a citta that is outside of the impermanent 6 senses and they would automatically accuse us of eternalism and Advaita Vedanta. That's because their criterion of what eternalism is is misguided, and what they're genuinely conceiving of as the Middle Way between the two is actually still a subtle form of annihilationism.

As you yourself mentioned, this is inevitable, but if one is aware of it then one will not obstruct one's progress on account of it.

The main problem problem as a puthujjana is one expects an easy way out of dukkha that one can simply "agree" with without partaking in it already, and that's why one is unable to endure the pressure to fall into one of the two extremes, no matter how hard one tries, and even if one is, say, the Buddha's personal attendant who knows everything he ever said and studies it intensely. That's just how ignorance works, and recognizing that "confinement" within blindness motivates one to at least stop fueling it.

As to the citta:

Can't say for sure, but it's also possible that you may be exaggerating your interpretation of when we say that it cannot be grasped as an object all the way to that it *cannot be grasped*, period. That would certainly result in eternalism.

Now, you *are* eternally paired with your citta if you don't get the Right View, but that doesn't mean what the ordinary person thinks it means. It doesn't mean you will get to keep any of the things you are attached to, at all. It simply means you are forced to continue *experiencing experience* as such, without beginning and without end.

You could say there are five buckets, and all that is happening in your wandering through saṃsāra is the fact that those buckets are being emptied and refilled again. But the thing

is, what you would be pleased on account of it being eternal *is never the buckets*, it's that which is *in them* (meaning whatever manifests as form, perception, feeling, intention, consciousness, far or near, inferior or superior, etc.) And that will always get completely destroyed everytime you die, and you would be able to have only memories and perceptions of it if you develop your mind in the next life. You would never call even those memories "my self", as having them is not very pleasing at all, hence remembering them is the second higher knowledge in the Suttas resulting from the fourth jhāna which contributes to the dispassion necessary for the third, Arahantship.

Think of the citta as the background attitude that is present towards anything that has arisen. Related to the discussion here, your citta would become clear as day (without "grabbing" it as an object, which means it's not the citta) if you managed to understand that, despite how much your body might crave for certain objects, it is possible to **peripherally experience** that *entire phenomenon of the six sense base "pulling"*, allowing it to endure without denying it, as "a charcoal pit, deeper than a man's height."

You would then implicitly have gotten to see that there is something there upon which things only have a "delayed effect"—effect that accumulates based solely on your choices in regard to that world (having been restrained and contemplated the right context of danger long enough, in this case), unlike your 6 senses which are affected immediately by the pressure of objects, and there isn't much you can do to change that except avoid the objects or try to modify their significance (what we call "management", "psychotherapy", or alternatively "contemporary Buddhism"). This "cumulative effect" is what MN 19 refers to as the mind inclining to either type of thinking—meaning to either type of mood/background attitude, not to *objects*. Virtue in body and speech alone, which entails making choices that you authentically recognize you are fully responsible for, is already having such an "effect", hence it factually makes one live in less suffering, whereas a meditation technique modifies the *objects*, which is pointless.

But this citta that you incline in the right direction is ultimately unreliable and not a refuge, because the fact is, not being completely dispassionate towards it entails needing to make choices whether you like it or not, and that's oppressive. The citta having been tamed is the result of jhāna practice and Gradual Training, and that's why MN 64 describes how once that's developed, you then need to reflect upon *that* as "impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a barb, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self", so that now even the purified citta, that still entails a form of action that will put subtler forms of content within the five buckets in a future life, will be abandoned.

And:

I am hoping that things will become clearer with the gradual training.

Yes, on a more immediate level, if you want to get to not-ignore (as opposed to "see" or "figure out") the citta where it is, that's what you need to undertake (and non-company as well for prolonged periods). Essentially, for a puthujjana, which we could define as a person who cannot overcome the hindrances, the citta and the senses are like two panes of glass glued together. They're not supposed to be like that because they're *two*, not *one*, but

there is no first point at which they were separate and became joined. Gradual Training is the only thing that can begin to outline the fact that they are two. Otherwise, literally, whatever your body wants is what your citta wants and is allowed to go towards by default, and thus they remain glued together.

Edit: It's also useful to note that, in the end, the citta is a *structure*; it's not one unitary thing. We and the Suttas present it like that only for the sake of simplification. It will probably be abstract, but "Hierarchy of Awareness" in Meanings explains this in detail.

Since it's not a *unit*, you can't possibly take it to be "me" or "mine" unless you misconceive it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-16 23:06:40 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, citta is that which can be aware (not in some new-agey, mystical sense).

That's why not having "tamed" your citta through Gradual Training, not having trained it to stop delighting in company means you can't even practice recollection and awareness. It's not something that you get "meditation instructions" for and then just do it.

The latest talk goes into how *satisampajañña* is something that that "hierarchy" needs to do *on its own*, not something you're manipulating with your volition, which is how people usually do it. Even those who see the futility of techniques will be trying to "arrange" the reflexive hierarchy if they don't have the Right View,—the one that should actually be endured in order to practice sati.

But what is written in "Hierarchy of Awareness" will be unnecessarily abstract and complex for most people. I mentioned it only to illustrate that the citta is not some mystical entity and that its nature can be described phenomenologically. It's just that the ordinary person will be looking at the wrong place whenever they try to recognize it (due to the habits and actions that have made them even more dependent on the *objects* of the more "palpable" hierarchy).

At the end of the day, people will fail to recognize the hierarchy not because they couldn't wrap their head around the subject of the essay, but because of the insufficient un-absorption into the other hierarchy, diminished through none other than the Gradual Training.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-17 09:25:26 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The "pheromones" are not the arousal. Rather, it is the desire and lust in regard to the reaction the pheromones evoke that is the arousal there.

Bhante, is assumption (*upādāna*, sensuality being one of the 4 types) identical with the five aggregates affected by assumption, or is assumption separate

from the five aggregates affected by assumption?”

“Monk, assumption is not identical with the five aggregates affected by assumption, nor is assumption separate from the five aggregates affected by assumption. Monk, the desire and lust in regard to the five aggregates affected by assumption is the assumption there”.

—MN 109

Referring to my comment you linked with the Vinaya passage, it mentions that an Arahant is incapable of an erection due to sensual desire. That is correct.

This will sound outlandish to the average person, especially if they haven’t been living celibately for a long time, but that is because the bodily reaction to “pheromones” does not and cannot induce an erection by itself. What “pheromones” induce on the relevant level is a pleasant feeling that is actually painful, and on the irrelevant level things like “butterflies in your stomach” (irrelevant because bodily sensations have nothing to do with feelings—where the craving and suffering is—and instead they are within the aggregate of perception). None of that involves craving if the mind is developed, and it in fact reminds you of the fact that this primate existence is a charcoal pit in its entirety, allowing the mind to withdraw from it peripherally and be at ease.

That is why Ven. Anuruddha in this story still “withdrew his faculties” from the woman that was trying to seduce him. Nobody wants to get even closer to the charcoal pit than they already are simply due to having this body. It’s not because he was afraid of the pressure. Most Buddhists would instead think that for an Arahant this situation should be the same as looking at a sunset, and that he withdrew his faculties out of some puritanical sense of duty and actually did not perceive the significance because nothing really exists or whatever, and that’s because of the completely wrong view of what equanimity is that hopes to *destroy the aggregates*, not abandon passion for them.

Pheromones and the sighting of a potential mate in the human primate can lead to an erection only if their *citta* has a perversion of perception, where it perceives that pleasure as pleasant, instead of as painful as it truly is (the two links above)—and if it perceives the body as beautiful as opposed to ugly. Thus, that cannot happen for the Arahant.

“But here, Upavāṇa, having seen a form with the eye, a bhikkhu **experiences the form** without experiencing lust for the form. He understands that lust for forms does not exist internally thus: ‘There is in me no lust for forms internally.’ Since that is so, Upavāṇa, the Dhamma is directly visible, immediate, inviting one to come and see, applicable, to be personally experienced by the wise

—SN 35.70

The bodily reaction and pleasant feeling are *part of that form*, on the same “side” where the pheromones are; the feeling is not in “you”. The delight and lust that gives rise to the erection is that *internal* side, referring to the *citta* and its context.

That pleasant feeling is what needs to be “endured” with right perspective (because it will

come up through your thoughts once you start practicing correct sense restraint and stop actually *looking* of its underlying Dukkha nature until it “sinks in”, without denying one bit that on the surface it’s very pleasant and falling into aversion (thus losing the “right level”). But the truly worst is *acting out of the pleasure*, not necessarily the inability to practice on the right level right away. Acting out automatically means undoing whatever perspective of its Dukkha nature was there, and re-instating the perversion of context.

Perceiving permanence in the impermanent, perceiving pleasure in what is suffering, perceiving a self in what is non-self, and perceiving attractiveness in what is unattractive, beings resort to wrong views, their minds deranged, their perception twisted.

Such people are bound by the yoke of Māra, and do not reach security from bondage. Beings continue in saṃsāra, going to birth and death.

But when the Buddhas arise in the world, sending forth a brilliant light, they reveal this Dhamma that leads to the stilling of suffering.

Having heard it, wise people have regained their sanity. They have seen the impermanent as impermanent and what is suffering as suffering.

They have seen what is non-self as non-self and the unattractive as unattractive. **By the acquisition of right view**, they have overcome all suffering.

—AN 4.49

And it must of course be noted that none of this will be seen for oneself beyond theory unless one gets to understand the “transparency of the mind” that I referred to above, and that’s done through the Gradual Training. Without that, “pheromones = erection” will seem the most natural thing in the world.

So yes, one *has* to be confused if one is still a sensual person, in a way, because that’s how Māra/Mother Nature ends up the same way.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-17 12:42:51

None of that involves craving if the mind is developed, and it in fact reminds you of the fact that this primate existence is a charcoal pit in its entirety, allowing the mind to withdraw from it peripherally and be at ease.

Compare with:

“It is wonderful, Master Gotama, it is marvellous how when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assailed by discourteous courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened. I recall, Master Gotama, engaging Pūraṇa Kassapa in debate, and then he prevaricated, led the talk aside, and showed anger, hate, and bitterness. But when Master Gotama is spoken to offensively again and again, assaulted by discourteous

courses of speech, the colour of his skin brightens and the colour of his face clears, as is to be expected of one who is accomplished and fully enlightened.

It's the same principle. The bodily reaction to insults highlights the dispassion towards the body that doesn't like to be insulted, and that in turn makes the citta be relieved of the burden to the same extent if the body has been fully understood as unownable.

Focusing practices make you more delicate instead, and require absence of discomfort to succeed. A little sound of traffic or whatever is already too much.

And since for example monks who practice that also happen to be the sort of people who haven't been spoken harshly to in decades, it's very easy for them to think they're equanimous.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-28 00:00:28 (in reply to a comment not included)

The point there was not that there is a distinction between two types of craving, but that one needs to know where the craving actually is and its true nature.

The thing is that, when a puthujjana tries to “look” at craving, they by definition cannot see it. All they see is basically already the *result* of craving being there.

So you only get to recognize what craving is and how it's “fueled” by learning to *indirectly* recognize it—meaning it's not an “object” like everything else you're used to—in its nature of something that has nothing to do with your experience in itself but nevertheless depends upon it and is “aimed” at it. That's important because when a puthujjana thinks of craving, ultimately they're bringing to mind an (un)pleasant *feeling* only, unaware of the true craving part. Like how some dedicated meditators would have an aversion to a lot of talking and lively discussions, as that gives rise to a more intense form of **feeling** than remaining quiet and avoiding people. They would then think that such discussions (about Dhamma of course) are bad and the more silence the better, because talking “*increases their craving*”, unable to see that the craving part is gratuitous “on top of” the more intense feeling and does not need to be there. Whenever they “see” feeling, they are unable not to bring the craving along into that picture, and thus the practice and “peace” revolves around just preventing certain feelings (and that can go up to such a subtle level that it would not even be noticeable).

(Obviously, restraint in regard to speech and noble silence are an integral part of the path. The problem is the *internal* ignorant and unrecognized attitude that feelings that are caused by certain circumstances, which you will inevitably have to experience from time to time, are somehow an issue and obstruction in themselves.)

Through *recognizing* that craving where it is—in your *attitude* towards things as opposed to in things that have arisen on their own, including feelings—you get to see that feelings caused by any circumstance, strong or weak, can be there without any craving present. By not seeing this, affairs of the body—“the pressure” as we call it, which happens “to” the

6 senses and ultimately should never touch the mind—is being conflated with (and thus infused with) craving, hence one does not discern the craving “in the citta” as I put it.

And what would be an example or two of things that are rooted in same amount of craving but not fueling it in the mind?

That would be keeping the precepts, sense restraint, studying the Dhamma, contemplating what you learn, avoiding company and distractions, etc. Basically the Gradual Training. I say that they “don’t fuel” the craving instead of saying that they “decrease it” because you can do all that for a million years and not get anywhere if you don’t start recognizing that “level” where the craving is, ceasing to confuse it with the pressures and feelings that have nothing to do with you. Also in the sense that simply doing those things, even blindly to some degree, starts to put a lid on the default ways by which one proliferates one’s already-rampant confusion of feelings with craving, which happens primarily through the actions of lust, aversion and distraction that adherence to the Gradual Training prevents.

In the end, that’s why an Arahant is indistinguishable from a puthujjana to another puthujjana. It’s not that they are always in every situation *doing* something special and different that the rest of the world doesn’t do (which is how the ignorant mind expects to recognize who’s enlightened), but that *whatever* they do with their body, and every action is a kind of “involvement” with sense-pressure, cannot possibly have craving “in the mind” as its underlying basis.

And it is because of the lack of that underlying basis that an Arahant cannot do things like have sex. It’s not because they are somehow constricting the range of their choices through willpower (which is how the attachment to virtue and practices practically manifests).

Introduction to Buddhism

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** RajiRG 2023-11-14 09:52:55

Hi all, new to this channel and very grateful for all your input.

Was wondering if you are able to recommend a book or series of essays for a person who is new to Buddhism.

I feel may be Ajahn Nyanmolis books would be too deep in terms of the content for somebody who’s starting out?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 00:12:31

I feel may be Ajahn Nyanmolis books would be too deep in terms of the content for somebody who’s starting out?

Perhaps, if the person is not yet standing at the point where they recognize that there is an inherent problem with their existence that will not by any means be easily solved. It’s

unbeneficial to “knock on people’s door”, so to speak, so to offer them deep Dhamma like a Jehovah’s Witness.

If that’s the case, you can introduce them to “Buddhism” in a very general sense, but you would also need to understand that their desire to find out what the Buddha actually taught would largely be dependent on the degree to which they feel an urge to solve that “inherent problem” that’s too strong to ignore.

It’s fine for the multitude to learn about “general Buddhism”, and that’s what one may pass on to one’s parents, for example (but after trimming away from it many of the modern wrong views, such as that meditation techniques and not wholesome behavior of body, speech and mind are what lead to peace, that if other Buddhists do something it’s ok for one to do it too, that we are already enlightened, that laypeople will be spared from suffering if they cultivate craving because they are laypeople, etc.)

A watered-down version of Buddhism that at least removes these rotten parts will be much better than any other philosophy a person who is not interested in freedom might choose to adhere to.

You Cannot Get What You Want

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** kellerdellinger 2023-11-14 00:44:42

I could write disparate argumentative comments about the philosophy of science, epistemology, metaphysics, ethics, and the relationship between all of those things. But these days, I don’t see much of a point in existential polemics or evangelism. The only fundamental reason why people don’t want to follow the Buddha’s teachings in a more authentic and radical way is because they want to indulge in sensuality. Their commitment to scientific metaphysics is only a vehicle for avoiding the possibility of losing out on all the “goodies” that contemporary society provides them if they were to take up ascetic (or not-so-ascetic) religiosity. At first glance, this seems like a reasonably safe play, since the validity of the scientific metaphysic is validated every time they turn on the TV and all other metaphysical systems always seem to hinge on the (assumed) distant epistemic event known as death. (I’m not afraid of death, I just don’t want to be there when it happens!)

The problem with this contemporary global ideological default option, hedonistic materialism, is that it simply doesn’t work. It never works. It has never worked. The extent to which it works is precisely the extent to which you ignore the fact that it doesn’t work. With ignorance, there is craving. With craving, there is suffering.

Let me explain.

I think: I want to touch that butt.

I touch the butt.

Reflection: Wait a minute. That wasn’t what I wanted. I wanted to touch the butt that I was

thinking about, not the one that I am now touching. One was a thought, an idealization, and the other is a tactile sensation. The butt that I touched and the butt that I thought about touching are *not* the same thing. I wanted the beautiful thing in my head and all I got was this stupid meat sack! This wasn't part of the deal!

Māra: I am altering the deal. Pray I don't alter it any further.

...He always does...but we are back to the butt. Well, at least I have *this* butt and not that lump of dung Ajahn Chah was always going on about...I know! I will change my idea of what I want to perfectly suit that which I now have! And I will pretend to myself that that is what I wanted all along and that there is absolutely no problem here at all! Butts of all kinds are accepted here! Even...this fleshy one that...despite grasping it I cannot...quite...*have* it, pin it down, like I *want*...I keep needing to think about new ways to touch it so that it doesn't get...boring...cause then I would have to *think* about...life...Nope! No problem here! No problem at all! Take that, Māra!

This recognition, the recognition of the futility of any project of attempting to glean satisfaction from the world, is available to anyone and everyone at any time. It is the most immediately available yet utterly terrifying reflection there is. Reflecting deeply in this way, you will no longer care about physics or rebirth or the ethics and epistemology of suicide. You will be met with the emotions that the existential philosophers wrote of. Anxiety. Angst. Vertigo. Nausea. You will come into direct contact with the primordial, groundless horror of your existence. And when you do, you will in that moment be prepared to listen to what the Buddha had to say.

Suffering and the end of suffering.

If you reflect in this way often enough, it will become clear that *none* of what is on offer in the mundane world is of *any* value. And so long as you do not give in to the temptation of suicide or a descent into insanity, so long as a Buddha has arisen in the world and made clear the resolution to the problem which you still only have an unclear but deeply pressing awareness of, you *will* eventually arrive at the Dhamma. There is no other possibility. This is the final destination, the end of the road, where radicals with nothing to lose may dig their teeth into something that is at least not completely speculative or completely nauseating.

Life is too short for metaphysics. Seek the Dhamma as if you have nothing to lose. Because, in truth, you don't.

It always turns to dust in your mouth...

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 11:57:08 (in reply to a comment not included)

In the meantime, though, maybe I can ask a related question—

The central theme you seem to be hitting on here is hedonistic materialism and the associated problems of anticipatory affective forecasting bias and the

hedonistic treadmill effect that render it ultimately unsatisfactory. But what is your opinion on more “prosocial” outlets for satisfaction?

I know that HH holds a view of Metta that differs from most contemporary accounts, and that they see it as more of a simple attitude of non-aversion and non-ill will, so I’m not asking you about this with Metta as justification, but just as a stand-alone topic.

Playing with children, caring for someone ill, laughter with friends and family, generosity, an attitude of love, scratching behind a dog’s ear, etc... do you think that actions of a more relational and less self-oriented nature could exhibit greater resistance to the hedonic adaptation seen in more material or sexual pursuits? Subjectively this seems to be the case for me, and social connections often show a sustained positive impact on well-being. Thoughts?

This reply I wrote recently (the second half), coupled with my post, may address your question.

question for Bhikkhu Anigha (extracted from another conversation)

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Brian-the-Barber 2023-11-13 15:53:51

is the samadhi of the layman (based on sila, etc) considered ‘sammāsamadhi?’ I know (from SN55.25-Sarakani Sutta) that a dhamma follower or faith follower possesses the faculty of samadhi (as well as the rest of the five faculties) without being a sotapanna. I guess I’d ask the same about their sati, panna, etc.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 22:31:18

is the samadhi of the layman (based on sila, etc) considered ‘sammāsamadhi?’ I know (from SN55.25-Sarakani Sutta) that a dhamma follower or faith follower possesses the faculty of samadhi (as well as the rest of the five faculties) without being a sotapanna.

Good to bring this up. This actually proves further some of our oft-repeated statements of how people should not consider themselves to be practicing the Dhamma or having the five faculties yet in order to start off on the right foot towards actually acquiring them (they are absent in the puthujjana as per SN 48.15 and all the Suttas in that series, as well as others elsewhere).

The most comprehensive description of what the faith- and Dhamma follower are is the entire SN 25.

Sāvattṁhī. “Bhikkhus, the eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The ear ... The nose ... The tongue ... The body ... The mind is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. **One who places faith in these teachings**

and resolves on them thus is called a faith-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, **entered the plane of superior persons (ariyabhūmi), transcended the plane of the worldlings (puthujjanabhūmi)**. He is incapable of doing any deed by reason of which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal realm, or in the domain of ghosts; **he is incapable of passing away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry**.

“One for whom these teachings are accepted thus after being pondered to a sufficient degree with wisdom is called a Dhamma-follower, one who has entered the fixed course of rightness, entered the plane of superior persons, transcended the plane of the worldlings. He is incapable of doing any deed by reason of which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal realm, or in the domain of ghosts; he is incapable of passing away without having realized the fruit of stream-entry.

“One who knows and sees these teachings thus is called a stream-enterer, no longer bound to the nether world, fixed in destiny, with enlightenment as his destination.”

—SN 25.1 [one of these two is what Sarakani himself was; *technically* he had sotapatti-path, not sotapatti-fruit].

What follows from this is that, unless a person is willing to declare themselves to be permanently free from the lower realms and belong to the plane of ariyas, one cannot even assume oneself to have “placed faith in these teachings and resolved on them”. That will have to be either because one doesn’t know where to look when the Buddha says “**the eye is...**” (or any of the other phenomena mentioned in the other 9 suttas of this Samyutta) or because one has not sufficiently clarified what “is impermanent, becoming otherwise” and so on means, and one possibly takes it to be some sort of “constant flux” of particles or lack of “**Real Substance**” in things.

The first shortcoming is resolved by learning to grasp the hints of the mind, which requires non-delight in company (AN 6.68) and of course virtue and sense restraint without which true seclusion is not possible, hence it always comes *later* in the Gradual Training (see the post “signs of the mind” on the sub).

As I’ve been mentioning a lot recently, people in the Buddha’s time obviously didn’t have to go through this first step, but that’s because they already recognized the hints of their mind naturally more than the average person today (how many people nowadays would listen to a Dhamma talk like this and react to it in the way Potaliya did, considering he seems not to actually have become a sotapanna but simply an ordinary follower? Most would start immediately grasping at straws to find fault with what the Buddha is saying).

The second shortcoming is overcome by striving to abandon wrong views and cultivating right views, and that is done by reading the Suttas carefully and honestly and studying Dhamma materials that do not contradict them.

As to the samādhi, sati and paññā of such a person, it’s not at all that they’re doing some sort of “method” to see that for example the eye is impermanent, and to purify their minds

from obstructions by contemplating that (which they can do, and that's their samādhi; the "method" part is what is gratuitous). As it says, they simply either *have faith* in that or have pondered accurately on its meaning, and they would be able to recognize it on the most general level of their existence, not just when they're sitting quietly cross legged or been on retreat for a while (which they might even not be able to do if they're busy householders as many were, including kings and extremely wealthy people).

This makes it sound like anyone can become one of these two followers and that it's too easy, but the real takeaway here is that even faith in the Dhamma and an truly accurate understanding resulting from pondering on it are **way** harder to achieve than people realize.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 22:37:15 (in reply to a comment not included)

Adhering so dogmatically to the tiniest nuance of these elaborate constructs strikes me as only possible when one loses sight of the foundational reality of our situation on this planet.

How are we sure that what you are referring to here as "foundational reality" *really* is foundational reality and not just another elaborate construct? Does the fact that science has provided us with immensely useful technology serve to prove that fact, or would you be able to offer a better argument in support of that assumption?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 12:08:14 (in reply to a comment not included)

Is lay followers who only follow based on faith still will be guaranteed stream entry?

Yes. But the point I made is that both faith and intellectual understanding are incredibly more difficult to acquire than what people assume. It's not about "agreeing" with what the teacher or the Buddha tells you for example. You need to *understand it* already to some degree (though a bit less than the dhamma-follower) in order for your faith to be properly directed.

If you don't understand what "the eye is impermanent" is even referring to, you can't possibly have faith in it.

Since it *absolutely guarantees* one to eventually become an Arahant within 7 existences at most, there is nothing harder in this universe than putting faith in the view that the eye is impermanent (or any of the other ways of phrasing the insight all throughout SN 25). The journey towards Arahantship becomes like that of a ship naturally being pushed by the wind in the right direction once you "just" put faith in that.

"Just as that tender calf just born, being urged on by its mother's lowing, also breasted the stream of the Ganges and got safely across to the further shore,

so too, those bhikkhus who are Dhamma-followers and faith-followers—by breasting Māra’s stream they too will get safely across to the further shore.

“Bhikkhus, I am skilled in this world and in the other world, skilled in Māra’s realm and in what is outside Māra’s realm, skilled in the realm of Death and in what is outside the realm of Death. It will lead to the welfare and happiness for a long time of those who think they should listen to me and place faith in me.”

—MN 34

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 12:57:53 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I made the same point in one comment sometime this week.

Since this has escalated to the point of being barely on topic, it would be good if you could find a way to formulate your doubts and post it on the newest thread I made. This is a dilemma which many people who approach the Dhamma may face so I’d like to address it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 04:48:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

This talk is one example.

Although, don’t put *too much* emphasis on trying to “wrap your head around it” right away, and instead, as I wrote, recognize that sense restraint is what begins to reveal to you what “the eye” even is.

Otherwise, when you think about “the eye” you will be thinking about *an object*, even if the definition of that object you are using is utterly and perfectly in accordance with the Suttas or very accurate phenomenology. Only actual sense restraint and not acting out is what starts to reveal to you that there is something in your experience that is *not* an object, and yet it’s very much there, meaning your sense organs that perceive pleasure and pain. You will never be able to “grab” your sense organs in the same way you can “grab” objects with your intellect, so to speak. But your discernment cultivated on the basis of Gradual Training would get to know their presence and their nature.

The fact that it’s not being seen on the “right level” is what prevents one from at least putting faith in it and becoming a faith-follower. It’s not primarily the fact that one didn’t hear the right instruction (not nowadays, at least).

You can also think of impermanence of the eye not just as the fact that the matter of your body will disintegrate (which is true), but also the fact that what the eye likes or dislikes is always changeable and never says the same, and you are not the one deciding its desires, so to speak, nor how long they stay.

That's how you get to see that having senses is in and of itself dukkha, and that's already the Four Noble Truths.

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Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-13 07:40:30

[removed]

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 22:54:31

“cetanāhaṃ, bhikkhave, kammaṃ vadāmi”

What's important to remember here is that the Pali Suttas are not giving us a perfectly consistent network of terms and definitions, and some words are sometimes used broadly and loosely.

Here, the word “cetanā” is referring to what we now in our elucidation of the Suttas would call “*intentional intention*”, meaning that when a possibility to do something offers itself, **you** choose to go for it.

That is your kamma, and understanding that principle and ceasing to fuel it is how you free yourself from kamma as well. An Arahant still has intentional intentions, but they are free from kamma because there is no craving behind those, meaning that their mind would not give rise to any states of lust, aversion or delusion if they were to refrain from making the choice out of the arisen possibility.

This is why they are incapable of breaking the five precepts for example, since those actions would always be rooted in not being able to put up with the arisen unskillful possibility and needing to go with the grain of it instead.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 02:54:36

Regarding this:

What's important to remember here is that the Pali Suttas are not giving us a perfectly consistent network of terms and definitions, and some words are sometimes used broadly and loosely.

That doesn't mean that the Suttas are not consistent enough so that for every proposed argument X that the Buddha would not agree with, there would not be a corresponding Sutta Y that disproves it in a way that is unambiguous and does not depend on those terms that are loosely used (like *viññāna* or *saññā* at times too).

And often the tenuous and unjustifiable arguments that are made based on (or I should say *in spite of*) the Suttas rely on such loosely used terms.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 12:30:34 (in reply to a comment not included)

In practical terms, thoughts seem to come to me in two flavors. **The first involves intentional thoughts that needs fueling and active participation, such as engaging in internal dialogue. The second encompasses spontaneous thoughts and images that seem to arise unexpectedly.** When it comes to purposeful self-dialogue, conversations stemming from a wholesome state of mind, like genuine contemplation, are encouraged, whereas engaging in self-talk driven by an unwholesome state of mind is advised against. As for random thoughts, since they are beyond our control, neither acceptance nor rejection is appropriate; rather, they should be endured. Bhante, am I understanding this correctly? Additionally, what is mental kamma in practical terms?

You can forget about “classifying” types of thoughts altogether. **Absolutely Everything** that is either remaining the same or changing in your experience for as long as you are not engaging in unwholesome with your body and are not speaking, and for as long as you’re not in the second jhāna, is the vitakkavicāra discussed in the Suttas (reaching and cultivating that recognition is how you enter the first jhāna by the way, the cessation of speech, and thus “**transcend the All**” also described in the Suttas. Trying to have only one “type” of thought as opposed to another is not part of that development at any point. MN 19 is not talking about “types of objects” but about the two classes of *context* that you can have in regard to objects. Virtue, celibacy, restraint, seclusion, not speaking and right context are the only components of the development of jhāna.)

It would be particularly good to not think in terms of the part that I highlighted, which is a common view, and think in terms of only mental kamma, not *what* that kamma happens in regard to.

Mental kamma can only be understood *after* your bodily and verbal kamma have been tamed. Otherwise you will be mixing up the three domains without noticing.

Not acting out by body and speech in any way out of lust and aversion is what starts pointing you in the direction of what kamma actually is: it’s not when the pressure to do or say *arises*, but when you give in to it. ’

One can understand that in theory but unless one’s restraint has been developed, it will be just that: theory which, when practicing according to it, may or may not give rise to meditation experiences that are not ultimately relevant to understanding the 3 domains of action and freeing oneself from suffering.

So through developing the principle in body and speech, you eventually get to see what is the “line” where the mere arising of a thought becomes a mental action. It has nothing to do with the *content* of that thought, although of course, there are very coarse cases where even as an ordinary person one will be aware that one is delighting or hating something.

Before developing on those two levels, this is what will happen: you will start thinking

that *types* of thoughts are the problem, because you still also think that *types* of deeds and words are the issue, and have yet to recognize that it's the *pressure behind* the deeds and words that make them unwholesome (and that pressure would always **have to** be given into in order to break the five precepts with celibacy as the fifth).

I believe I addressed this with different words in the essay.

Review of “The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple According to the Pāli Suttas”

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-11-12 12:01:28

Yesterday I came across an article by Ven. Bhikkhu Bodhi titled “The Jhānas and the Lay Disciple According to the Pāli Suttas”, which happens to accurately disprove the contemporary idea that the jhānas are indispensable for stream-entry, and should also make lay followers of this day and age who think of themselves as jhāna-attainers seriously reconsider whether they are right in assuming themselves to be capable of a superhuman attainment that the *enlightened* lay followers, who had been receiving direct instruction from the Buddha for many years in his time were not capable of (the point is implied throughout the article as well, not just in this Sutta).

It seems the author does not realize this, but his conclusions also implicitly add weight to the argument that samādhi is not “concentration” on an object. This is because the recollections of the Triple Gem, virtue and generosity, the “pleasant abidings here and now”—a term for samādhi—cannot be taken as “objects” to give one’s fixed attention to in any meaningful way.

We have in the past spoken about how the recollection of the Triple Gem is a form of “pleasant abiding here and now” that would be accessible to a noble lay disciple who has gained unshakable confidence in the Buddha’s teaching (stream entry), and that the jhānas require a higher degree of restraint, specifically celibacy. This is further supported by the article, which proves the point that sammāsamādhi is not limited to the four jhānas, despite them usually making up the factor of samādhi in the Noble Eightfold Path. This fits perfectly with AN 6.73 that we often quote: attaining those 4 establishments of mind is impossible for one who has not fully discerned the danger in sensual pleasures, which would necessarily be the case for whoever continues to partake in them on the coarsest level of sexual intercourse.

There exists a custom of using either “buddho”, “dhammo” or “saṅgho” as individual “mantras” in the name of recollection of the Triple Gem, but hopefully, no one who has studied the suttas would claim that the world fails to realize the Deathless owing to a failure to perform this mechanical, mental repetition of a mere sound properly.

The word translated as “recollection” in this case is just the word “sati” with the prefix “anu”, so, to argue based on logic alone, whatever can be called a “recollection” should be very close in its manner of practice to what “anapana-sati” is. It would be ludicrous

to suggest that the theme of one's practice of samādhi would completely change how it is developed, and **what it even is**.

The contemporary “breath observation” and the associated techniques used to aid it such as “counting”—and just the general idea that sati of the breath is to be centered around the awareness of body parts and sensations—form a completely different approach to practice than what would be done by recollecting, for instance, your conviction in the righteousness of the noble saṅgha, or the qualities of the Dhamma being “well taught, visible here and now, timeless, etc.”. Such direct-attention and sensation-observation practices not taught in the Suttas—unlike this recollection of the Triple Gem, or the *understanding* of the breath that is the authentic ānāpānasati (“breathing in long, he *understands* (pajānāti :: paññā) [the action of] breathing in long” —Ānāpānasatisutta)—result in an entirely different mental state.

This is a fundamental crossroads, as these two forms of practice are so divergent that only one of them can be “sammāsati”—and only one claims support from the Suttas. The fact alone that both result in feelings of pleasure is a very tenuous link. Yet the most important consequence of following either is the radically different sort of “knowledge and vision” that will be attained. As the Buddha makes sure to tell us, incorrect samādhi *does* result in knowledge, and even in a type of “liberation”.

As evidenced by AN 10.106, the liberation that is not of the right kind leads to unskillful states. Here it must be kept in mind the fact that “liberation” is by definition always *pleasant* and *unburdening*, and frees one from one's issues (or at least so it will seem). Also, the previous factor of “knowledge” resulting in “liberation” will always by nature appear as enlightening and earth-shattering when it arises. This danger is made worse by the fact that the ordinary person does not see unskillful as unskillful, and is said throughout the texts to be “untrained and unseeing of the noble Dhamma”, which of course includes sammāsamādhi.

Finally, it should be clear that we would, of course, choose to disagree every single time the word “concentration” as a translation for samādhi occurs in the article, and with commentarial notions such as “mundane jhānas”, “access concentration”, and Visuddhimagga-biased, etymologically unjustifiable renderings such as “one-pointedness”. Apart from this, the author's conclusions, someone whom we can at least give due credit for having studied the Suttas more than nearly anyone else on the planet, are mostly solid and well-supported.

On nearly all other instances apart from this paper we would disagree with the author, including even the footnotes on his translations of the Nikāyas, and his renderings of many crucial terms in the translations themselves, where he sides with modern/commentarial interpretations.

Notable excerpts:

•The texts sometimes speak of the worldling jhāna-attainer as “an outsider devoid of lust for sensual pleasures.” [This connects with what I've alluded to in my latest essay and Dhamma talk: that one who learns to abide in and

develop the jhānas taught in the Suttas would *have to* become free from sensuality, *even* without noble attainments].

•“What is noteworthy about this list is that samādhi, as a faculty, does not determine a class of its own until after the fruit of stream-entry has been realized. That is, facility in [composure] determines a distinct type of disciple among the arahants (as the both-ways-liberated arahant) and among the aspirants for the higher stages (as the body-witness), but not among the aspirants for stream-entry. In this lowest category we have only the faith-follower and the Dhamma-follower, who owe their status to faith and wisdom, respectively, but there is no type corresponding to the body-witness.”

•[...] the thesis that jhāna is necessary at every stage of enlightenment claims powerful support from the canonical account of the Noble Eightfold Path, which defines the path factor of right [composure] (sammā samādhi) with the stock formula for the four jhānas. From this definition, it might be argued that [...] the jhānas are indispensable from the first stage of awakening to the last. This conclusion, however, does not necessarily follow. [...] It could be that attainment of jhāna is necessary to complete the development of the path, becoming mandatory at a relatively late point in the disciple’s progress.”

•...since the passage simply inserts the formula for the four jhānas without qualification into the definition of the [composure] faculty, we would have to conclude that all noble disciples, monks, and lay followers alike, possess all four jhānas, not just one. Even more, they would have to possess the four jhānas already as faith-followers and Dhamma-followers, at the very entry to the path. This, however, seems too generous, and indicates that we need to be cautious in interpreting such formulaic definitions.

•At AN 5:179/III 211, the Buddha speaks, with reference to “a lay follower clothed in white” (gihī odātavasana), of four “pleasant dwellings in this very life pertaining to the higher mind” (cattāro ābhicetasikā dīṭṭhadhamma-sukhavihārā). Now in relation to monks, the Nikāyas invariably use this expression to mean the four jhānas.[25] If it were considered commonplace, or even paradigmatic, for a lay noble disciple to attain the four jhānas, one would expect the Buddha to explain the above expression in the same way as he does for monks. But he does not.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 15:14:00 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I did read it a few months ago, and Ajahn Nyanamoli had come across it too. I was somewhat surprised to find it.

The book does serve as real life evidence of the argument I made in my newest essay that if one were to do an honest and careful reading of the Suttas, one would simply not end up holding the widespread views of today. Most of those ideas would simply not arise, given

that they already entail believing that experience works in a way that it actually doesn't, which even the most un-Buddhist person who is not already invested in those views (or in the misapplication of science to "explain" consciousness) would be able to recognize.

The main issue we would take with it is that (as far as I remember), despite the accuracy of the majority of the points that are made, especially when it comes to just interpreting the Pāli terms and such, the actual *practice* that leads to jhāna was never addressed. In an ideal world where everyone knows what "being fully separated from sensual pleasures" (*vivicceva kāmehi*) truly means, this would not be a problem, as they would know that there is only one way to reach that: *actually* being incapable of sensual desire, which requires complete dispassion towards sensual pleasures and seeing them as a "charcoal pit", so that there is no underlying desire and infatuation towards them.

"And how, bhikkhus, are sensual pleasures seen by a bhikkhu in such a way that as he looks at them **sensual desire, sensual affection, sensual infatuation, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures? [=the hindrance of sensuality is absent]?**

Suppose there is a charcoal pit deeper than a man's height, filled with glowing coals without flame or smoke. A man would come along wanting to live, not wanting to die, desiring happiness and averse to suffering. Then two strong men would grab him by both arms and drag him towards the charcoal pit. The man would wriggle his body this way and that. For what reason? Because he knows: **'I will fall into this charcoal pit and I will thereby meet death or deadly suffering.'** So too, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has seen sensual pleasures as similar to a charcoal pit, sensual desire, sensual affection, sensual infatuation, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures.

—SN 35.244

(I also cited many other Suttas in my essay which describe how the hindrances are overcome through contemplating the peril of sensuality.)

Since this is not addressed, the book will indirectly instill the notion in most readers who agree with it that what it takes to achieve jhāna is simply a less focused kind of awareness, an "open awareness" if you will, as it's sometimes called. And this is insufficient to truly surmount the five hindrances, despite the fact that it may give rise to pleasant experiences and be only slightly less outrageous than the attempt to be aware of one thing alone.

Fundamentally, the first jhāna is a state of complete dispassion, disenchantment and lack of interest towards the entire world, compared in this series of Suttas to none other than Nibbāna itself ("in a provisional sense", as they make sure to note). It is not enough to find a form of happiness that does not depend on the physical world nor on concentrating on an object to enter jhāna. The book focuses more on defining what the pleasure of jhāna is, and does not go into the torment and misery that need to be understood and abandoned to as to enter it. Accomplishing the latter would result in jhāna whether you like it or not; getting a PhD in the former would not bring you much closer.

We usually speak against focusing meditation techniques most often since those are the most popular ones, but fundamentally, “opening” the range of your awareness is not the gateway to the Buddha’s Teaching either.

We’d also heavily disagree with the following sort of statement:

With better understanding of the first and second jhāna, meditators who supposedly don’t practise “jhāna” may suddenly realise that actually, going by the Suttas’ terminology, they’ve already done it, and that the jhānas aren’t as inaccessible as they were led to believe.

Which is tantamount to claiming that a large amount of ordinary people have experienced “Nibbāna in a provisional sense”, referring back to AN 9.47 that I quoted above. Surely there are practitioners who are delighted by this idea, but whoever is honest about their predicament and lack of knowledge of the way out of suffering will realize that this is too good to be true.

Last but certainly not least, something that, to heavily understate, is not unrelated to what I wrote above regarding the necessity of dispassion to achieve true jhāna: it makes no mention (AFAIK) of the fact that one’s actions rooted in sensual desire are the foremost obstacle to achieving the pleasure apart from the sensual domain, and of the necessity of celibacy and sense restraint, which in fact is said to in and of itself lead to the wholesome sort of pleasure in some Suttas when done properly, i.e., by one who sees the hints of their mind, be it a stream enterer or the potentially-not-found-among-earth’s-current-population person who has such little dust in their eyes that they can enter jhāna (**“provisional Nibbāna and Deathless”**) without having heard the Buddha’s teaching. It also does not emphasize the need for physical seclusion and not delighting in company that is necessary to see the hints of one’s mind, which is what enables the proper contemplation (jhāna) of the danger in sensual pleasures or any other satipaṭṭhāna.

The choice to give up the emphasis on attention to objects is a prerequisite to embarking in the direction of that proper contemplation, but is ultimately insufficient.

The five hindrances, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the five hindrances? It should be said: the three kinds of misconduct. The three kinds of misconduct, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the three kinds of misconduct? It should be said: non-restraint of the sense faculties.

—AN 10.61

If anyone has specific questions regarding that book, feel free to open a new thread.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 15:16:22 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The celibacy part is simple. Sexuality is absent in the Brahma Worlds, so in order to temporarily occupy those headspaces the person must themselves be absent of sexuality within their human headspace. Physical restraint alone is completely insufficient.

Very good point. The “headspace” cannot possibly be emptied of sexuality through a merely temporary commitment to celibacy, let alone no commitment at all.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 22:53:26 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

just because it's not the ‘1 in a billion can do it’ absorption jhana doesn't mean it's easy to achieve

Yes, I remember it mentioning the “jhāna is nearly impossible” thing that is from the commentaries (and although the modern quest towards “absorption” stems from that which the commentaries describe as jhāna and is supposedly hardly achievable, people seem to be getting those jhānas left and right—or perhaps that's because they lowered their standards so as to no longer live up to the source of the whole idea, being often unaware that that's basically where it comes from).

Also, I would actually not hesitate to use the expression “‘1 in a billion (today) can do it’ dispassion jhāna”. But that's not because there are some intrinsic obstacles related to people's faculties or past kamma, as with the commentarial ultimate, perfect absorption made up of “mind moments” all exclusively consisting of the “object” (hard to say why this deserves be called “jhāna”, as in comprehension/meditation in the original meaning of the word).

The funny thing is, that “dispassion jhāna” can be achieved by almost anyone. The real obstacle is that, in the process of moving in that direction, there is a (most likely strategically designed by a certain being) minefield that all but the most dedicated and discerning practitioners will be able to not prematurely perish in during the process of treading it (beginning with the several-square-kilometers-large, nuclear land mine of non-celibacy). And it's not unreasonable to say that there was a lot more safe space to walk on between the mines back in the Buddha's day, with less proliferation of views—to the point where someone who *knew* that absence of sensual desire was the main prerequisite for jhāna likely wouldn't have strayed too far from it.

People like the wanderer in MN 80—whose idea of what one is supposed to be aware of during meditation is in some ways not too dissimilar to many contemporary notions), or the one in MN 75 with a wrong view of what “Nibbāna” is—tended to hold that way because they had *factually* not heard the Buddha's teaching, not because they heard it and then chose to water it down, or to do something else altogether.

(Another interesting find: regarding the word [“meditation”] (<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meditation>) see what the few introductory paragraphs describe, and compare that with the “Etymology” section).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 23:39:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

“Hypnosis” (intentional, to boot) is certainly accurate.

Although generally, I would avoid presenting a contrasting idea of what is kusala compared to what is akusala that people can too easily relate to and think that they “got it” by just figuring it out and changing their opinion.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 05:36:27 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I hope and believe there are more than 8 people practicing jhana today,

There’s no *intrinsic* reason why that could not be the case. Hopefully, my statement is just due to the fact that these people don’t teach, are hardly known, don’t speak English, or I the fact that I haven’t (and never will have) deep searched the Internet that I can’t seem to find a living person who *elucidates further* without contradictions the practice of jhāna taught in the Suttas, as opposed to “moving the goalposts”, fabricating something else altogether out of thin air, or failing to emphasize what the needs to be understood and abandoned so as to enter jhāna.

Ajahn Chah was such a person, but unfortunately, his instructions on anapanasati, presented by him often as a central practice for beginners as opposed to for much later on (as the Buddha did with Rahula in MN 62) were not catered to the average person and he was not putting himself in their shoes (obviously not on purpose), since it is only for a mind that is already significantly free that the recognition of the context of breathing can lead beyond thinking and pondering effortlessly, without having to “endure” the pressure of thoughts as we often talk about, which is the principle that cultivates the first jhāna (although he did make it clear that the first jhāna consists of something that **is** “thinking and pondering”, not just “directed thought and evaluation”, “applied and sustained attention” or “placing the mind and keeping it connected” or similar).

A person who is not free from sensuality would, in their misguided attempt to follow those instructions that are coming from real wisdom, mistakenly try to overcome the hindrances by *getting rid* of thinking and pondering, and this results in neither the first jhāna nor the second (AN 9.35, where you can incidentally see an example of Bhikkhu Bodhi’s mistranslations: “vHe does not pursue that **object**, does not develop and cultivate it, does not **focus on it** well”. That’s not even close to what the Pāli says.

[Also, note that this is already an infinitely better scenario compared to the bhikkhu who doesn’t reach the first jhāna with thinking and pondering at all, but something else instead].

In many places, Ajahn Chah also made clear that trying to stop the mind from thinking is not the goal, but rather developing the right kind of thinking based on dispassion. I am also left wondering how many times he must have given instructions more along these lines which flew over the head of his students, or their minds “subconsciously” chose to not pay due attention to due to being already pleased with their (mis)understanding of his anapanasati instructions. The ones that did make it through to us today do not tend to be quoted from as far as I’ve seen, or are at least relegated to comparatively secondary importance, such as when you *can’t* focus on the one object well enough so *then* “it’s fine” to do some wholesome thinking).

He was also quite insistent on the lack of benefit in sensuality and worldly pleasures, and often made strong statements (which may be taken as mere poetry by some) like that one should be willing to put one’s life on the line so as to abandon those things.

So yes, I suppose it is possible that there are Ajahn Chah disciples who, referring back to the first paragraph here, may be able to enter jhāna and more without having “moved the goalposts” of what that even is—that he may have been able to pass on the actual practice of pleasant dispassion to *some* of his Thai students, but they don’t seem to be the ones who have become well-known as far as I’ve seen.

His respected disciples often blatantly contradict his very statements, often with the underlying but unstated view that Ajahn Chah was some sort of Zen-esque teacher, whose actual message should (conveniently) not be expected to lie in his words and be logically consistent from one Dhamma talk to another. The consequence of this being that it’s perfectly fine to interpret his teachings in the most flambuoyant ways, cherry-picking quotes and overlooking the times that he made statements that clearly contradict what they, after his passing, can now present as his legacy without reproach. And since the original Thai recordings are not public, there is little opportunity to disprove with evidence their chosen interpretations of his ideas. And of course, it’s clear that the written translations have been “polished”, to say the least.

Edit: you’re right, it would be better to make a new thread for that question. I’ll post my reply there when it’s up. Also, I’ll just mention that I have no “horse in the race” regarding Ajahn Chah. My ordination is Sri Lankan and I’ve never been to Thailand or any of the branch monasteries. I’m actually not a fan of the tradition in general.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 06:02:01 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I also became aware of Sayadaw U Tejaniya through this book. He makes some good points about focusing practices and how awareness works. However, I find that his instructions still do not address the main obstacle that’s preventing an ordinary person from removing from their mind that which is the foremost disturbance according to the Suttas. Even if technically his ideas about awareness and phenomenological experience are not inaccurate. The existential phenomenologists also managed to form very accurate views about how consciousness works for example, to the point where, having hardly spent

time with their works at all as part of my practice, I was surprised by the acuity of their phenomenological recognitions— especially Sartre whose Being and Nothingness I read a few pages from recently.

it was what finally took me out of mainstream meditation methods and theories and gave me the first nudge in the right direction.

I supposed it'd be a better starting point for most people indeed, leaving less to “unlearn”.

talking about potential aspects of experience that one can naturally become aware of [...] this “shift” is *not an object* in the sense in which objects are used in mainstream meditation practice – as something put in front. it is something that can only be noticed *reflectively*, as the background of whatever is currently in front – the room one is in, for example, in the case she was mentioning. so just that was enough for me to start groping my way towards the background.

Yes, this is the sort of thing the phenomenologists would be describing. The funny thing is it's kind of obvious the way that experience works. It doesn't take much to recognize it—what takes a lot of work today is un-recognizing one's even “wronger than wrong” conceptions of it.

once their presence is acknowledged, practice becomes mostly about keeping an eye open for their presence, and learning to contain them – not acting out of them which, from Tejaniya's perspective, is a mental acting out first, so the way he talks about it is about not letting greed, aversion, and delusion leak into the attitude one is carrying around both while sitting and in one's daily life. background sensitivity intermingled with letting awareness be aware of what it is already aware – and not denying that it is aware of what it is aware.

That may help people manage their issues *way* better than the usual “stress therapy meditation” or whatever that is commonplace today, done with the usual object focusing and sensation watching. So what U Tejaniya teaches should be secularized and sold to the masses if you were to ask me. However, when it comes to suffering and freedom from it, it would also introduce a contradiction with the following:

“When, friends, a noble disciple understands the unwholesome and the root of the unwholesome, the wholesome and the root of the wholesome, in that way he is one of right view, whose view is straight, who has unwavering confidence in the Dhamma and has arrived at this true Dhamma.

[...]

“And what is the root of the unwholesome? Greed is a root of the unwholesome; hate is a root of the unwholesome; delusion is a root of the unwholesome. This is called the root of the unwholesome.”

—MN 9

And also this:

“Bhikkhus, there are these two powers. What two? The power of reflection and the power of development. “And what is the power of reflection? Here, someone reflects thus: ‘Bodily... verbal...mental misconduct has a bad result in the present life and in the future life.’ Having reflected thus, he abandons bodily... verbal... mental misconduct and takes on good bodily... verbal... mental conduct; he maintains himself in purity. This is called the power of reflection.

“And what is the power of development? The power of development is the power of trainees. **For relying on the power of a trainee [see SN 48.12 below], one abandons lust, hatred, and delusion.** Having abandoned lust, hatred, and delusion, one does not do anything unwholesome; one does not pursue anything bad. This is called the power of development. “These, bhikkhus, are the two powers.” —AN 2.11

And “trainee” (sekha) always means one of the first 7 noble individuals in the Suttas.

So teaching in that way will unfortunately tend to lead people not to question far and deeply enough what is truly preventing them from becoming a trainee, since implicitly they will be assuming they already are one (even if they know they are not ariyas, the implication is they *can* accurately see akusala as akusala—what greed, aversion and delusion are—and that’s what a sekha is).

for me, when i first got exposed to this, it was as if a whole new world was opened up – and “practice” became inseparable from “life” – as it became about *revealing* what is already there, implicitly, and understanding it.

Yes, that is one advantage. Again, just like with the existential phenomenologists.

a first hand, hands on investigation of how my mind is when it is on hindrances – not with the intention of getting rid of them, but of containing them – while, in parallel, **cultivating the five spiritual powers.**

That is indeed more in the right direction of where to look to see the hindrances, but there would be a similar issue with it:

““Bhikkhus, there are these five faculties. What five? The faculties of conviction, effort, recollection, composure and discernment. These are the five faculties.

Someone who has completed and fulfilled these five faculties is an Arahant. If they are weaker than that, they’re a non-returner. If they are weaker still, they’re a once-returner. If they are weaker still, they’re a stream-enterer. If they’re weaker still, they’re a follower of teachings. If they’re weaker still, they’re a follower by faith.” —SN 48.12

There’s also MN 2 showing that both abandonment of unwholesome and cultivation of wholesome (“bhāvanā) requires yoniso manasikāra to have been understood and developed, and that this would lead to stream entry, after which each one of the 6 subsequent components of practice are possible, since they mention “having reflected according to the womb” as prerequisite (outrageously rendered as “reflecting rationally” if you look

at the SC translation). Same with SN 46.30 showing that Ven. Udayi gained the 7 enlightenment factors, effectively synonymous with the five powers, as a *result* of stream-entry, rather than those 7 factors making up his *practice towards it*. And it's just a general point that when there is non-knowledge of the Four Noble Truths, i.e. wrong view or micchādiṭṭhi, other things like right effort and recollection cannot be present. As AN 10.103 puts it, the first factor sort of “snowballs” into the subsequent others, culminating even in “wrong liberation” in SN 45.26. It's a bit of tragicomedy to note the mention of “worse than the inferior person”, and the two factors that make them be so.

Furthermore, in AN 6.55, where the advice to “balance the faculties” occurs, there is very good reason to believe that Ven. Soṇa was already a sekha. There is no way that an ordinary person can do much, let alone tread the path to Arahantship as he did through on account of such a terse utterance.

SN 54.12 also shows us that the Buddha generally did not distinguish, or did not find it necessary to mention a category of person lower than a sekha, meaning an ordinary person, who was able to abandon the five hindrances. This was the case obviously for people like the Buddha's former teachers, but apart from them, if we take the canonical narrative at face value, there did not seem to be anybody else that he felt was particularly well-equipped to hear his teaching after his enlightenment, i.e. people who were skilled at abandoning hindrances. To paraphrase AN 9.47 which I quoted somewhere in this thread, a taste of abandoning hindrances is a taste of Nibbāna, and there is therefore not much barring a person who achieved the former from the latter.

as it still carries some misleading traditional baggage.

One of the main things I would point out in that context is the general idea (which can be ascribed to the Burmese AFAIK, or at least was brought by them to the modern Zeitgeist) that meditation can be successfully performed if one simply receives an accurate set of instructions from a teacher and carries them out to the best of one's ability. U Tejaniya seems to be operating within this assumption, contrary to the idea that the Suttas I quoted are putting forth.

That's why I mentioned some time ago in one reply that if a teacher were to relentlessly emphasize abandonment of sensuality *without* resorting to the usual focusing techniques so as to *stop perceiving* the domain of the five senses, they would be much closer to the Suttas and what we are teaching, than someone who is able to give accurate descriptions of the workings of awareness but does not emphasize the putting down of the heaviest of all internal burdens (sensual desire) so as to achieve (temporary and eventually permanent) calm. All these intricate descriptions we give of “foreground vs background”, “peripheral”, “context”, etc. are all necessary only because if they are not mentioned, a person today will most likely be *actively* going too far in the opposite direction.

Also, this is why abandoning sensuality merely through one's body and speech results in a better and happier life in and of itself, regardless of one's ideas about how and to what extent attention should be directed towards phenomena. It's because that what matters, and the “mental purity” can only be achieved by taking that same principle of non-sensuality in the first two doors of action further into the third.

Nevertheless, I will say that I never expected to hear a Burmese monk encouraging anything other than Visuddhimagga-like focusing, and when I saw the word “Sayadaw”, I was not far from not looking the name up at all, so it was an interesting find anyway.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 21:36:38 (in reply to a comment not included)

it actually seems to start momentary and then with practice become sustained over a longer period.

Correct, it starts momentary in the sense that right effort and right recollection of the context can only be established “for a fingersnap”, and by sustaining it long enough, the citta becomes so that *it* sustains the context now, without the need for one’s direct input. (See this I wrote)

So I would agree with “starts momentary” for as long as that’s not taken to be in the sense of *an experience of pleasure* or some sort of special “click” that happens.

Rather, by the time the “experience” of jhāna comes up and the mind is joyous, the context has already become so steady that even if one stops protecting it, it will not go away for a good while (days, potentially). What is “momentary” is the context for as long as it depends on one’s volition still.

Beautiful commitment to truth in the suttas

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-11 19:49:34

There are suttas like MN 35:

Now at that time Saccaka, the son of Jain parents, was staying in Vesālī. He was a debater and clever speaker **deemed holy by many people**.

[After getting into a debate with the Buddha, and seeing he was wrong]

Saccaka said to him, “Master Gotama, it was rude and impudent of me to imagine I could attack you in debate. For a person might find safety after attacking a rutting elephant, but not after attacking Master Gotama. A person might find safety after attacking a blazing mass of fire, but not after attacking Master Gotama. They might find safety after attacking a poisonous viper, but not after attacking Master Gotama. It was rude and impudent of me to imagine I could attack you in debate. Would Master Gotama together with the mendicant Saṅgha please accept tomorrow’s meal from me?”

Where other leaders, deemed holy by others, confidently confront the Buddha, end up being completely wrong, *and are then capable of admitting they’re wrong in front of their followers*, and basically being willing to declare that their teaching was absolutely wrong.

This is an easy thing to brush off since our focus is usually on more technical aspects of the suttas. But this is a very admirable and beautiful quality to have: the only thing I'm committed to is the truth about what leads me out of suffering, *regardless* of if *I* myself am considered an esteemed person by others. I cannot imagine the level of development Saccaka had to be able to admit his wrong in front of his followers, I would certainly hesitate stating I'm wrong (and then basically go onto list the numerous ways in which I was essentially stupid like Saccaka did up there) in front of just a *single* person who valued my opinions, let alone possibly hundreds.

Saccaka's commitment there is to the truth and truth *alone*, not commitment to maintaining his followers, not commitment to maintaining his tradition, not commitment to his teacher, not commitment to his prestige, *no*: it's *only* commitment to what leads him out of suffering, because otherwise, admitting so would be basically impossible. It's commitment to a teaching in which he knows,

These qualities lead to dispassion, not to passion; to being unfettered, not to being fettered; to shedding, not to accumulating; to modesty, not to self-aggrandizement; to contentment, not to discontent; to seclusion, not to entanglement; to aroused persistence, not to laziness; **to being unburdensome, not to being burdensome.**

AN 8.53

But what I've said above there about Saccaka's commitments isn't showing the seriousness of his commitment to the full extent. Realizing the full extent *personally*, would require actually inquiring whether *I* myself – having currently not attained sotapatti – am committed to whatever tradition I'm in, the great community within that tradition, the teachers who I've learned from and developed much from? Am I committed to the looks, appearances, elegant manner of movements of my teacher or am I committed to whether what they *say* will lead to freedom? If whatever tradition I'm in were to be proven wrong in its fundamental doctrines and effectiveness in ending my suffering, whatever views and practices it may advocate – regardless of whether they've been of immense benefit to me –, would I hesitate having to leave all this behind for *my own well-being*? Or am I going to then come up with excuses to protect myself from having to face the pain of leaving the tradition, the teacher, and the community surrounding it?

I certainly cannot confidently and bravely say 'yes' to all the questions above. I've always had the fear of being wrong, being told I'm wrong, absolutely *hated* being wrong. This hate was taken to such an extent that I started paradoxically loved being wrong (whilst simultaneously absolutely hating it though) so that way I can fix it ASAP and reside in safety of being right. So paradoxically again, I'd hate being told HH's wrong if that ever happens, but I'd simultaneously be forcing myself to fix that wrong.

Either way, just wanted to share this reflection here. This quality is truly one of the most beautiful qualities in my opinion, I feel like if I ever saw someone doing what Saccaka did there, I would start tearing up because of how beautiful it is.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 00:21:18

MN 76 tells of an even more commendable decision (and admission) by the wanderer who was the leader of a sect. Also teared up years ago during my first read of the Majjhima when I read this.

Cover-up of the fragility of the body

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-11 01:57:13

As I keep reminding myself and keep re-establishing the context of ordaining *eventually*, confronting my parents *eventually*, not only have various sensualities become apparent, but the fragility of the body as well.

The fact that if I ordain and become a forest monk in the future, and I may not have access to the medical facilities we have now is *frightening*. I no longer need to mechanically remind myself of the 31 parts of the body, since every body part is ‘seen’ without the extra layer of medical-facilities-there-beforehand-to-fix-any-problem-with-it, the possibility of *truly* facing its changeability – and the *implications* of it that were completely hidden beforehand; the suffering – becomes apparent. I can no longer hide behind scientific advancements in the medical field to cover up the fragility of the body and its implications with regards to *dukkha*.

I occasionally have toothaches; these were previously not problematic at all; of course, I wasn’t going here and there telling myself that our current medical facilities are there for me in case something really bad happens, but the belief was there implicitly instilled within me from since I was young. Now when that assumption is being questioned (will any of this really be there for me?), the toothaches acquire a new meaning: having to *actually* face change, and the possibility of that negative change not changing for the rest of my life. This is *exactly* the fragility I felt 24/7 when I had chronic pain for years and no one could help.

The cover-up here isn’t *only* scientific advancement though. The assumption that my “parents/relatives are *of course* there for me in case something happens” so that I’m not alone, and someone can take care of me, is also another ‘layer’ that covered up the fragility of the body.

Beforehand, if someone said this was the problem, I would’ve memorized of all these facts, then regurgitate all these facts mentally and call it “contemplation”, however, it wouldn’t produce any fear of facing the fragility as this is doing so now. The difference is that now there’s a *genuine intention* that *genuinely* targets the assumptions that the danger hid behind, whereas previously, that contemplation would’ve been done *through* the very place of safety that I would be trying to contemplate against. How can I contemplate the dangers of the body, the dangers of *delighting* in the body, when my entire lifestyle is in some implicit sense the maintenance of the belief that I won’t *really* have to face those dangers?

It's absolutely ridiculous just how much dirt a single *honest* intention can start to uncover. No wonder none of these "contemplations" were working beforehand.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 12:02:42

Yes, all of what you're describing here is essentially one of the big reasons why ordination is beneficial, despite all the gratuitous cultural and traditional baggage that has accumulated into it over time. *None of that* fundamentally offsets the benefit of exposing the vulnerability of your situation, and all the inauthentic and superficial cultural stuff will only become an obstacle for one who is inauthentic themselves.

The 10th precept of abandoning money also makes quite a difference, and it's one of the reasons why laypeople cannot reach Arahantship, not because they don't wear a robe or have not shaven their heads. It's not *at all* the same to not have access to your bank account and go "off the grid" for months, than knowing that you will be *completely and utterly* dependent on other people's generosity from now onwards, and cannot pay for your own stuff even if your life depends on it. The former might feel unpleasant initially but one may ultimately come to enjoy it. The latter is like staring at an abyss, and it will only be pleasant to think and ponder on once you have made some *serious* progress, to the point where even falling down that abyss would not cause you suffering (although that recognition may unfortunately be mitigated by the excessive amount of wealth available in monasteries these days. Either way, the displeasure will be there if you know how to look for it, certainly the more you were dependent on the comforts of home life).

And yes, the point you make about people back in the Buddha's day is quite accurate. It does not at all mean that those people were somehow not capable of seeking and delighting in sensual pleasures to the same degree that we can. The "amount" of sensuality is fundamentally not even that important. What really matters today is how the entire lifestyle is structured around preventing anything that may *compromise* one's access to pleasure.

So, what really matters is not how much pleasure you've been having. What matters is how much the circumstances cover up the *impermanence* of that pleasure.

Of course, the Buddha and his foremost disciples had been pampered throughout their youth, and even prevented from recognizing the calamities of the world on purpose. But the fact that they decided to go forth *immediately* after recognizing these things points to the fact that the amount of "dust in their eyes" was already pretty much non-existent.

This is not the case for anyone today who has had even a single, beloved family member die, and yet still do not feel an impulse to seek some sort of way out of suffering, nor recognize that engagement with sensuality cannot possibly be positively contributing to their predicament. And those who already have faith in the Buddhadhamma do not usually choose to intensify their practice on account of this. At least not in the sense of "practice" that matters, where they cease to engage, even as laypeople, with the things that expose them to the impermanence of life even more than is necessary.

"Bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of excellent thoroughbred horses found

existing in the world. What four?

- (1) “Here, bhikkhus, one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency as soon as it sees the shadow of the goad, thinking: ‘What task will my trainer set for me today? What can I do to satisfy him?’ Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse here. This is the first kind of excellent thoroughbred horse found existing in the world.
- (2) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred nor does it acquire a sense of urgency as soon as it sees the shadow of the goad, but it is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its hairs are struck by the goad, thinking: ‘What task will my trainer set for me today? What can I do to satisfy him?’ Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse. This is the second kind of excellent thoroughbred horse found existing in the world.
- (3) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred nor does it acquire a sense of urgency as soon as it sees the shadow of the goad, nor when its hairs are struck by the goad, but it is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its hide is struck by the goad, thinking: ‘What task now will my trainer set for me today? What can I do to satisfy him?’ Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse. This is the third kind of excellent thoroughbred horse found existing in the world.
- (4) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse is not stirred nor does it acquire a sense of urgency as soon as it sees the shadow of the goad, nor when its hairs are struck by the goad, nor when its hide is struck by the goad, but it is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its bone is struck by the goad, thinking: ‘What task now will my trainer set for me today? What can I do to satisfy him?’ Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred horse. This is the fourth kind of excellent thoroughbred horse found existing in the world.

“These are the four kinds of excellent thoroughbred horses found existing in the world.

“So too, bhikkhus, there are these four kinds of excellent thoroughbred persons found existing in the world. What four?

- (1) “Here, bhikkhus, one kind of excellent thoroughbred person hears: ‘In such and such a village or town some woman or man has fallen ill or died.’ He is stirred by this and acquires a sense of urgency. Stirred, he strives carefully. Resolute, he realizes the supreme truth with the body and, having pierced it through with wisdom, he sees it. I say that this excellent thoroughbred person is similar to the excellent thoroughbred horse that is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency as soon as it sees the shadow of the goad. Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred person.

This is the first kind of excellent thoroughbred person found existing in the world.

- (2) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred person does not hear: ‘In such and such a village or town some woman or man has fallen ill or died.’ Rather, he himself sees a woman or a man who has fallen ill or died. He is stirred by this and acquires a sense of urgency. Stirred, he strives carefully. Resolute, he realizes the supreme truth with the body and, having pierced it through with wisdom, he sees it. I say that this excellent thoroughbred person is similar to the excellent thoroughbred horse that is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its hairs are struck by the goad. Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred person. This is the second kind of excellent thoroughbred person found existing in the world.
- (3) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred person does not hear: ‘In such and such a village or town some woman or man has fallen ill or died,’ nor does he himself see a woman or a man who has fallen ill or died. Rather, a relative or family member of his has fallen ill or died. He is stirred by this and acquires a sense of urgency. Stirred, he strives carefully. Resolute, he realizes the supreme truth with the body and, having pierced it through with wisdom, he sees it. I say that this excellent thoroughbred person is similar to the excellent thoroughbred horse that is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its hide is struck by the goad. Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred person. This is the third kind of excellent thoroughbred person found existing in the world.
- (4) “Again, one kind of excellent thoroughbred person does not hear: ‘In such and such a village or town some woman or man has fallen ill or died,’ nor does he himself see a woman or a man who has fallen ill or died, nor has a relative or family member of his fallen ill or died. Rather, he himself is stricken by bodily feelings that are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, harrowing, disagreeable, sapping one’s vitality. He is stirred by this and acquires a sense of urgency. Stirred, he strives carefully. Resolute, he realizes the supreme truth with the body and, having pierced it through with wisdom, he sees it. I say that this excellent thoroughbred person is similar to the excellent thoroughbred horse that is stirred and acquires a sense of urgency when its bone is struck by the goad. Such is one kind of excellent thoroughbred person. This is the fourth kind of excellent thoroughbred person found existing in the world.

“These, bhikkhus, are the four kinds of excellent thoroughbred persons found existing in the world.”

—AN 4.113

Basically no one today lives up to even the 4th kind by nature, without having to work towards it. On the contrary, *even as monks* people don’t react to the “whip” when it comes,

and in many cases continue to distract themselves with monk-ly pleasures as soon as such distressing events pass.

Separating the mind from the body.

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** ComprehensivePin6440 2023-11-10 14:15:37

In a previous post, it was mentioned that an Arahant's body can still react to certain situations like fear and anxiety. The only difference compared to an ordinary person is that an Arahant's mind has no resistance towards the situation. An example was also given of how if a person was always scared of spiders since childhood, that bodily fear would still persist even in Arahanship. The only difference would be that despite experiencing fear in the body, an Arahant could, if needed, pick up that spider. That's why they are referred to as the "5 wild animals" in the suttas.

How does one make a clear distinction between the two in one's experience?

For instance, you are walking in the forest alone and recognize the features of a wild bear. Experientially, the implications of you being alone in the forest with a predator that can easily attack you will be there. That initial wave of bodily fear and body shakes will be there, the dhammas of a dark and dangerous predator will be there, and the vulnerability of your situation will be there for both the Arahant and the normal person.

But the Arahant will, despite all of these inputs and bodily reactions, still be somehow not moved while he is still moved.

So then, how can we truly measure the mind and truly separate it experientially?

The mind in that situation will be aware of all of these implications but will not want to get away from that situation or wouldn't want to change it, and this will be known by the observer and would be one dart less hitting him. Despite the seemingly overwhelming situation, an Arahant will not be moved despite being literally moved. He will not be moved because despite everything that could be happening, he has already created a space in his mind where suffering can't follow him. That space experientially will be felt like ease despite everything that could be happening. Like finding release within confinement.

So, as long as we find ourselves having the urge to make a change in whatever situation that has presented itself to us, then we are compromising our freedom from that unavoidable confinement that awaits all of us.

So, in brief, dhammas and implications remain. Feelings remain. Bodily reactions remain. What doesn't remain is the mind's resistance towards anything.

These have been some of my ponderings, and I would like to hear what you guys have to say about this matter.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 08:46:36

In a previous post, it was mentioned that an Arahant's body can still react to certain situations like fear and anxiety. The only difference compared to an ordinary person is that an Arahant's mind has no resistance towards the situation. An example was also given of how if a person was always scared of spiders since childhood, that bodily fear would still persist even in Arahantship. The only difference would be that despite experiencing fear in the body, an Arahant could, if needed, pick up that spider. That's why they are referred to as the "5 wild animals" in the suttas.

Correct:

I am not **afraid of fear**

our Teacher is **skilled in the Deathless**

the Path on which fear cannot land

by that Path the monks go. —Theragāthā 3.1

However, it has to be born in mind that these descriptions are used for the sake of pointing people towards the correct way of relating to these experiences when they arise. It is ultimately a matter of semantics to say whether fear, or any other emotion, does or does not arise in an Arahant, and this is evidenced by so many Suttas in which it is said that Arahants are utterly and completely free from suffering and live in perpetual peace, and yet you find passages like the one in MN 121 (the last Sutta quoted below is synonymous with this) describing how the mere endurance of the 6 sense bases constitutes a "disturbance" that the Arahant will not be free from until the body breaks apart (the difference between Nibbāna-with-remainder and Final Nibbāna), but is not an issue whatsoever, as the Arahant is said to not long neither for life nor for death.

What I mean to say with "used for the sake of pointing people towards the correct way of relating to these experiences" is that, if you tell a person that *fear should not arise*, what will happen is that, whether they like it or not, due to not seeing the signs of their mind and where greed, aversion and delusion actually are (MN 9 says from the start that only the sotapanna clearly knows wholesome as wholesome and unwholesome as unwholesome) they will most likely end up trying to *get rid of* and *interfere with* things that are within "the All", and this is not the Middle Way, and is "like a dog tying itself even tighter around the post", to use a simile the Buddha gave in a different context. This Sutta puts it best:

"Bhikkhus, **All is of a defiling nature (saṃkilesika-dhamma)**. And what, bhikkhus, is the All that is of a defiling nature? The eye is of a defiling nature Forms ... Eye-consciousness ... Eye-contact ... **Whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition** ... that too is of a defiling nature

"The ear ... The tongue ... The body ... The mind ... **Whatever feeling arises with mind-contact as condition** ... that too is of a defiling nature

“Seeing thus, bhikkhus, the instructed noble disciple experiences revulsion towards the eye, towards forms, towards eye-consciousness, towards eye-contact ... He understands: ‘... there is no more for this state of being.’”

—SN 35.38 [expanded from the abridged version in the translation]

And this connects perfectly with

For one who has abandoned greed,
and does not become greedy **amidst that which incites greed**
greed falls away from them
like water drops from a lotus

[...]

For one who has abandoned aversion,
and does not become averse **amidst that which incites aversion**
aversion falls away from hem
like a palm nut from it's stem.

—Itivuttaka 4.9

The point here is that, whether you like it or not, the mere arising of *any phenomenon whatsoever* is of a defiling nature, meaning that, if your practice consists of preventing certain phenomena from arising and ensuring that only certain others manifest (e.g. a bodily displeasure on account of a spider “should not” arise, but bodily equanimity or joy on account of a spider “should” arise), *you are defiled by what you think is “fine”, and have failed to equally turn the mind away from.* (This is incidentally how mettā is often wrongly practiced).

SN 35.28 is even more specific, mentioning greed, aversion and delusion specifically, point being that the problem is not that there is a fire in everything whatsoever that arises, but that because there is no dispassion, you are *touching some of it* always, and that is your suffering. Thus, when the noble disciple becomes fully dispassionate towards that which has fire in it (the entire world, internal and external), they will know that birth is destroyed and the holy life has been lived, as the discourse ends.

So, by telling a person that they need to allow even the fear to endure, what they will eventually learn to do is recognize that no amount of something that comes within the range of “the All” is truly the issue—because fire is harmless in and of itself—and they will be able to discern the subtle, gratuitous attitude “behind” the All, which is essentially craving.

However, it's important to note that there is absolutely no way to see this principle “where it is” with the intellect alone, because if there were, the utterance of another would be the only factor for stream entry, and there would be no need for developing yoniso manasikāra. There is no way to conceive of how the experience of a sotapanna, let alone

an Arahant, is able to be without conceivings, because, as per MN 1, conceiving is what makes one a puthujjana.

Thus:

So, in brief, dhammas and implications remain. Feelings remain. Bodily reactions remain. What doesn't remain is the mind's resistance towards anything.

Yes, but one has to understand that even the thought of “what doesn't remain is the mind's resistance towards anything” is inevitably — wrongly conceiving something that is within the All as “what doesn't remain” —, for as long as one is a puthujjana, and there is no way to “crawl out of that” even for a moment without ceasing to be a puthujjana.

In other words, the puthujjana's mind is conceiving an impermanent circumstance (the All is also defined by being utterly impermanent as the other Suttas in that series show), a particular, circumstantial, changeable configuration of the All as “freedom”, and this is why the puthujjana does not see the Four Noble Truths, no matter how much sense they make intellectually, and how much they may like to believe that they're observing them in their experience and “doing their 4 respective duties” of understanding, abandoning, experiencing, and developing.

It should be pointed out too that when it is said that “bodily fear still arises in an Arahant”, the person without the Right View who does not see paṭiccasamuppāda will also not be able to see that what qualifies any given experience as what it is, is that which it simultaneously depends upon. In this case, if we classify “fear” as pressure (phassa) or feeling loosely speaking, that is *determined as what it is* by the six sense base (salayatana), as the PS “chain” tells us.

Thus, if the six sense base has *ceased to be a determination* (sankhara), whatever requires it as its simultaneous basis to exist will have “ceased” too. The feeling or pressure that may arise on account of the six sense base is “ceased pressure” (“empty and hollow” as Ajahn Nyanamoli has described it in the past) meaning that it absolutely cannot be compared with what is happening when paṭiccasamuppāda is going with the grain in the ordinary person (anuloma), as opposed to against it (patiloma) with the Arahant.

My recent essay about the 4 satipaṭṭhānas is all about the principle that makes things cease to be sankharas when the Noble Disciple recollects it, and recognizing the principle at least would have to lead to sotapatti.

So then, how can we truly measure the mind and truly separate it experientially?

Through the sustained *lifestyle* of virtue and sense restraint, you eventually learn to see the “extent” of the All whether you want it or not, which is where the pressure to act out of unwholesome things will be arising.

The “container” within which the “stuff” of the All has to remain within long enough for you to see it is “leaking” as soon as you break your sense restraint, as Ven. Mahā-mogallāna put it in SN 35.243. (This is usually translated as “corrupted” but the word

“avassuta” which is the title of the discourse and the underlying metaphor really means “oozing; seeping; leaking”).

That is the necessary basis to start discerning the “distinction” between things and your craving on the right level, and one also should know the gist of what SN 1.1 describes. Initially one’s efforts in that attitude to “not delight in things without trying to get rid of them”, as we say, happening within the virtue and sense restraint, will be inaccurate. But if at no point one dupes oneself into thinking that one is succeeding in seeing the distinction between feeling and craving, one will eventually see for oneself what *yoniso manasikāra* really is, at which point the Four Noble Truths will be obvious, and “the All” will remain what it always was, in the following way:

[continued below due to lack of space...]

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 08:46:53

“Why now do you assume ‘a being’? Māra, is that your speculative view? This is a heap of sheer formations: Here no being is found.

“Just as, with an assemblage of parts, The word ‘chariot’ is used, So, when the aggregates exist, There is the convention ‘a being.’

“It’s only suffering that comes to be, Suffering that stands and falls away. Nothing but suffering comes to be, Nothing but suffering ceases.” —SN 7.10

But, again, the ordinary person will hear “this is just a heap of formations”, and the peripheral attitude of their mind that they still cannot see (*cittanimitta*) will—*literally* like a wild animal that does its own thing no matter what you tell it, hence we use that comparison so much—interpret that as “*the heap of formations must become different*”, i.e. **Nibbāna is the fact that the All is now a certain way as opposed to another**, and that is management, not *uprooting* of suffering, the title of this talk.

Note also how the above Sutta does not say that suffering “does not exist” and the Arahant becomes unaware of it. It’s simply that the full dispassion of the purified *citta* (as in, it’s not *them* being dispassionate, because “they” are the heap of formations that is nothing but suffering) makes it impossible for them to become involved with it and “touch” the fire as in SN 35.28 above, and thus there is impossibility to suffer *amidst* suffering, as Ajahn Nyanamoli likes to put it. Or, there is “Stillness Flowing”, as Ajahn Chah often said.

All this may make the path sound easier and that there is not much distance between a puthujjana and an Arahant, but it’s completely the opposite. The distance that there is is immeasurable, literally. It’s just that whatever the puthujjana conceives that “distance” to be is not what it is. Thus, when they walk along that “direction”, they are not approaching Arahantship, they are approaching a different kind of All that is less unpleasant, but they will still be “touching it” and getting burned—without recognizing it of course. Only the stream enterer and above has gained the blueprint to “bridge the gap” between themselves and the Arahant.

Pretty much all of what I wrote here is closely related to this topic, and the reply on the

other thread titled “meanings” is pointing to the same principle. All of this is just describing the Middle Way.

(I know this is even longer than usual, but this is the core of the Dhamma that can basically never be fully exhausted in explanation.)

Edit: fixed some typos.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 11:19:42

In the process of writing the other reply, I eventually forgot to add that there is a big “but” to all this.

When the mind is established in samādhi, even the body calms down, as the Suttas say. As in, the powerful, sharp feelings that may have otherwise arisen, say by the Arahant coming across the spider, will not even arise at that moment. This is why Ven. Mahākasapa in SN 16.5 decided to stay in his austere environment, which meant that he would have even easier access to the jhānas that in a more comfortable setting (“I see for myself a pleasant abiding here and now”, the first reason he listed). As in, that’s more pleasant than having to experience the “disturbance of the body” mentioned in MN 121 *without* samādhi, but either way there would be no suffering if he had to leave that environment. This is one example of how an Arahant can perfectly well still have “preferences”, something contemporary views would sometimes deny.

The “body calming down”, which means essentially the senses, is what SN 35.247 refers to, where the animals eventually become tired and lay down, a simile for how the senses cease to pull towards agreeable things and away from disagreeable ones.

This Sutta illustrates very well our point that what leads to samādhi is sense restraint and the practice of sati as *recollection of a context*, not *attention to one thing*. As it says, you tie the animals to the post, and then **let them try to get away as much as they want, making sure only that the rope and post (context) do not budge**. This is what you do with right context and yoniso manasikāra, as opposed to the contemporary approach of taking up an object, which is more akin to shooting the animals with a tranquilizer gun so that they stop pulling ASAP.

Therefore, the practice of samādhi is not something *apart* from the withstanding of pressure without delighting in it that I have been alluding to here. It’s not about “suppressing things”, as some would say in regard to the five hindrances. That is not within the Middle Way, so whatever wisdom that samādhi will give rise to, no matter how calm your body feels, is not the right one. For this reason there is wrong samādhi and right samādhi mentioned in the Suttas many times, and wrong samādhi is there when wrong view is there, i.e. that the All is the problem, not one’s craving in regard to it. *There is no mention that there will be some sort of alarm warning you that “this is wrong!”*, since otherwise no one would practice it, keeping in mind the fact that the puthujjana fails to see skilful as skilful and unskilful as unskilful by definition. “Wrong samādhi” would naturally be taken by practitioners as that which anybody but them might be doing, and as some ridiculous

practice that only adherents of other religions would engage in.

So, quite contrary to what people often misunderstand from our instruction, “enduring things on the right level” long enough naturally results in samādhi, and in the body calming down. It’s just that one initially needs to be able to take on trust that what one’s wild mind is trying to convince is the true problem (the All, the feeling that has arisen, the perceptions of fear, whatever), actually isn’t. This is why, in AN 10.61, “faith” or “trust” (saddhā) is said to be the prerequisite for yoniso manasikāra, which is what “starves” the hindrances according to SN 46.51.

Last but not least, “body becoming calm” in samādhi does not *necessarily* mean sitting still, since, as said above, that primarily refers to the senses and their pressure, not to one’s bodily posture and sensations. And one thing is absolutely sure: the first jhāna would not involve sitting perfectly still, given that vitakkavicāra is naturally a form of movement in relation to the 5 senses.

AN 3.64 (SuttaCentral numbering) has one imagine the Buddha, walking, standing, sitting and lying down while his mind is in the “celestial abidings” of the four jhānas.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 12:48:29 (in reply to a comment not included)

Before I reply, what would be your answer to the first two questions?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 12:58:29 (in reply to a comment not included)

Also, how do you think what I wrote here relates to the “plane” I was referring to here, in a practical way that could help you transcend it eventually?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 23:25:06 (in reply to a comment not included)

I’m not certain why exactly a more austere environment than that compared to a monk’s lifestyle would be more conducive for jhanas...

The answer you gave is correct in a general sense, but there is a much more acute reason. It should be clear from reflecting on what I wrote here that the main point is *pressure* of any kind is not the problem, and that calm arises by enduring the pressure on the “right level”, which in turn leads to the pressure being temporarily not even felt (i.e. when there is samādhi).

So, by living in a more austere environment where you will be constantly exposed to discomfort, you have *no choice* but to be enduring pressure *all the time*, and, when you have learned the principle of right context and have tamed the mind to the point of being an Arahant like he was, that means you have a constant incentive to not let the context lapse

so as to keep even the senses, not just the citta, calm. (Because the whole point of Arahantship is that you don't have to be practicing mindfulness anymore, so an Arahant can just forget about everything the Buddha taught and be completely fine, and in a comfortable environment they would naturally tend to do so more—not that there is ignorance involved in that of course. It's just that their samādhi won't be as good, but since they are dispassionate towards even the presence or absence of samādhi, ultimately they are not affected by either.)

As I said above on how restraint makes you become aware of the full “size” of the All, taking that restraint even further, to the point of asceticism, *if you do it for the right reasons and not for foolish self-mortification*, reveals the “size” of that All even more, so that, in the case on an Arahant who was already fully incapable of “touching it” by default, they can now even start “moving away from it”, so to speak (doesn't mean you stop perceiving it, but literally that the mind is becoming more and more “elevated” while it's there, like a hot air balloon. That's samādhi, not going “deeper” into something like people think).

And, ironically that is a “pleasant abiding”, not a specific configuration of a pleasant All that you take to be samādhi. That's still “burning you” if you take it for granted and don't turn the mind away from it although you won't realize, so it can never be the same profound, literally immeasurable through the “Allness of the All”, joy and relief, even if your body is having an orgasm. This is why samādhi has to lead to abandoning fetters whether one likes it or not and is the most refined factor of the Path—it's the most palpable thing that takes you in the same direction of enduring pressure correctly, and “rewards” you on account of it to boot, so that eventually you end up with a mind like AN 6.55 and SN 35.228 describe even outside of samādhi.

And this is the only feasible explanation as to how Bāhiya became immediately an Arahant upon hearing “in the seen let there just be the seen”. Samādhi is already an emulation of that principle, although the person, if they haven't been told about anattā (*the “you will be neither here nor yonder...” bit*), would not be able to surmount the higher “plane” of the *samādhi itself*, so that the mind becomes permanently free. In other words, Bāhiya *must* have been very skilled in jhānas, which is why he genuinely thought he was an Arahant as the Bahiyasutta says. A person who became enlightened so easily could not have been lying to themselves and just being arrogant. As the Buddha said, same would've happened with his former formless attainment teachers who unfortunately passed away before he could teach them the Dhamma. And all of these were hardcore “ascetics”.

Experientially, it would be like having a very strong urge towards an activity that, in a way, feels like it has to be done...

Yes, that would be a good example. Any intention can be the basis for unwholesome and acting out of pressure, although of course there is no hope in recognizing the most general level of the principle unless the virtue, celibacy and restraint are there from well beforehand, and the mind has already “dried up” from unwholesome quite a bit on account of them, a process which you cannot “accelerate” so that it happens within 10 days, for instance.

Then what follows is rinse and repeat development of the theme of danger,

and if pressure comes towards an action, you then bring back the theme and its implications. Sometimes you have to just stick it out, despite the horrible pressure and your mind just not wanting to listen. But you would know that this will be for your welfare. And in time, you would see that you will not be bothered as much as before, which will be a very peaceful experience.

Certainly. That's why "you" are the trainer who ultimately needs to be the "adult" so to speak, and know what is for the welfare of both you and the wild animal in the end. And you start "knowing" at least the information of what a good trainer is by reading the Suttas, contemplating, etc.

Now of course, one must also not be *hoping* for a diminishing of pressure. What will happen is that sometimes you will have the right attitude and will be able to tame the mind a little bit on the right level, but at other times the tendency to try to "configure" the All will come back and you won't even realize it (as in, you're trying to "aim" at a new feeling now, instead of enduring whatever is there). So that's why I said on the other reply I linked to on the other comment that you must completely give up the expectation of "something" that will come OR go away as a result of the context, and focus on "including", as we say, the entirety of expectations, hopes, desires, ideas, and notions that may arise within the container of the All that is dangerous to act out of even mentally.

(That doesn't mean you start trying to practice some sort of "open awareness" to include everything at once, which in the end will mean just including irrelevant sensations and perceptions, the sound of the birds or whatever. It just means that whatever is present now, especially in terms of pleasant or unpleasant thoughts, you don't start "running with your own feet" on account of it, even if the mind is thinking it on its own accord. That's what it means to "not grasp at signs and features"—it doesn't mean *not having* signs and features. It's also what non-proliferation (nippapañca) means, not stopping thinking and concepts or whatnot).

Edit: Regarding the first part about "asceticism", the Jains (and even some Buddhist monks today) go wrong in that, for them, asceticism was basically rooted in wishful thinking that suffering would be cured eventually on account of it, and were not making effort to *understand* the mental resistance caused by depriving themselves of comfort, which would have led them to jhānas at least, like Bāhiya certainly must've had (another contemporary view is that most other ascetics back then had only samādhi but no wisdom, but there is no support for that in the Suttas. The ones who did have samādhi were these rare cases who became enlightened easily).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 23:37:58 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

One of the most important factors is the context, and the context is the driving force that will help me transcend it eventually.

The context is the driving force for development of samadhi and the progression towards jhanas.

Yes, but what I was hinting at was the fact that the context is “polluted” for as long as it maintains that *something* in the experience should change. *Looking forward to a pleasant experience* of peace means hoping for such a change instead of being exclusively concerned with the context (that’s the simile of the hen *wishing* for the eggs to hatch instead of just sitting on them regardless of her wishes, because of which the eggs don’t hatch).

So, only by including *even that* within the context is there a chance that you may be transcending the entire “plane” of sensuality and hindrances that I referred to in the comment I linked. Otherwise, that renunciation is really just a subtler desire.

It’s also what I meant there by mentioning that if one’s “pleasure of seclusion” depends on *exclusively* having thoughts of renunciation, and there is no pressure there at the same time to which that renunciation is applying, so both the pressure and the context “counterweighing” each other at the same time, then that’s not the sort of pleasure that should be cultivated. It will be a form of dependence on circumstances.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 23:12:24 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The answer is implicit in the replies I wrote on this thread.

internal perceptions of fear and terror don’t arise in the suttas for arahants though

This is true, because “internal” refers to the citta as opposed to the six senses (hence MN 10 talks about knowing whether a hindrance is “internally” present, a word which has a very clear purpose there because all hindrances are inherently not in the outside world, so it has to mean more than just that).

the suttas consistently note that “fear, horripilation, & terror” can’t be aroused in an arahant.

That is also true, if we understand it in that “internal” sense.

and so the the bodily reactions of fear and terror don’t arise either.

As I wrote in the “In the process of...” reply above, cessation of bodily reactions only occurs during samādhi, which an Arahant is not perpetually within. Also, when Māra is said to tempt the Buddha or Arahants in the Suttas, what he is essentially doing is arousing bodily reactions, as the body (six senses) is his property that he can manipulate as he wishes, which he says himself in SN 4.19 (here what is translated generally as “contact and its field/base of consciousness” is what we often refer to as “pressure” (phassa). When there is pleasant pressure there is always a corresponding pleasant feeling, and so on.)

He doesn’t “tempt” only by speaking random verses and interrupting their seclusion.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 09:40:11 (in reply to a comment not included)

An Arahant cannot “get aroused” in a sense. See this statement from the Vinaya, Parajika 1:

At one time a monk was lying down in the Jātiyā Grove at Bhaddiya, having gone there for the day’s meditation. He had an erection because of wind. A certain woman saw him and sat down on his penis. Having taken her pleasure, she left. Seeing the moisture, the monks told the Buddha. “Monks, an erection occurs for five reasons: because of sensual desire, feces, urine, or wind, or because of being stung by caterpillars. It’s impossible that that monk had an erection because of sensual desire. That monk is a perfected one. There’s no offense for that monk.”

The fact that Mara can just control bodily reactions make Arahants more human but also more impressive.

What I meant with bodily reactions wasn’t so much this, but that when thoughts about the past arise or memories about the future (the arising of which is in Māra’s control in a sense, you can’t completely prevent certain things from coming up in your mind, proven by how some monks are overcome by sexual fantasies even though they don’t want to have them) there is implicit “pressure” arising on the level of the senses. Hence SN 4.19 I quoted saying that pressure/phassa belongs to Māra. But because the Arahant’s are developed towards the pressure, there is no lust or aversion whatsoever.

This is what SN 35.240 mean and SN 35.243 mean by saying that Māra tries to “gain access” through each sense base pretty much constantly. In the latter Sutta even says “he overwhelms sights; sights don’t overwhelm him”. It’s not that the sights changed their significance, but that the mind became developed in regard to them.

The two similes Mahāmoggallāna gives about the “blazing glass torch” approaching either a shed or dry reeds or a plastered hut show that the attack is not *different*. What’s different is what the house is made of.

See also MN 119 about the “benefits of kayagatasati”. It doesn’t say that fear and dread or delight and discontent do not arise, but that *you overwhelm them*, they don’t overwhelm *you*.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 14:33:10 (in reply to a comment not included)

Is it just me, or did I just read a sutta where a woman raped a monk, and it was pretty much okay because it was not out of sensual desire? ☒

No, not so fast... it doesn’t say that the monk consented to it. If you consent to it you’re not a monk anymore; that’s how the first pārājika works. So he must have been ill or something.

See this:

“Again, some bhikkhu can endure the clouds of dust, the crests of the standards, the uproar, and a blow. Having triumphed in that battle, he emerges victorious and settles at the head of the battlefield. What is the victory in his case? When the bhikkhu has gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, a woman approaches him, sits down or lies down next to him, and embraces him. But he disentangles himself, frees himself, and goes off wherever he wants

“He resorts to a secluded lodging: the forest, the foot of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle highland, the open air, a heap of straw. Gone to the forest, to the foot of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down, folding his legs crosswise, straightening his body, and establishing mindfulness in front of him. Having abandoned longing for the world, he dwells with a mind free from longing; he purifies his mind from longing. Having abandoned ill will and hatred, he dwells with a mind free from ill will, compassionate toward all living beings; he purifies his mind from ill will and hatred. Having abandoned dullness and drowsiness, he dwells free from dullness and drowsiness, percipient of light, mindful and clearly comprehending; he purifies his mind from dullness and drowsiness. Having abandoned restlessness and remorse, he dwells without agitation, with a mind inwardly peaceful; he purifies his mind from restlessness and remorse. Having abandoned doubt, he dwells having gone beyond doubt, unperplexed about wholesome qualities; he purifies his mind from doubt.

“Having abandoned these five hindrances, defilements of the mind that weaken wisdom, secluded from sensuality, secluded from unwholesome states, he enters and dwells in the first jhāna ...

—AN 3.75

(Note that the comparison with soldiers in this Sutta is partially to inspire the monks, but it’s not rooted in some puritanical notions. It’s easy to think that as someone who has never taken on celibacy for life. You literally win the hardest battle of all, because there is a knife right at your throat to say “yes” to it... coming from your own body, of course, that you can’t be outside of even if you want to. A person who has not been celibate for several months or years may think they can easily just say “no” and thus sexual intercourse is not a big deal, but that’s just like how if an addict took their heroin 15 minutes ago, they won’t had a hard time not taking it again anytime soon).

In the “case studies” of the first pārājika, there are other stories of monks who were assaulted by women and because they were conscious of what was happening, they immediately kicked them off and left. Those who consented consciously were expelled.

Fundamentally, although the form of an Arahant or Anāgāmi who is not in samādhi still “pulls” towards the counterpart of their body and finds that possibility inherently alluring, *the citta* of the Arahant (or even the puthujjana free from sensuality in MN 142, i.e. who

gets jhānas) perceives *their own body* as a “charcoal pit” by default, and when it’s pulling like that even more so (SN 12.66 says *your senses* are that in the world that is pleasant and agreeable, and **that** is what is being compared to a poisonous drink. The objects are secondary. The “pull” I’m referring to is the nice appearance, aroma and taste of the drink, which an Arahant does not get rid of, as the simile implies).

So since *choice/kamma* is always rooted in the citta (connected in Pali to cetana) they would be incapable of consenting.

Also, the fact that the monk proceeds to enter the jhānas after the incident in the Sutta I quoted is not a coincidence. Contrary to the way it works with micchāsamādhī, where this occurrence would have left “imprints” on the mind that would prevent one from focusing well on the object for a good while—refusing to listen to one’s biological drives *through* the right context of danger and non-ownership, not of denial and ignoring, is the true pleasure of withdrawal from unwholesome. Meaning, if this were to happen to you every day, your jhāna would only be strengthened.

Jesus Christ, so in that situation, Mara is just taking control of his body and the woman’s and just doing as he sees fit. I understand that it’s Mara’s, but couldn’t that Arahant or Anagami just leave or do something to avoid that situation? Even if it was not done out of sensual desire, those animals would definitely be more wild than they were.

Not quite. Māra cannot “possess your body”. That’s *never* what we would mean with “eliciting bodily reactions”. What Māra can do is present objects, mainly to your sixth sense base, that will cause your body to experience its present state as “lacking”. At least that’s the only access he would have when you’re in the forest. This is the reason for the statements in MN 150.

When the body perceives that “lack” that is being pointed at by mano (also part of the body), it “reacts” to it with wanting (hence “bodily reaction”), but if the citta is developed in withstanding that “lack”, no action, even mental, will be committed on account of it, and the arising of a bodily saṅkhāra will not be proliferated into lust (see the discussion of “transparent mind”), not even with one’s (1) intentional thinking with delight, nor (2) denial and aversion, that would be present in the ordinary, untamed citta that knows nothing apart from those 2.

So yes, they would *never* allow their animals to get wild like that intentionally. *Actions* result in an entirely different level of wildness than the arising of mere perceptions does. That’s why without actions, there is no suffering. Only the ordinary person makes their senses wild on purpose and *enjoys it*, sadly not being aware that they’re about to relinquish their well-being in the stupidest, **most preventable** way of all. Pulling the trigger on yourself, pretty much.

But either way, the developed mind is not afraid of the animals getting infinitely wild. Plus, that wildness would, if they’re in good health and in seclusion, *aid* in outlining the first jhāna.

Edit: I should note a mistranslation in the last Sutta I linked, which will also serve to illus-

trate the point. “Compelling” understates the true meaning of “bhusa”, meaning “strong, mighty, forceful, intense, potent”. So the translator has the view that Arahantship is about not experiencing feelings, pretty much.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2024-05-20 03:22:49 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, it’s actually the previous one. SuttaCentral is sometimes one Sutta behind the app I use.

AN 4.12 has similar implications.

meaning

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** cajuputoil 2023-11-10 11:41:16

are we looking for the meaning of something

or do we give meaning to something

this phenomenon that we called a perception can be called a meaning too isnt,it?

It can be said that in the beginning we give meaning to everything, especially when we were a new born baby, a child and do not know even the meaning of the language we use.

So what is the correct meaning according to the Buddha?

And what criteria are used to understand that a perception is a wrong perception?

How does meaning become a tool or one of a vehicle toward right view?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 00:16:47

It can be said that in the beginning we give meaning to everything, especially when we were a new born baby, a child and do not know even the meaning of the language we use.

This needs qualification. “We” don’t give meaning to things. Rather, the five aggregates are meaningful in and of themselves.

The view you seem to refer to often leads to the idea that “concepts” or even “language” are the basis for ignorance, and that to achieve true knowledge one must abolish concepts and remove the meanings that experience naturally has. This is wrong view, a suggested “shortcut” to enlightenment that only covers up one’s suffering in the end.

So what is the correct meaning according to the Buddha?

You could say that ultimately there is no correct meaning, and yet experience always has its own meaning at any given time, even for an Arahant. The ultimate goal of practicing

the Buddha's teaching is to gain the ability allow experience to have the meaning that it has always had (the five aggregates persisting, changing or persisting-while-changing) without craving for or against it (Arahantship).

This relates to what I wrote here regarding how one must allow **any** feeling (and of course any other aggregate), no matter on account of what it manifests and what meaning it has, to endure.

To use the example in that thread, the experience of faeces and urine has a meaning of "this is disgusting", and what one must do to practice properly is not *try to get rid of that*, but learn how there can come to be no aversion despite the very sharp and intense presence of that meaning. Yoniso manasikāra is what starts taking one in that direction.

How does meaning become a tool or one of a vehicle toward right view?

So, in the process of developing this "ultimate aspect" of the teaching which is Arahantship, one needs to learn to discern certain meanings within the experience which are overlooked by default. These are the things that the Buddha talked about as "the practice", such as discerning the three characteristics, the four satipatthanas, the danger in sensual pleasures, and so on.

However, the key is to be able to *recognize* those meanings in the experience as being already there, even when you were not thinking about them, without misusing them to *suppress* the other meanings that one feels uncomfortable with, such as the meaning of disgust described above, or even the meaning of "agreeability" in a pleasant sense object. Misusing them in that way entails diverging from the Middle Way.

In other words, the right meanings can only be truly seen by *enduring* the pressure and discomfort of the "wrong" meanings. Then, once those "right" meanings sit at the background of the "wrong" meanings whenever they arise, one does not even need to cultivate the "right" meanings anymore, and this is essentially Arahantship, the ability to even forget about "dukkha" or anything else the Buddha said without any perversions of perception being possible.

And what criteria are used to understand that a perception is a wrong perception?

Thus, don't try to figure out what is wrong perception by looking at the *experience*, such as how something makes you feel or what meaning it has, given that an Arahant still perfectly experiences even sensual objects as pleasant (but they do not seek them out) and disagreeable experiences as unwanted (Ven. Channa in MN 144).

Instead, think of "wrong perception" as being first and foremost measured by your *choice to act* by body, speech and mind in unwholesome ways with regard to the perception that was already there before you acted. By purifying that, all perversions of perception are purified.

(All this is why the preface to Ajahn Nyanamoli's essay with the same title talks about "*understanding meanings*" instead of "looking for "*The Meaning*")

I've been having crisis lately

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Handsome_God123 2023-11-09 10:52:53

My parents are approaching old age right now, and as their son I have to take care of them. Although I care about them as they have been a good parents to me, I'm really panicking over the thoughts of one day I need to help them urinate and defecate.

I've always been a clean freak, and the thought of taking care of someone else bodily fluid deeply scares me. I also visited some subreddits about caring for aging parents, and it makes me even more anxious and depressed.

Idk, I guess it's just part of life and I have to deal with it, but how do you not get affected by looking at gross things and smelling them? Idk if achieving noble attainments can even make you not affected by it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 23:30:36

Idk, I guess it's just part of life and I have to deal with it, but how do you not get affected by looking at gross things and smelling them? Idk if achieving noble attainments can even make you not affected by it.

Don't worry about *not experiencing* disgust, because that is not true equanimity (which, despite how it may sound, makes the path immeasurably harder, not easier, but at the same time makes it doable, not a mere fatasy, after a tremendous amount of effort, contemplation, and time):

“Herein, what are the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life? On seeing a form with the eye, equanimity arises in a foolish infatuated ordinary person, in an untaught ordinary person who has not conquered his limitations or conquered the results [of action] and who is blind to danger. **Such equanimity as this does not transcend the form; that is why it is called equanimity based on the household life.** “On hearing a sound with the ear...On smelling an odour with the nose...On tasting a flavour with the tongue...On touching a tangible with the body...On cognizing a mind-object with the mind, equanimity arises in a foolish infatuated ordinary person, in an untaught ordinary person who has not conquered his limitations or conquered the results [of action] and who is blind to danger. Such equanimity as this does not transcend the mind-object; that is why it is called equanimity based on the household life. These are the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life.

“Herein, what are the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation? When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of forms, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that forms both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, equanimity

arises. **Such equanimity as this transcends the form; that is why it is called equanimity based on renunciation.** “When, by knowing the impermanence, change, fading away, and cessation of sounds...of odours...of flavours...of tangibles... of mind-objects, one sees as it actually is with proper wisdom that mind-objects both formerly and now are all impermanent, suffering, and subject to change, equanimity arises. Such equanimity as this transcends the mind-object; that is why it is called equanimity based on renunciation. These are the six kinds of equanimity based on renunciation. —MN 137

You will eventually develop equanimity that “transcends the object” first and foremost through keeping the 8 precepts and sense restraint in the right way. Instead of trying to force yourself through psychotherapy to stop perceiving sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touches as agreeable or disagreeable so as to make your restraint easier, you focus on *not resisting* the experience of disagreeable when it arises, regardless of how disagreeable it is, and not acting towards agreeable objects, no matter how agreeable they are. You don’t try to “stop” either of them, which would be you claiming ownership over the aggregate of feeling. That’s because feeling, no matter how intense, is *part* of the object, it’s not part of “you”. So if your equanimity depends on modifying the feeling, as is the usual approach, you will still be “infatuated, not transcending the object”, like the passage above describes.

This would lead eventually to the *mind* not being affected *in the face of disgust*, a reaction of your body which is ultimately not in your control, and with that any suffering it might cause you will have completely disappeared. In fact, the disgust would remind you of your freedom of mind and dispassion on the right level. Through this you would also recognize the way out of every single unwholesome state that might arise.

But this is absolutely not a magic pill, and it’s not enough to understand it in theory. It requires a complete overhaul of the way you live to enable it, unlike the ways of developing “equanimity” you would tend to hear about today.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 05:35:57 (in reply to a comment not included)

This is an interesting sutta reference that I wasn’t too familiar with.

Understandably. Unfortunately, this belongs to a large corpus of Suttas that are either overlooked, or assumed to have some trifle meaning, and yet what they point to is absolutely key.

In what sense is it using the term “infatuation”? Infatuation seems like an odd pairing with equanimity.

This could be explained in various ways, but since the discussion here has mainly gone in the direction of feeling:

“How, householder, is one afflicted in body and afflicted in mind? Here, householder, the uninstructed worldling, who is not a seer of the noble ones and

is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, who is not a seer of superior persons and is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma, regards [form....] feeling as self, or self as possessing feeling, or feeling as in self, or self as in feeling. **He lives obsessed by the notions: 'I am feeling, feeling is mine.'** **As he lives obsessed by these notions, that feeling of his changes and alters. With the change and alteration of feeling, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair.** [perception ... intentions consciousness....] —SN 22.1

That “living obsessed by these notions” is, in passing, not something that the person will be aware of at the core level where it is, since otherwise it would not be happening. The notion of “mine” with regard to feeling is no less than the core of all infatuations, and the name “infatuation” fits well in fact because it’s something that causes perspective to be muddled, which means that simply having it entails not being clear about its nature... and not being clear about its nature entails having it. If one were to become aware of it, it would have to disappear, never to return (hence the categorical divide found in the Suttas between noble disciple and ordinary person).

Therefore, bhikkhus, **any** kind of feeling whatsoever, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, **gross or subtle, inferior or superior**, far or near, all feeling should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’ —SN 22.59

Now, if a person takes on the practice of equanimity with the view that certain feelings should not arise because *they* are the suffering, they are for that very reason failing to truly see “this is not mine” with regard to **any** kind of feeling, regardless of whether it’s on account of this or on account of that. Because that’s the point of the Dhamma: no amount of feeling IS suffering; rather, *craving* in regard to feeling is suffering. Most Buddhists would reply with “of course”, but, as said above, if one had understood this even to the basic degree, suffering would have permanently diminished to “7 grains of sand”, as the Suttas say.

For as long as a person’s equanimity rests upon even a tiny attitude of control towards feeling, the infatuation, the notion of “mine” has not been abandoned. It is simply going in the opposite direction than before. Furthermore, that equanimity will be circumstantial and flimsy, because there simply are things that are felt extremely unpleasantly for as long as one is alive (and that is not a problem if there is no craving), and one can only succeed so much in avoiding them (which people who take on the practice tend to become skilled at over time.)

Since such a state of mind is inherently liable to deteriorate, it is essentially of the nature of a possession that one can be afraid of losing, and that entails a subtle degree of intoxication with it as well, which will also not be obvious to the untrained mind.

“Bhante, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly liberated in mind, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into range of the eye, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he observes its vanishing. Even if powerful sounds cognizable

by the ear come into range of the ear ... Even if powerful odors cognizable by the nose come into range of the nose ... Even if powerful tastes cognizable by the tongue come into range of the tongue ... Even if powerful tactile objects cognizable by the body come into range of the body ... Even if powerful phenomena cognizable by the mind come into range of the mind, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he observes its vanishing.

“Suppose, Bhante, there were a stone mountain, without clefts or fissures, one solid mass. If a violent rainstorm should come from the east, it could not make it quake, wobble, and tremble; if a violent rainstorm should come from the west ... from the north ... from the south, it could not make it quake, wobble, and tremble. So too, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly liberated in mind, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into range of the eye ... Even if powerful phenomena cognizable by the mind come into range of the mind, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he observes its vanishing. —AN 6.55

Instead of what this passage describes, the “infatuated equanimity” is more like “when a person abides thus, **no form that comes into the range of the eye is powerful**” And this is temporary, shaky freedom from *feeling*, not freedom from craving, and adhering to it with the idea that it’s the latter will obstruct one from treading the much harder path towards actually reaching it.

To be more specific, we could say that the misconception lies in thinking that if one can have certain *perceptions* arise (say, of faeces and urine as the questioner mentioned) and yet not experience the usual *feeling* that comes with them, there is equanimity. MN 137 quoted above actually says “has not overcome the boundary” not “...his limitations” in Pali. That boundary is the domain of feeling, which the person cannot withstand if the temporary suppression fails.

This is why the Suttas speak even of “micchāvimutti”, wrong liberation. It’s not that there is no liberation in such a case, but that it’s not the right one that will remain permanently and stand the test of when it’s time for the body to break apart at the latest—the most excruciating experience possible. The Buddha always alluded to death when he wanted to talk about immense pain, and it is utterly gratuitous to assume that experience just suddenly shuts off if you get shot in the head, for example.

(On extremely disagreeable feelings still arising when there is no craving, see Arahant Channa’s description of his experience prior to his own suicide in MN 144. Notice how there was very clearly a feeling there; it was not just “neutral” bodily sensations, and his reply when questioned as not “I’m fine, it’s just a sensation” as many would expect from an Arahant—and yet, he was completely free from suffering despite that. For a Sutta with a similar message to AN 6.55 above, see SN 35.228, also referring to the Arahant.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 08:53:05 (in reply to a comment not included)

What does it mean Bhante? Would it still be prone to puking when it see gross stuff if I have develop it enough?

You may still be prone, or you may not.

The thing to understand is that *right now* there is fear in your mind, and that's the only reason you're asking the question. If you were to abandon that fear here and now, you wouldn't be asking the question with anxiety. You would stop caring whether you will puke or not because you would know that either way you will not suffer (and, if anything, *this* would most strongly contribute to your not puking, more than any psychotherapy you might do while you're still *afraid* of that unpleasant feeling and simply try to make it not be there).

It also depends on one's samādhi level at the time, which even for an Arahant can be quite low if they've been really sick (Ven. Channa in MN 144 I quoted above) or busy with mundane things and with little seclusion (SN 17.30). Nevertheless, their inability to suffer *even* if the body felt like puking would never deteriorate, and they would not run away from things on account of fear.

Of course, "samādhi" here is to be understood as the imperturbable, unified (ekagga) context and clarity of comprehension of the sense domain that leads even the body to calm down completely (temporarily). Not as being absorbed in one thing.

So, you could summarize it like this: instead of trying to abandon the disgust directly and forcefully, focus only on learning to abandon fear of disgust (or of any kind of emotional pressure). That would prevent you from having any issues in your life, even if you had to experience your worst nightmare in the flesh.

(Edited accidental reference to SN 12.28 instead of SN 17.30)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 09:58:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

Sure. Also, I forgot to mention, this is essentially the entire point of my essay The Meaning of Yoniso Manasikara.

What I wrote here would probably serve to clarify points there that seem obscure.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 10:33:32 (in reply to a comment not included)

So there is reactive equanimity, as in one focus on the perception of the arisen object of the senses, which allows the person to forget about, or avoid/turn a blind eye to uncomfortable thoughts and feelings in regard to the unpleasant situation.

Yes, “reactive equanimity” is a good term. The person is not aware that their attempt to not feel the feeling is already a reaction to the feeling (and fundamentally it always subtly remains at the back of your mind, you’re just suppressing it), thus it’s rooted in aversion even though the stated intention is to abandon unwholesome. That’s why it’s said that the Right View is the beginning of the Middle Way, and the whole world adheres to either welcoming or rejecting. This includes even people who intellectually agree with the Buddha’s teaching but still don’t have the Right View. It’s not a matter of choice. This attempt towards “reactive equanimity” is also the subtlest form of self-mortification that won’t necessarily feel painful at all for the undeveloped mind, and may even give rise to blissful experiences, which are not jhāna because they’re outside the Middle Way.

This is what I alluded to here when I wrote that no matter how blissful those experiences are, they are like torture (in an *existential*, not bodily sense) compared to the result of practicing the Middle Way. That’s not an exaggeration, and it happens precisely because one who doesn’t see the Middle Way also doesn’t see the deeply rooted level of dukkha that really matters (the 4NT come and go together, as per SN 56.30) and is fully able to ignore it and focus on the superficial pleasure (or superficial equanimity) instead.

And is therefore no longer occupied with obsessing over/delighting in/sticking to whatever that is felt and thought in regard to whatever phenomena that is presently enduring?

Pretty much. The most accurate description is, there is no longer movement *internally* despite any amount of emotional pressure that may arise, which is to say, any movement, even if you’re not making active effort to contemplate anicca, dukkha and anatta, or anything for that matter. This is essentially the meaning of Ajahn Chah’s “Still Flowing Water” metaphor, sadly overlooked by most of the people who are into his teachings. He also gave a simile of a person who perfectly understands how monkeys are, and is therefore no longer invested in trying to get the monkey to behave differently. He remains at ease no matter what the monkey does. He said this explicitly in the context of training the mind, and the wrong expectations people usually have about samadhi, that it’s about suppressing thoughts and similar.

(“The monkey” obviously refers to the moods, feelings and thoughts that one learns to be undisturbed by, not to one *committing actions* rooted in lust or aversion on account of those phenomena. That already means being “baited” by the monkey’s tricks).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 11:52:00 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Oops, thanks for the heads-up. That’s not even remotely what I was referencing. I look up Suttas through a Pāli app that doesn’t use the usual numbering scheme, so I have to be careful not to end up quoting Suttas with similar names but totally different contents. On top of that, the Wisdom Publications versions I always use to quote translations often differ in numbering by one or 2 Suttas from the SuttaCentral version.

This is the Sutta.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2024-01-23 03:39:11 (in reply to a comment not included)

Is it where that ‘immediate level’ and ‘reflexive level’ come into play, where the disagreeable feeling linked to having to deal with someone else’s bodily fluid would be at the immediate level, whereas not resisting the disgust would be at the reflexive level?

You could put it that way. The immediate level is where the feeling is experienced (the object); the reflexive level is where you either try to get rid of it or endure it rightly.

Of course this alone is not the same as you *understanding* that feeling is not self, that it’s not “in you”, because that would be the Right View. But if you refrain from acting out of feelings long enough through the context (yoniso manasikāra) that you heard and took on (parato ghoso, the utterance of another), which is that they are part of the experience you can’t ultimately control, you would eventually see for yourself that that’s the way it is.

Avoiding Pride From Attainments

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Self_Reflector 2023-11-08 15:16:03

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 03:34:43

Regarding your comment above:

As far as my arguments go, I realized very early in my interactions here that my views are not welcome and can not be defended.

Perhaps you are confusing the fact that your views will most likely be met with counterarguments by default if they are discrepant with HH views (since this is an HH subreddit) with you not having the freedom to present your position.

You may jump to that conclusion given that members might start downvoting, falling into a more personal attack and start launching borderline *ad hominem*s instead of merely refuting the relevant views and ideas, but ultimately that’s every person being responsible and free with regard to the intentions behind their actions.

It should just be clear that speaking out of ill-will and attacking people personally, in case that’s what you’ve experienced here in the past, is not in line with HH views at all, hence not all that people say here should be taken to be representative of those views.

Everyone is free to attempt to defend their views as much as they can in the face of the counterarguments that are presented, and there are no “forum rules”, but, needless to say, discussion will not be fruitful and the purpose of the forum will not be served “for whomever expects to be agreed with by default without presenting convincing evidence for their position. That applies even in mundane situations, not to mention the Dhamma.

Also, I can't speak for everyone, but I'd venture to say that people would be more open to hearing and engaging in an argument when it's well supported, even if it contradicts their beliefs.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 08:56:39 (in reply to a comment not included)

At any rate, I appreciate your invitation to have me continue to participate in this community. I run a community too and I welcome those who challenge my views in a respectful way. I'm sure you see it the same.

Of course, anything goes, respectfully or disrespectfully as long as there's some semblance of an argument being put forth and it's not just noise.

Do you have any thoughts on the sutta I posted?

Yes, happy to share. I'm not exactly sure what is your interpretation here, but I'll proceed on the assumption that you take it to refer to a noble disciple becoming heedless and arrogant:

It must be noted that this Sutta was told in the context of Devadatta, if you read the beginning. That's why at the end it says, "he does not become heedless and achieves non-occasional liberation, meaning that the "knowledge and vision" that person had was not at the level of irreversible, noble insight. It refers to the psychic powers like divine vision that Devadatta had acquired as a result of the 4th jhāna, because of which he became greedy, lost the jhānas of course, and never actually understood the Dhamma despite having reached such a (temporarily) purified state.

(One must also remember that the 4 separate noble attainments had not been outlined for the majority of the Buddha's career, so in a lot of Suttas, everything he would list before Arahantship itself would still be reachable by puthujjanas, such as in this case).

This discourse cannot possibly be referring to a noble disciple, because, as MN 7 says, one must abandon:

"Covetousness... ill-will... anger... resentment... contempt... insolence... envy... avarice... deceit... fraud... obduracy... rivalry... conceit... arrogance... vanity... negligence..."

...*first* in order to gain confirmed confidence in the Triple Gem (stream entry). These are the things that are abandoned *forever* by such a person, unlike the hindrances and sensuality that are overcome only temporarily before stream entry. This is essentially the first, coarsest "layer" of greed, aversion and delusion that leads to a bad destination, which is why it's completely absent in a sotapanna, let alone higher.

What this means is that a sotapanna or higher is incapable of, as MN 29 you quoted says "exalting themselves and disparaging others", of being condescending, patronizing, and attacking people personally to prove a point of Dhamma. That unwholesome intention simply cannot arise unless there is self-view. It would imply thinking highly of your-Self when you've understood that that self is not in your control, i.e. not your self. The only

thing that you could ever be proud on account of is exactly the thing that you have come to understand and abandon, so it'd be silly, like eating vomit. Arrogance also requires you to perceive the other person you are “better than” as the owner, master of their experience, which a noble disciple would clearly know they are not.

(MN 30 is the twin to this Sutta, and it *would* seem to be referring to a stream enterer who still hasn't attained jhānas, and becomes arrogant and heedless on account of their insight. But again, see the initial context. The Buddha was maneuvering around having to say whether the knowledge and vision of these teachers is right or not so that this Brahmin would not be displeased and dismiss his teaching too soon, and instead chose to highlight how if they were to cultivate jhānas—which none of the mentioned teachers claimed to have as far as recorded instances go—they would be guaranteed to reach *true* knowledge and vision eventually... if they don't become inwardly rotten like Devadatta, of course.)

So, what one needs to learn to differentiate to see the line between wholesome and unwholesome in this case is the difference between disparaging *views*, or even disparaging behaviors of people under your tutelage as the Buddha did to his monks, and disparaging *people* themselves. (Note also that the Buddha had clearance to go a bit farther: you don't read about monks full-on calling names like he did, “useless man”, “stupid, incompetent laywoman” etc., but he could do that without ill-will).

Criticism of wrong views is 50% of what came out of the Buddha's mouth; personal attacks towards people are heavily discouraged:

“Bhikkhus, do not engage in disputatious talk saying: ‘You don't understand this Dhamma and Discipline. I understand this Dhamma and Discipline. What, you understand this Dhamma and Discipline! You're practising wrongly, I'm practising rightly. What should have been said before you said after; what should have been said after you said before. I'm consistent, you're inconsistent. What you took so long to think out has been overturned. Your thesis has been refuted. Go off to rescue your thesis, for you're defeated, or disentangle yourself if you can.’ For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, this talk is unbeneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and does not lead to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna.

“When you talk, bhikkhus, you should talk about: ‘This is suffering’; you should talk about: ‘This is the origin of suffering’; you should talk about: ‘This is the cessation of suffering’; you should talk about: ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering.’ For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, this talk is beneficial, relevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and leads to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna. —SN 56.9

And, as MN 26 and others say, knowledge of what is the path is intimately linked with knowledge of what is *not* the path, so discussion of the latter is equally if not more important, and falls squarely within the topic of the Four Noble Truths. Provided it's not done in the unbeneficial manner described above.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 14:42:32 (in reply to a comment not included)

So to summarize, the Buddha is saying that followers of the path should speak in positive regarding what is the path, rather in the negative of what others believe is the path but is not the path?

Not quite. This is what I wrote:

So, what one needs to learn to differentiate to see the line between wholesome and unwholesome in this case is the difference between disparaging *views*, or even disparaging behaviors of people under your tutelage as the Buddha did to his monks, **and disparaging people themselves.**

There is a line that needs to be recognized between talking as much as you may about what is not the path, even about the specific misunderstandings the person has, and about explicitly saying “I know, you don’t know”, which turns it into a verbal fight where no Dhamma will really be discussed, and the only purpose is to have the last laugh.

That’s why it’s said that such conversation is unbeneficial. It’s not saying that discussing what is not the path is unbeneficial, which would the Buddha saying one thing and then doing the opposite, not only sometimes, but extremely frequently. It may feel “unbeneficial” to the other person if they have developed an unwarranted intimacy with the view at hand, which is ultimately to their own detriment. But from the point of view of the speaker, the intention can remain wholesome (although one must still be mindful of it) no matter how strongly arguments are presented for as long as it doesn’t turn into a “contest”. And, ultimately, each person has to check their own mind to see whether that’s what they’re really aiming at. That’s because they might be perfectly polite on the surface, but still internally be trying to win a competition and be solely interested in showing that the other party is wrong, while someone else could speak very forcefully yet not be worried about losing or winning in the end, only presenting their viewpoint.

Also, would this be contrasted in explaining flaws of a view to a third party? The Buddha says not to tell someone they do not see while I see, but what does he say about telling a third party that someone else doesn’t see while I see?

All of them would be wrong. When you explicitly say “I see, you don’t see”, it turns into a contest, as said above.

But whether one likes it or not, the very act of offering a counterargument in response to someone *implies* the attitude “I understand, you don’t”, and that is not necessarily unwholesome, because it’s how dialogue works. Trying to sugarcoat one’s argument does not change the fact that one is attempting to disprove the other person’s beliefs, so it’s more efficient to be upfront and simply abstain from attacking or offending the person directly. In this way, they will only get offended if they were unjustifiably clinging to their standpoint, which is no longer one’s fault.

You mentioned that laypeople can attain the first three stages of attainment.

Absolutely.

So then is it the case that sense restraint need not be perfected for a layperson who has gained one of these attainments?

Sense restraint needs to be practiced as diligently as possible so as to have a chance to attain what is yet unattained, both for the ordinary person and for one who has attained the first or second stage. Once the person reaches what was unreached, if they don't have a particularly strong sense of urgency left over, they may choose not to keep up the same degree of restraint that was required during their training period, and they may choose to remain a layperson.

And how, bhikkhus, is there nonrestraint? There are, bhikkhus, forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a bhikkhu seeks delight in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, he should understand this thus: 'I am declining away from wholesome states. For this has been called decline by the Blessed One.'

"There are, bhikkhus, sounds cognizable by the ear ... mental phenomena cognizable by the mind that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a bhikkhu seeks delight in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, he should understand this thus: 'I am declining away from wholesome states. For this has been called decline by the Blessed One.'

—SN 35.98

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 15:00:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, and "simply denigrating" is measured by the launching of personal attacks and talking in terms of "me and you", not by very forcefully tackling whatever viewpoint the person is expressing. To argue with reasoning alone, this is essentially the only way that the idea of the Buddha and notable Arahants like Ven. Mahākassapa having perfect mettā can be reconciled with their being so seemingly overbearing in their presentation of the Dhamma.

On the other hand, "constructive conversation" is measured by the ability of the questioner to express their viewpoint clearly, and by that of the responder to show counterarguments for it that are coherent and well-justified. Not by how much the questioner may feel offended if, as said above, they have developed an unjustifiable attachment to a view. A conversation that fails to expose that "sore" when it's there would be of very little value to the questioner themselves.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 22:49:47 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Likewise.

An impressive Paticca Samuppada's mind map.

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-11-08 09:30:24

<https://preview.redd.it/pauh5oeef3zb1.png?width=7578&format=png&auto=webp&s=5fac9a158d4c9d4>

<https://www.jayarava.org/texts/paticcasamuppada-pali-english-version5-4.jpeg>

This is coming from Jayarava's blog. He is an independent researcher that I really like. He is one of the few who proved the Heart Sutra is of Chinese origins but that's another subject. I don't know if this mind map will fit with Ajahn Nanamoli's interpretation but I'm sure this could be useful. Reading this article from the same author really helps in understanding the Upanisa Lokkutara sequence.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-08 14:04:57

The issue is that even if the map were perfectly accurate, and created by the Buddha himself, being absorbed in the *theoretically correct* (in the best case scenario) content of your thoughts precludes seeing the *nature* of thoughts here and now, which is how you actually see paṭiccasamuppāda.

So not only is it not relevant, it can even become an obstacle if one relies on detailed descriptions past a certain point. It won't be "concrete thinking" and will be abstract instead.

The right degree of detail in explanation is simply what is necessary to point someone towards seeing that *nature* of phenomena here and now. That's the reason why the Suttas don't go further in detail than that. Not because the Buddha or the early monks were short on time.

Stream Entry for Lay People

Subreddit: r/theravada | **Posted by:** AriyaSavaka 2023-11-07 11:56:45

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 13:52:58

To address the general misunderstandings that seems to be prevalent regarding the video:

It's not being claimed that jhāna results in permanent freedom from sensuality, or that one needs to be an anagami in order to enter it. This would contradict various Suttas, most notably AN 6.60 and the case of Devadatta in general, who is said to have reached the 4th jhāna and even gained psychic powers.

The point being made is that freedom from hindrances is a state that, *although temporary*, is *complete*. To reach freedom from the hindrances, primarily sensuality, one needs to be perfectly dispassionate towards sensual pleasures of the past, present and any possibilities of them in the future (expressed as “future lives” in MN 106). It is not a state that can be reached by suppressing particular perceptions of sensual pleasures, which is what is accomplished through focusing on an object. The *possibility* of delight needs to be abandoned, but it will of course come back.

AN 3.94 shows that even a stream enterer who reaches withdrawal from sensuality as a *temporary state*, and dies during that time, will become an anāgāmi, never again returning to this world. This goes to show that it's the same extent of freedom *at that time*. It's just that the underlying tendencies cause one to fall away from it eventually, as the case described in AN 6.60.

Nevertheless, the point still holds that, for a person who has attained jhāna, while they may revert to sensual pleasures again (and it is obvious that this will happen, given that those who are reborn in Brahma realms without gaining noble insight eventually fall back down), their mind needs to have reached a certain extent of understanding of the nature of sensual pleasures (see AN 6.73, the 6th prerequisite for jhāna) to reach that jhāna in the first place. So, while they may return to it in theory, it is not likely for people who have been diligently cultivating the path as well, at least not for very long if they have also been gaining understanding of dukkha and the Buddha's teaching (case in point, the person in AN 6.60 disrobed but eventually ordained again and became an Arahant).

The difference between this and the effect that what is contemporarily conceived as jhāna has is that, fundamentally, people who attain it are on average not fulfilling the 6th condition in AN 6.73. They may recognize in theory that “sensuality is bad” because they are Buddhist and the Buddha said that, but deep down it is often clear that they hold a view that sensuality is valuable, only that they may now be more careful and restrained in regard to it, and don't let it get out of hand. This is not “seeing the danger in sensual pleasures as it truly is with correct wisdom”, as AN 6.73 says.

A stream enterer also sees that danger implicitly on account of seeing the 4NT, but due to their habits and lack of a sense of urgency due to contentment with how far they've come, they may allow themselves to be weak and still engage with sensual pleasures. While they very much still have a “perversion of perception” described in the Suttas, not fully seeing the dissatisfaction of desire, it is very different from the ordinary person who does not see their own craving, and *values* desire deep down, as something that is necessary to uphold their existence. See SN 36.6 on how a noble disciple knows the escape from pain apart from sensual pleasures, while the puthujjana does not (and it is not specified that it refers to an anagāmi so, it would include even a lay sotapanna who still engages with sensual pleasures on the outside).

Feel free to reply or to direct questions to [r/HillsideHermitage](#).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 14:49:49 (in reply to a comment not included)

Could you clarify? I do not see a discrepancy.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 16:20:38 (in reply to a comment not included)

Jhana is not a requisite of stream entry, and that notion is not in line with the Suttas. You would have to prove otherwise given the copious evidence showing the contrary.

Celibacy is not requisite for jhana or stream-entry

Do you mean to say that you can achieve this sort of perspective, which is necessary to abandon the first hindrance as I mentioned above, referencing AN 6.73, while sexual intercourse is still a part of your life:

“And how, bhikkhus, are sensual pleasures seen by a bhikkhu in such a way that as he looks at them sensual desire, sensual affection, sensual infatuation, and sensual passion do not lie latent within him in regard to sensual pleasures? Suppose there is a charcoal pit deeper than a man’s height, filled with glowing coals without flame or smoke. A man would come along wanting to live, not wanting to die, desiring happiness and averse to suffering. Then two strong men would grab him by both arms and drag him towards the charcoal pit. The man would wriggle his body this way and that. For what reason? Because he knows: [189] ‘I will fall into this charcoal pit and I will thereby meet death or deadly suffering.’ —SN 35.246

As the Suttas quoted in the first comment on the video make clear, it is impossible for the mind to give rise to the knowledge of the Four Noble Truths if sensual passion still lies latent within one. As copiously explained in the video and my comment above, one who sees the Four Noble Truths may return to sensuality afterward, but not before the attainment has taken place.

As said in MN 36, a mind that is still “wet” with sensual passion cannot give rise to insight. I doubt anyone would dare to argue that their mind can be “dry” from sensual passion when they’ve been engaging in sexual activity. And as that same Sutta says, it’s not even enough to *externally* restrain yourself, in the way all monks are by default. The desire needs to be abandoned *internally*, which is categorically impossible when even externally you’re still giving in to it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 00:10:12 (in reply to a comment not included)

SN 55.5 & SN 45.8: This does not prove anything. The fact that a sotāpanna possesses sammāsamādhi does not mean that they are having pleasant meditation experiences yet

(not to say that pleasure is bad, the problem is *how* did you get it), which I venture to say is what you're thinking of as "possessing sammāsamādhi".

This is proven by several Suttas, a very good example is MN 14:

"Mahānāma, there is still a state unabandoned by you internally, owing to which at times states of greed, hate, and delusion invade your mind and remain; for were that state already abandoned by you internally you would not be living the home life, you would not be enjoying sensual pleasures. It is because that state is unabandoned by you internally that you are living the home life and enjoying sensual pleasures.

"Even though a noble disciple has seen clearly as it actually is with proper wisdom that sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering and despair, and that the danger in them is still more, as long as he still does not attain to the rapture and pleasure that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, he may still be attracted to sensual pleasures. But when a noble disciple has seen clearly as it actually is with proper wisdom that sensual pleasures provide little gratification, much suffering and despair, and that the danger in them is still more, and he attains to the rapture and pleasure that are apart from sensual pleasures, apart from unwholesome states, or to something more peaceful than that, then he is no longer attracted to sensual pleasures."

Mahānāma was a stream enterer, and he had yet to find the joy that is apart from sensual pleasures, meaning he had not experienced jhāna yet.

The reason why a stream enterer possesses sammāsamādhi is because they have *acquired* the 7 enlightenment factors (absent in a puthujjana), as explained in SN 46.30, or, equivalently, the five faculties (absent in a puthujjana as shown by SN 48.12, where the lowest possible individual with 5 faculties is the sotapatti-magga).

So, having the faculty of samādhi does not mean that the sotapanna has already learned to fully establish their mind in jhāna to the extent where it can be called an "abiding". But, because they have Right Mindfulness, again absent in a puthujjana, their simple practice of mindfulness is already partaking in the nature of jhāna, even though they may not be aware of it at the time:

"Bhikkhus, if a bhikkhu develops the first jhāna even for a fingersnap, he is called a bhikkhu who is **not devoid of jhāna**, who follows the Teacher's instructions, who responds to advice, and does not eat the country's almsfood in vain. What is to be said of those who make much of it?" —AN 1.394

"Bhikkhus, if, even for fingersnap, a bhikkhu dwells contemplating a body within the body, a feeling within feelings, a mind within the mind, a phenomenon within phenomena, he is called a bhikkhu who is **not devoid of jhāna**... —AN 1.402-5 (SuttaCentral Numbering)

With the contemporary ideal of jhāna, thought of first and foremost as an experience that comes to you, not something that you *cultivate* with diligence, you cannot explain how

one can cultivate jhāna “for a fingersnap”. It is because of having this ability that even a stream enterer like Mahānāma who has not celibate and had never entered jhāna is said to possess sammāsamādhī.

On Mv 1.14.1:

... gave them a progressive talk—on generosity, morality, and heaven; on the downside, degradation, and defilement of worldly pleasures; and he revealed the benefits of renunciation. When the Buddha knew that their minds were **ready, supple, without hindrances, joyful, and confident** he revealed the teaching unique to the Buddhas

...which is to say, to go back to MN 36:

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who **live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has been fully abandoned and subdued internally**, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are capable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment.

If you receive talk from the Buddha himself on the danger of sensual pleasures, then if your faculties are naturally up for the task, despite your engagement with sensual pleasures, you will be able to see sensual pleasures as a “charcoal pit” during that time at least, which will give rise to the Right View. But if you’re *not* receiving a talk from the Buddha, and you’ve learned about the Four Noble Truths extensively, much more than these laypeople ever did, and are still not a stream enterer, it’s because the mind is still not “ready, supple, without hindrances, joyful and confident” on account of *seeing the danger of worldly pleasures*, which is what these people had at that moment, not on account of a body observation technique that has nothing to do with understanding sensual pleasures.

That means that you cannot afford to live like these people were before they talked to the Buddha, because that means you will simply continue to either maintain or increase the same sensual infatuation which is preventing you from reaching the state that these people had at that moment, of a mind “internally withdrawn” from sensuality—state which you now have to cultivate yourself, without the Buddha’s help.

The Buddha with his teaching abilities could “dry your sticks” to use the simile in MN 36 simply by talking, if your faculties (“paramis” if you want to call it that) are sufficiently good, even if moments before that you had been keeping those sticks in the water.

As I made sure to point out in the video: you allowing yourself to have sexual intercourse during your training period to reach stream entry, would be tantamount to the young men in this story turning their gaze to the women near them and fantasizing about them, ignoring what the Buddha was saying about the danger in sensual pleasures. The result would’ve been no stream entry whatsoever.

AN 10.92: This does not prove anything, because it simply explains how a stream enterer would avoid breaking the five precepts for their own welfare. It does not say anything about what they had to do to reach that attainment. As I also made sure to point out, a stream enterer may choose to return to the things they learned to regard as unsatisfactory and completely unworthy, if they do not feel the urgency to attain Arahantship in this very life.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 00:12:57 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The criteria for certain different factors of the eightfold path change depending on the ordination status of a person.

Sure, but then you would also have to remember that whenever the Buddha talks about things like practicing satipaṭṭhāna, Anapanasati and entering jhānas, it's *also* always addressed to monks. Which would mean, according to this logic, that that does not fall within the eightfold path of a layperson, and they should not be trying to practice it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 04:05:02 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Very well. No hard feelings.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 11:30:41 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

A layperson can take them up if they wish to, but that's not a certificate required to practice Buddha's teachings correctly for them.

It's not, because there are different levels of "Buddha's teachings". So yes, they can practice to lead a more wholesome life, much less unpleasant than if they'd been following any other religion or philosophy, but when it comes to permanent destruction of suffering and attainments, dispassion is the foremost factor to cultivate during one's training period towards that, and dispassion is first and foremost reflected by one's actions. There is no way around this.

Also, it's not about a "certificate". The whole fuss around ordination that exists in modern traditions is absolutely not what it's about. It doesn't matter whether you wear robes or jeans and whether you follow 227 rules, a majority of which were responses to social circumstances and accumulated over time, or not. People and monastics who prioritize this as the core of the practice are simply clinging to virtue and duty, which is a way in which monasticism itself can become an obstacle. So whoever tells you that being a monk makes a magical difference is wrong.

What matters is if you are doing things that make you fall away from wholesome states or not (the foremost being dispassion, always given as the prerequisite for liberation in

the Suttas) meaning that those wholesome states will not reach the necessary potency to clear your mind from obstructions and understand the Four Noble Truths. The base of your mind where freedom is developed has not the slightest clue about whether your head is shaven and your skin has an ochre robe on top of it or not. Monks in the Buddha's time, the people who he addressed the profound discourses involving things like the three characteristics, satipaṭṭhānas, and jhānas to were assumed to be people who by default did not engage in such things that diminish wholesome states. That's all there is to it.

In fact, contrary to what many people seem to believe, our teachings are geared almost entirely towards laypeople. In my experience, there are very few monks who are willing to radically change their views after they've ordained, since their self-assessed certainty in the teaching is often a major factor in taking up the robe.

right/wrong actions are defined by a clear code of conduct

This is using external habits and vows (sīlabbata), not discernment, to define what is wholesome or unwholesome, and that is a perilous view.

- 1) "Any kamma fashioned by greed, born of greed, caused by greed, originating from greed, is unwholesome and blameworthy and results in suffering. That kamma leads to the origination of kamma, not to the cessation of kamma.
- (2) "Any kamma fashioned by hatred ... (3) Any kamma fashioned by delusion, born of delusion, caused by delusion, originating from delusion, is unwholesome and blameworthy and results in suffering. That kamma leads to the origination of kamma, not to the cessation of kamma. —AN 3.111

See also MN 14, where Mahānāma, a noble lay disciple, was worried about the fact that lust continues to arise in his mind. He did not say "Well, I'm a layman still, so this is alright". Fundamentally, he has discerned his own welfare and, as anybody else, cares about it deeply, so he could not possibly believe that his external living circumstances are a justification for things that he knows very clearly lead to suffering. He may still continue to engage with those things, and because of his attainment, the results of it are immensely dampened compared to an ordinary person. But he could not fool himself, hence the sense of shame and fear of wrong doing which is part of the noble disciple's five faculties.

What you describe here is a common notion taught today that results in a greater amount of laypeople (and monks) expecting they will attain stream entry than there otherwise would be, but, as is often the case, lowering the bar of entry to something cannot be done without lowering the quality of it.

What you are proposing about celibacy here is akin to what vegan Buddhists propose about practicing Buddha's teachings rightly; that if you eat meat you are breaking sila, and so, are not practicing the Buddha's teachings correctly.

This is again using external criteria, and we advise against this extensively. You are not

practicing the Buddha's teaching (even for a lay stream enterer who becomes complacent) if you delight in what is impermanent, suffering, and not-self, by body, speech, and mind. Particularizing it any more than that is something we would heavily discourage, and leads to lust and aversion ultimately being justified in subtle ways, shown by how you often see such vegans being very much devoid of mettā, and how you see monks ultimately having attachment for things like tradition, renown, and offerings because "whatever monks do as long as they keep the 227 rules is wholesome".

Edit: Regarding what I wrote about our teachings being geared at lay people, I will add that so far I have never met a monk who agrees with our teachings who was not inspired to ordain on account of them from the beginning. So even they find the insistence on restraint and dispassion very unpalatable.

Also, edited the passage "what you describe here is a common..." to make it more accurate.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-11 05:35:05 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Do not feel obliged to reply, but this article which I came across today may be of interest. Usually, we disagree with the author's views, but in this case we would mostly agree with his conclusions.

We have in the past also spoken about how recollection of the Triple Gem and of virtue and generosity constitute the "pleasant abidings here & now" that a noble lay follower who only keeps the five precepts is capable of attaining, and that the jhānas require stricter restraint than that. This is supported by the Suttas, as the article shows.

u/Spirited_Ad8737 u/copyblogger10 u/TejvR u/Brian-the-Barber u/AriyaSavaka u/Inner-Amphibian-3829 u/GachiOnFire u/MrSomewhatClean u/VitakkaVicara u/MercuriusLapis

(Video) Stream Entry for Laypeople

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-11-07 09:18:35

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-08 03:16:05 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I rather get into pleasure jhanas and find insight into no-self that way.

This is the nuance that's so often missed. Complete abandonment of sensuality, the first and most basic that you absolutely need to grow all the others from is *the* "pleasure jhana", to the point where even the most peaceful bliss that you will get on account of a technique is pure torture in comparison, even if it's supposedly the "20th jhāna" or what have you and you're in cloud nine.

It's just that that true, unfathomable bliss has a bare minimum price, and if you see it being offered for less, it will always be a cheap plastic knock-off that doesn't even resemble it, but that the masses who don't know better are content with.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-08 13:50:13 (in reply to a comment not included)

Bhante in this video I understand that for the right view one needs to abandon sensuality or devalue it but isn't that the state of jhana?

A confusion many are likely having I suppose.

Practically you could put it this way: as a puthujjana, you need to work to mentally try to abandon sensuality *completely* (obviously having established restraint and so on). Tell yourself you're trying to become an Arahant, nothing less. That's why I said in the video that you can't justify to yourself delighting in stuff because "a stream enterer might still desire this". They *could*, but you need to tell yourself that that's none of your business at this time (i.e. for however many years it takes you to get there). What you're shooting for is complete dispassion.

(With this I don't mean you absolutely need to sell your house or external things like that. Primarily it means externally you don't break the 8 precepts; internally you don't delight in unwholesome).

What will happen is, you will obviously not succeed, but over time you will have purified your mind from the hindrances to the degree necessary to get the Right View (which, yes, is a lesser degree than jhāna). But if you allow yourself delight with a view that a sotapanna can still have it, you won't reach even that temporary freedom from hindrances.

That's why MN 106 which I referred to in the essay several times says you need to reflect about the danger in sensuality not just here and now but "in lives to come" (which you could just interpret as "in the future" in the absolute general sense). It's just how the mind and purification work in general. It's never about what you're actually wanting right now, it's about how much you *could* even remotely want things.

To the degree there is room for future wanting, your mind is *presently* defiled, and actual unwholesome actions in the present are just the "icing on the cake".

Let me know if that still doesn't make sense, it's not exactly an easy topic, and yet it's crucial.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-09 05:00:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

To me it seems like this fits the description of jhana but it also contradicts the fact that jhana is a higher degree than sotapatti?

Whether it's somewhere in the direction of jhāna or not would depend.

A person can go as far as rectifying their views fully in accordance with the Suttas, understanding that jhāna is attained on account of virtue, celibacy restraint, learning to reflect rightly, having recognized the futility of the offered “shortcuts”, and yet *still* be off. And even a tiny bit of being (excrement) smells just as bad as a lot, as that Sutta says.

The stuff we spend most of the time arguing in favor of like celibacy and sense restraint, is more like just to bring back people from way back in the “minus” range to point 0, where they can actually *start* going in the “plus” direction, and from there onwards there are still numerous pitfalls to avoid.

So, going back to my reply above, what I would advise in this case, since I can’t judge based only on what you’ve said, is that you completely disregard any notion of pleasure *including* the pleasure of renunciation that you think you may be getting. You don’t allow yourself to be delighted on account of *anything* that you become aware of, including what you might think is the pleasure of enlightenment.

As I clarified here, jhāna is an entirely different “plane” that is invisible from one’s current point of view, so it is perfectly possible for one to practice renunciation within the “plane” of kāmabhāva, i.e. the hindrances, and for it to be pleasant and for the world to feel not worth it anymore. So only by applying the attitude of “this is not worth it” towards *everything* is there a chance that you are actually addressing that entire “plane” that you exist within.

I am not a sotapana but I am having very pleasurable moments born of seclusion and even accompanied after some time with even more intense pleasures.

What you need to ask yourself here is what exactly is that “seclusion”. If it’s because you are thinking about the *same things* that used to cause delight and now delight isn’t there, then it may be worth cultivating. If it’s because you are now having “only” thoughts about renunciation and that feels good, but thinking about sensual objects without delight is not possible, then it’s probably better to investigate your motivations more carefully. That would still be “off-balance”.

the fact that jhana is a higher degree than sotapatti?

Entering and *abiding* in the pleasure born of withdrawal from the five hindrances takes more strength of yoniso manasikara than sotapatti does, evidenced by how a sotapanna cannot reach it initially. But in the end, it’s better not to even think of jhāna as an “experience” you are trying to get, and instead regard it as just the cultivation of a context, i.e. *a meditation*.

All the pleasure and gladness are utterly secondary to that context, and they manifest only to same exact degree that the context is there. So your only concern is the context of danger in anything agreeable here and now. What comes out of the context eventually is “none of your business”. Only then can that pleasure not be craved for despite its arising.

Edit: Also, don’t think of pleasure of renunciation as an “intense” pleasure, because that’s likely to be within the sensual domain still (like how people get quasi-orgasms and trem-

ble or whatever during meditation). Think of it as an *existential* pleasure, like you would feel if you just dodged a bullet. Or, to use the simile of the Suttas, you were about to be thrust into a charcoal pit and you managed to avoid it, or you had a huge debt and you managed to pay it off. The existential pleasure in the mind comes first, the bodily stuff is second. Usually for people it's the other way around.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 15:17:49 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, this is likely to be used in support of the idea that laypeople do not need to hold themselves up to the same standard as monastics if they wish to *practice towards* Nibbāna when they do not partake in it yet.

“Verified confidence” can be described in a very relevant way in this context by how a noble lay disciple like Anāthapiṇḍika in this passage has perfect, unshakable and complete confidence in the fact that, as I mentioned in the video, the abandonment of sensuality and cultivation of dispassion is ultimately for nothing other than their own welfare, despite the fact that they are choosing not to go that way on account of a (fully conscious) complacency.

Due to their uncompromising trust in the Buddha's teaching, backed by the best evidence anyone could ask for which they see in themselves, such a person would have no issue whatsoever accepting the fact that their present way of living is not fully in accordance with that teaching, without feeling the slightest resentment towards it, nor (“subconsciously”) trying to alter IT and bring IT “closer to them” so that they can feel at ease with whatever way they decided—according to their personal view, which has clearly been dragging them through samsara without beginning—is the best way to live their life. They would be able to hold both the thoughts (1) “Nibbāna is the highest, and nothing else is of any value” (2) “I will continue to enjoy these mundane pleasures” *at the same time*, an ability which, for anybody lower than them, is not within range.

Also, the ordinary person's inability to accept that the abandonment of sense pleasures is for nothing other than their welfare is precisely what is referred to in the Sutta you quoted as “distrust towards the Dhamma”.

As Ñāṇavīra Thera put it best:

“...the *Notes* attempt to provide an intellectual basis for the understanding of the Suttas, without abandoning *saddhā* [“confidence” above.] It was, and is, my attitude towards the Suttas that, if I find anything in them that is against my own view, *they* are right, *I* am wrong. I have no reason to regret having adopted this attitude.”

—L. 61, 08-20-1963 (emphasis in the original).

“Training rules appropriate for the laity” in the context of the *attained* laity that are alluded to in the Sutta you quoted means the 5 precepts and generosity, since this is what will ensure that these people not only do not partake in more than 7 existences, which is

already impossible, but also spend the majority of those eons engulfed in heavenly pleasure. These people still need to be diligent with this because, if their 5 precept adherence and generosity turns deficient, they may spend most of those lives in the human realm instead and with less fortunate conditions if the results of their past actions ripen in such a way.

The “training rules” necessary for one who aspires to “attain the unattained”, and does not have a fully awakened Buddha to give them a talk perfectly catered to their dispositions, be it a layperson or a monastic, and be it the first, second, third or fourth noble attainment, or any samādhī attainment that they may desire, are these:

“The non-doing of anything unbeneficial,
the undertaking of what’s beneficial,
the cleansing of one’s own mind:
this is the teaching of the Enlightened.

Patient endurance is the foremost austerity,
Nibbāna is the highest, say the Enlightened.

He who injures another is no contemplative.

He who mistreats another, no monk.

Not disparaging, not injuring,

restraint in line with the Patimokkha [8 precepts],

moderation in food, dwelling in seclusion, [AN 6.68]

commitment to the heightened mind:

this is the teaching of the Enlightened”

—Dhammapada 183-185.

(This was the entire Patimokkha exhortation given to the monks initially, whereas now we sit together for almost an hour and a half every two weeks listening to a dry, legal text that only barely ensures the first component of what I highlighted above, and not the others).

If this is not followed to the best of one’s ability...:

And how, bhikkhus, is one subject to decline? Here, bhikkhus, when a bhikkhu has seen a form with the eye [ear, nose, tongue, body, mind], there arise in him unbeneficial unwholesome states, memories and intentions connected with the fetters. If the bhikkhu tolerates them and does not abandon them, dispel them, put an end to them, and obliterate them, he should understand this thus: ‘I am declining away from wholesome states [**not “wholesome states for monks”**]. For this has been called decline by the Blessed One.’ —SN 35.96

Now, note also that what was mentioned above for attained laypeople looking forward to a heavenly rebirth is insufficient to ensure the true welfare of those who are not attained:

“What, bhikkhus, are the five shackles in the heart that he has not severed?

•Here a bhikkhu is not free from lust, desire, affection, thirst, fever, and craving for sensual pleasures, and thus his mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance, and striving. As his mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance, and striving, that is the first shackle in the heart that he has not severed.

•“Again, a bhikkhu is not free from lust, desire, affection, thirst, fever, and craving for the body...As his mind does not incline to ardour...that is the second shackle in the heart that he has not severed.

•“Again, a bhikkhu is not free from lust, desire, affection, thirst, fever, and craving for form...As his mind does not incline to ardour...that is the third shackle in the heart that he has not severed.

•“Again, a bhikkhu eats as much as he likes until his belly is full and indulges in the pleasures of sleeping, lolling, and drowsing...As his mind does not incline to ardour...that is the fourth shackle in the heart that he has not severed.

•“Again, a bhikkhu lives the holy life **aspiring to some order of gods thus:** ‘By this virtue or observance or asceticism or holy life, I shall become a [great] god or some [lesser] god,’ and thus his mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance, and striving. As his mind does not incline to ardour, devotion, perseverance, and striving, this is the fifth shackle in the heart that he has not severed.

“These are the five shackles in the heart that he has not severed.

“Bhikkhus, that any bhikkhu who has not abandoned these five wildernesses in the heart and severed these five shackles in the heart should come to growth, increase, and fulfilment in this Dhamma and Discipline—that is impossible. —MN 16

(This is of course not saying that one needs to be an anāgāmi in order to progress in the Dhamma. It means one must at least not be fueling the first three shackles through actions by body and speech for as long as one is trying to grow one’s Dhamma-potency. There is ultimately no higher measure of “desire, affection, thirst, and fever” than bodily and verbal actions.)

While one may choose to argue that the two Suttas above were intended for bhikkhus only, and for laypeople the threshold of unwholesome is different, here is another that was also only intended for bhikkhus, which will surely be of relevance for whomever desires, as a layperson, to become like Anāthapiṇḍika above, who had only 7 grains of suffering left at most:

“Bhikkhus, without directly knowing and fully understanding the All, without

developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is **incapable of destroying suffering**.

“And what, bhikkhus, is that All without directly knowing and fully understanding which, without developing dispassion towards which and abandoning which, one is incapable of destroying suffering?

“Without directly knowing and fully understanding the eye, without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering. Without directly knowing and fully understanding forms ... eye-consciousness ... eye-contact ... and whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition ... without developing dispassion towards it and abandoning it, one is incapable of destroying suffering [...and so on for the other five sense spheres]. —SN 35.26

Lastly, what I wrote here may also serve to shed some light on the topic.

edit: I hope it's clear that the motivation for my question is that I'm personally very much wanting to meet the requirements listed in this sutta excerpt

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Edit: Fixed lack of spacing in quoted Suttas.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 16:53:42

To add to this, see also this occurrence in MN 37, resulting from an exchange between the king of gods Sakka and Ven. Mahāmoggallāna:

.Then, soon after the venerable Mahā Moggallāna had gone, the attendants of Sakka, ruler of gods, asked him: “Good sir, was that your teacher, the Blessed One?”—“No, good sirs, that was not my teacher, the Blessed One. That was one of my fellow companions in the Brahma-life, (**sa-brahmacārī**) the venerable Mahā Moggallāna.” —“Good sir, it is a gain for you that your companion in the holy life is so powerful and mighty. Oh, how much more so must be the Blessed One, your teacher!”

“brahmacārī” in Pāli always refers to the celibate life, in analogy to how Brahmā gods are inherently celibate due to permanently abiding in jhāna.

So, lord Sakka here is considered to be “a companion in the celibate life” to Arahant Mahāmoggallāna, despite the fact that moments ago he was probably engaging in the heavenly equivalent of sexual intercourse, surrounded by nymphs.

This is because whoever has the Right View has also the ability, as mentioned in the video, to re-establish celibacy and dispassion in a fingersnap, no matter how heedless they have been—ability which the ordinary person lacks. This is how a lay stream enterer may even be able to become an anāgāmi at the moment of death if they set their minds to it and possess great wisdom, despite having been keeping only the five precepts throughout their life.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 23:27:35 (in reply to a comment not included)

is that a fair description of the layman's training for Sotapatti?

Yes, it's a fair description of a human being's training for Sotapatti.

which taken on properly will of necessity be developing towards yoniso manasikara and correct sati if taken on the right level

Correct. Yoniso manasikāra, as the Buddha explained in MN 2, is about knowing what things cause the taints of sensuality, being and ignorance to increase when you attend to them, and which cause them to decrease, and then striving accordingly, which is said to lead to stream-entry (note that it talks about people in general, the word "bhikkhu" does not occur in this first section referring to the first three fetters. It occurs in the next section, given that that refers to the further effort you need to make after sotapatti towards non-return, which is what complacent laypeople who already saw the Dhamma would choose not to make). Grasping at the signs and features of sense objects is the foremost way of increasing these 3 taints.

to attain stream entry, one must have (in that moment at least) total dispassion for any sensual pleasure or pains, past, present, or future.

That's true. In addition, understanding the Four Noble Truths inherently entails, at the core level of your being, a permanently different attitude towards the entire world and experience, even in the most heedless of moments. So it's not to say that the sensual desire, aversion or negligence that would come up in a stream-enterer are exactly the same as in a puthujjana.

That's why it is said that a sotapanna is incapable of the forms of greed, aversion and delusion that would lead them to the lower realms (or to great suffering in this very life). It's not because they *do* have the same amount of craving but it just magically doesn't result in suffering.

This can only be understood on the basis of what we often emphasize regarding "intentions behind one's actions", not on the basis of figuring out what specific actions a sotapanna would not do. People usually do this practice initially by seeking rational answers to the question of "Why I am I doing this?" in terms of "this happened yesterday so now today this is what I need to do..." and such external, causal relationships. But what really needs to be discerned is, how hard is the wild animal that is the *citta* pulling towards whatever it wants, and how much would I suffer if I were not allow it to have it.

In a stream-enterer, on account of possessing sammāsamādhi even if they've never had jhāna experiences before and never even heard that word, their mind inherently cannot "pull" as hard as the ordinary person's mind, even if externally both end up committing exactly the same action. (This is the meaning of AN 3.100 which I quoted in the video). So *whatever* they do simply cannot be rooted in greed, aversion and delusion to the same extent, even breaking the five precepts. This is a way in which not all practitioners of the Buddha's teaching are "equal", and the higher one goes, the more "wiggle room" one has

to do things that for an ordinary person would be obstructions (but this never includes breaking the 5 precepts and celibacy. Such actions always are linked with suffering no matter how developed the mind of a stream enterer or once returner is, which is why an Arahant cannot do them intentionally).

Case in point is Ven. Mahākassapa in SN 16.5, who was invited by the Buddha himself to live more comfortably than he had become used to. For a sekha bhikkhu—or worse, a puthujjana bhikkhu—this “backsliding” could easily result in hampering their progress.

(this would be why the holy life would be hard to live at home)

Exactly, the fact that this expression occurs so many times in the Suttas—whenever a person with above-average interest in their own welfare heard the Dhamma—is exclusively due to real, practical considerations, not due to some ideosyncratic, romantic idealization of monasticism. Lay life is inherently a compromise for one who seeks liberation, and nobody wouldn’t want to risk failing at what potentially is their last chance to understand the Dhamma even by a tiny 0.1%, in the best case scenario if they truly understood what is at stake. (This of course also applies to even forest monks being less than heedful and devoted to the training outlined in the Dhammapada verse I quoted, which is not uncommon, not just to laypeople).

However, one can mitigate the effects of the compromise of laylife, to the point of standing a real chance of going even further in the practice than most monks, by abandoning the notion that, when it comes to *practicing towards* attainments, there is a distinction between training rules for monks and training rules for laypeople, and abandoning the view that there is such a thing as craving that will not lead to one’s own harm (which, again, many monks would fail to do).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-10 23:46:15 (in reply to a comment not included)

Not necessarily. It’s also important to understand that denying the world and not looking at anything, not hearing anything, not reading, not eating, etc. are *breaches* of sense-restraint, and are a form of passion, not dispassion.

First a person should simply make sure that they are keeping the 5 precepts and celibacy perfectly, and not trying to do sense-restraint within faulty precepts, which would result in them “overshooting” sense restraint in order to compensate for not fulfilling the previous “step”. This is essentially what happens in contemporary meditation retreats, where one restrains oneself far beyond what is necessary, instead of simply never acting out of lust, aversion, and distraction/delusion during or out of retreat, and recognizing that everything else is fine.

That is essentially the “Middle Way”. You develop it through celibacy and 5 precepts, and then learning to see what is unwholesome based on the intentions behind your actions, not based on whether you broke the rule of perfect silence during a retreat or not.

“Middle Way” does not mean to have sexual intercourse in moderation, or something

along those lines. That's just the basic requirement to not fall below the threshold of a human.

It is beneficial to learn about everything the Buddha said so as to aid one in abandoning wrong views that can often be an even more fundamental obstacle than one's attitude towards sensual pleasures (such as the view that "nothing is real", "we are all enlightened" or similar, which would tragically pass as "Buddhism"). Also, the view of "there is no mother, no father, no results of good and bad actions, etc." that the Suttas often talk about is much more deeply rooted than one may realize, present contemporarily for example in people who would think that saying "well, my mother is just subatomic particles so it's not *really* my mother" is Right View.

One should simply understand that the reason why reading those words has not given rise to noble insight in one's mind is because of the lack of dispassion, which is what is always said in the Suttas to be the prerequisite for knowledge and vision, as I mentioned in a recent comment. You could equate dispassion with samādhi for practical purposes, as opposed to the contemporary idea of perfect focus on one object, which still perfectly allows room for very subtle passion to be present.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 09:18:19 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

does it make sense to think that laypeople in general were far closer to the state of mind necessary for making a breakthrough to the Dhamma than people today, when even those who had enough distaste for lay life that they went forth as a monk still needed the gradual training? or did the gradual training begin after right view?

All I've said here is not rooted in a fable-like assertion (a la Commentaries) that *everyone* would have been able to get the Right View before ordaining and practicing the Gradual Training, just that the number of people who did was evidently immensely larger than it is today. (And it because of this that there could be such a thing as an exclusively ariyan Sangha in MN 118 at what was the second largest of all the early monasteries).

Nevertheless, yes, in many cases the Gradual Training would've begun after the Right View. In fact, in Suttas dealing with the Gradual Training like DN 2, you find a common passage:

Endowed with this **noble (ariya)** aggregate of virtue (sīlakkhanda), he experiences a blameless joy within himself.

...after which *sense restraint* begins. I think I discussed the topic of the aggregate of virtue in the Sīla is Samādhi essay. It's the sort of thing that these laypeople who had done no Gradual Training at all would immediately acquire by gaining the Dhamma-eye. In fact, it's pretty much guaranteed that such people, like Anāthapiṇḍika for example, did not even know how to practice sense restraint correctly yet. Stream entry does not immediately reveal all aspects of the practice. If you read DN 10, you see that sense restraint

onwards is actually part of the aggregate of samādhi, not virtue (samādhikkhanda), which means that this is what the stream enterer has to start working on to free themselves from the remaining 2 lower fetters.

I ask because I have had the view that the gradual training is what leads from puthujjana, through Right View, all the way to arahant, and the training is the same whether lay or ordained. if I'm right, where in the training does Right View fit in? if I'm wrong, how should we understand the gradual training?

Right View is not part of the Gradual Training *technically*. It is pretty much the only guarantee that you'll ever be training correctly, but that doesn't mean nobody could do it without the Right View to any degree. Case in point is the Buddha's former teachers, Bāhiya and even Devadatta.

You can think of the Gradual Training as that which *develops* your mind. Hence, for a person whose mind was already developed to the point where a mere *explanation* of the danger in sensuality would lead to the right type of gladness and samādhi, they do not require any Gradual Training at all, and if they are content with their attainment, they will not undertake it (yet). The samādhi they would be able to get from then onwards by reflecting on the Triple Gem is essentially of the same "strength" as what they already had before attaining, not enough to constitute jhāna, but certainly a form of pleasant abiding.

The Gradual Training is about nothing other than increasing one's proficiency in samādhi. That's why it makes no mention of learning and study for the sake of abandoning wrong views, or of what one would contemporarily call "insight practice". DN 25 goes into how *everything* all the way from virtue and restraint to the first two knowledges gleaned from samādhi deserves to be called "asceticism and scrupolosity" (tapojigucchā), a concept popular with the followers of other sects, meaning that they could technically reach it in the ideal scenario. See also what the Buddha says towards the end of what type of person he would easily and quickly be able to bring to Arahantship. The Gradual Training is also developing such qualities in oneself to the extent they were not there.

So, you could say that if a person today has not achieved the Right View by listening to the same type of teaching that these people had access to, it's because their mind is far from a mundane form of samādhi that would be sufficient for knowledge and vision to arise. Not sure where I exactly I wrote that, but I mentioned recently that samādhi could effectively be equated with dispassion, and dispassion is the condition for knowledge and vision to arise, as lots of Suttas say.

Now, of course, those people who had enough samādhi to be dispassionate towards sensuality as the Buddha explained it's dangers were not *acting* dispassionately before that necessarily. What needs to be remembered there is that ultimately passion cannot be measured by one's external actions, but by the un-tameness of the mind (although in the ultimate sense of the Arahant, certain actions do become impossible of course, i.e. intentionally breaking the five precepts with celibacy).

"Un-tameness" of the mind meaning, say, how much someone like Anāthapiṇḍika or Visākha would've suffered if they'd *had* to be celibate for a prolonged period of time when

they had no Right View yet, even if they never actually did it. The intensity of that suffering is guaranteed to have been less than for the people who could not get the Right View after hearing the Buddha.

Edit: fixed typos.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 11:59:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Exactly.

Not able to find some sutta

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-11-07 04:02:06

Many a time some suttas are quoted by Bhikhu Nyanmoli but I cant find them.

Can we list some popular suttas that he mostly refer.

The one I am not able to find but frequently quoted are :

- (1) ' sotapanna knows that he knows.'
- (2) ' when buddha explains nibbana to putthujana, they cried, saying its almost like a death'

I will add if I recollect some more such case. and also would like you to add If any you remember.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-07 06:24:49

- (1) The Pāli expression is “jānaṃ jānāti, passaṃ passati”. It could also be translated as “knowingly knows, seeing-ly sees”, with the same meaning. Usually it’s watered down to “really knows and really sees”. A few examples:

“Bhikkhus, those ascetics or brahmins who do not understand as it really is ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’—they look up at the face of another ascetic or brahmin, thinking: ‘This worthy is surely one who knowingly knows, who seeingly sees.’

“Suppose, bhikkhus, a tuft of cotton wool or kapok, light, wafted by the wind, had settled on an even piece of ground. An easterly wind would drive it westward; a westerly wind would drive it eastward; a northerly wind would drive it southward; a southerly wind would drive it northward. For what reason? Because of the lightness of the tuft.

“So too, bhikkhus, those ascetics or brahmins who do not understand as it really is ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’—they look up at the face of another ascetic or brahmin, thinking: ‘This worthy is surely one who knowingly knows, who seemingly sees.’ For what reason? Because they have not seen the Four Noble Truths.

“But, bhikkhus, those ascetics or brahmins who understand as it really is ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’—they do not look up at the face of another ascetic or brahmin, thinking: ‘This worthy is surely one who knowingly knows, who seemingly sees.’

“Suppose, bhikkhus, there was an iron pillar or an Indra’s pillar with a deep base, securely planted, immobile, unshaking. Even if a forceful blast of wind comes—whether from the east, the west, the north, or the south—that pillar would not shake, quake, or tremble. For what reason? Because the pillar has a deep base and is securely planted.

So too, bhikkhus, those ascetics or brahmins who understand as it really is ‘This is suffering’ ... ‘This is the way leading to the cessation of suffering’—they do not look up at the face of another ascetic or brahmin, thinking: ‘This worthy is surely one who knowingly knows, who seemingly sees.’ For what reason? Because, bhikkhus, they have clearly seen the Four Noble Truths. What four? The noble truth of suffering ... the noble truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering. —SN 56.39

Another Example:

His fellow monks esteem him thus: ‘This venerable one lives in dependence on the Teacher or on a certain fellow monk in the position of a teacher, toward whom he has set up a keen sense of moral shame and moral dread, affection and reverence. This venerable one surely knowingly knows and seemingly sees.’ This quality leads to affection, respect, esteem, concord, and unity. —AN 8.2

(2) Venerable sir, can there be agitation about what is non-existent internally?

“There can be, bhikkhu,” the Blessed One said. “Here, bhikkhu, someone has the view: ‘That which is the self is the world; after death I shall be permanent, everlasting, eternal, not subject to change; I shall endure as long as eternity.’ He hears the Tathāgata or a disciple of the Tathāgata teaching the Dhamma for the elimination of all standpoints, decisions, obsessions, adherences, and underlying tendencies, for the stilling of all formations, for the relinquishing of all attachments, for the destruction of craving, for dispassion, for cessation, for Nibbāna. He [137] thinks thus: ‘So I shall be annihilated! So I shall perish! So I shall be no more!’ Then he sorrows, grieves, and laments, he weeps beating his breast and becomes distraught. That is how there is agitation about what is non-existent internally. —MN 22

And obviously one should note that one doesn’t need to be thinking such course thoughts like “I shall be permanent” to have that view. It’s enough to not see the Dhamma, 4NT,

impermanence of the five aggregates, etc. The only other alternative for a puthujjana is to think “I shall be annihilated”, which again doesn’t have to be a coarse idea. The idea will be subtly implied even in your understanding of the Suttas. When the puthujjana imagines what an Arahant is for example, their mind, their background context that is unseen, interprets that as “*there is no self* anymore for the Arahant”, *even* if they’ve heard and intellectually agree with the fact that that’s wrong. They just can’t help it until they actually see the Middle Way and cease to be puthujjanas.

So these are just the two subtle, peripheral, unrecognized attitudes that one will have towards the aggregates at any given time by necessity. Once recognized, they can’t be there anymore.

Extent of sensuality

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-07 00:29:50

I used to read passages on sensuality on how one delighted in the senses, and thought I understood the extent of the meaning within my experience. However, all this time, I’ve only been focusing on sexuality, and now other obvious things have become apparent. Delighting in loved ones *appearing* happy, smiling, laughing; delighting in *listening* to their content and soft voices — all of this is sensuality.

This became apparent to me as I kept reminding myself to get out of the “safe spot” within my experience right now by reminding myself of the fact that I need to train myself to be strong enough to be able to ordain. As I kept doing this today, every time, the possibility of not seeing loved ones happy; *seeing* them crying, *hearing* them crying, became more and more apparent and painful. Repetitively reminding myself of ordaining felt like I was being pulled out of this shelter I reside in, not having access to that shelter feels terrifying, to the point where it felt like my actual physical heart was getting pulled somehow.

This shelter, its existence, was not at all apparent to me. I wonder all other such shelters that aren’t apparent to me; what are they? How are they found? How does one not even create any more such shelters? How does one become comfortable without them?

There is a “visible” duality within my experience: ignore that I need to ordain, or not ignore that. Ignoring that is seeming to be the most convenient and non-challenging option, that’s the “safe spot” I was referring to. Literally everything within my experience becomes far more comfortable as a result. However, not ignoring that is absolute terror here-and-now.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-07 06:51:56

This shelter, its existence, was not at all apparent to me. I wonder all other such shelters that aren’t apparent to me; what are they? How are they found? How does one not even create any more such shelters? How does one become comfortable without them?

That’s the catch. You can’t “count” them or measure them because it’s an entire *domain of existence*. It’s infinite. That’s why, to flog a dead horse, a meditation technique and its resulting pleasure don’t actually address the problem, even though it seems to remove all the potential “shelters” you might have created and it feels like you’re perfectly independent from the world internally. You’re not for as long as that entire domain of false safety in pleasure is not fully discerned and abandoned.

But yes, by restraining yourself from the specific ways of taking shelter that you start recognizing, obvious sensuality in terms of the precepts first and foremost, other ways that were not apparent before will come to light, and that over time starts to outline the entire domain.

Before that entire domain is seen, even pulling your eyes out, living naked under a bridge and refusing to eat and breathe will be another form of “taking shelter”.

There is a “visible“ duality within my experience: ignore that I need to ordain, or not ignore that. Ignoring that is seeming to be the most convenient and non-challenging option, that’s the “safe spot” I was referring to. Literally everything within my experience becomes far more comfortable as a result. However, not ignoring that is absolute terror here-and-now.

That may potentially be a good sign. It could mean that you’re not misconceiving it to be a magical escape from your problems. It’s not.

If you’re practicing rightly, your true problems become amplified and fully visible *when* you ordain, and that’s why it’s the best environment to address them.

But if you end up using it as another “shelter”, it might be worse than lay life in some ways, because the shelter can be made more comfy on a subtler level. Meaning, you start to avoid all *existential* disturbances, like being with other monks who have different views or interpretations of the rules, or being shown less-than-perfect respect as a senior monk. So you become even more existentially delicate rather than the opposite.

New Essay: “What The Jhānas Actually Are”

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-11-06 06:32:48

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-06 13:13:54 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

from Keren Arbel and in a scholarly way her analysis supports the understanding of Jhanas you’ve put forth in your essay.

Yes, I came across that one. It was not bad, relatively speaking. But if you read closely, you’ll see that she still thinks “thinking” is somehow in and of itself an obstacle. It’s hard for people to abandon that notion, because that’s when you get in the realm of *actually*

having to become dispassionate towards the entire world correctly (which is experienced *through* your thinking, nothing else), not run away from it.

I have a question : in your personal experience or overall in people's experience abiding/practicing in those correct Jhanas, does the experience of each of the four jhanas clearly distinct from one another ? **Is there a distinct feel/taste/knowing change when the mind goes from one to another ?**

Most definitely, to the point where “distinct feel” would be an extreme understatement. This is another one of the huge discrepancies in the common understanding of jhāna, where it's basically just “absorbed... even more absorbed... even more absorbed...” and people use the term “deep samādhi” to describe it—a contradiction in terms, and carries the connotation of *digging yourself further into a hole* so you have even less perspective, whereas samādhi is all about *going up, elevating* the mind.

All the terms and “factors” the Suttas use to describe each jhāna are usually just being read into the experience of being “locked” into the object, worsened by the fact that you're not supposed to be able to reflect while you're in the supposed “jhāna” or you will lose it, which means you can't even soberly recognize what phenomena are present (which, contradictorily, is exactly what Sāriputta was doing in *every* single attainment in MN 111).

So in the end, what people are going through in those “jhānas” is not actually changing all that much. It's just different perceptions coming up that are regarded as “special”, **and that's why the experiences vary from person to person**. Also, there is an inherent but subtle craving to get “more” and you get bored if you just do the same one forever, which shows how it's not even free from longing, the first hindrance. (With even the basic first jhāna, despite all that thinking and pondering, it's *inconceivable* to want or need anything, whether worldly or “spiritual”, which is why it's sufficient for Arahantship.)

When you ascend from an actual jhāna to the next, you're ascending into an entirely different *plane of existence*, literally. (This is why there's one separate Brahma realm for each jhāna, and the beings in a lower one are completely unaware that there is a higher realm—a higher jhāna—than theirs, like the Brahma Baka in MN 49, who genuinely thought he was the foremost in the entire universe. These are not random fairytales).

So, a higher jhana is not just “different” from the previous one. Comparing them as two objects is impossible because you can only *exist* within one of them at any time. In other words, your thought of a jhāna while you're not in that jhāna is **not** that jhāna; it's a thought within your current plane of existence. You can't “relate” to the second one while you're in the first, and while you're not in jhāna at all, you can't even relate to the first one. That's why we say the hindrances are your *state of being* too; they're not things you temporarily get rid of by suppressing your thoughts.

“Bhikkhus, there are these four inconceivable matters that one should not try to conceive; one who tries to conceive them would reap either madness or frustration. What four? (1) The domain of the Buddhas is an inconceivable matter that one should not try to conceive; one who tries to conceive it would reap either madness or frustration. (2) **The comprehension-sphere of one in jhāna**

(jhāyissa jhānavisayo) is an inconceivable matter ... (3) The result of kamma is an inconceivable matter ... (4) Speculation about the world is an inconceivable matter that one should not try to conceive; one who tries to conceive it would reap either madness or frustration. These are the four inconceivable matters that one should not try to conceive; **one who tries to conceive them would reap either madness or frustration.**” —AN 4.77

With the modern “jhāna” you can very much conceive it and imagine what it’s like before experiencing it without reaping madness or frustration, because it’s just “remove the thinking, add a fixed object and the ecstatic pleasure”. And you can *crave* for it sensually as well because it’s just another experience within the same sensual realm you were born into. Whatever you reach there will still be sensual, even on a very subtle level, no matter how peaceful and liberating it feels.

(See also AN 3.94, which says that a noble disciple cannot be reborn in the sensual realm if he dies while his mind is established in the plane of the first jhana. That’s because his citta is *already not here* while he’s alive, so to speak, despite still having the same functioning 5 senses. The jhānas are called “*superhuman states*” as well, and you lose your monkhood forever if you claim to have them when you know you don’t. They’re no joke, and they most certainly don’t happen by accident during a 10-day retreat).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-06 16:28:10 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

How do they get to stream entry without being celibate or restraint? I thought it’s only possible to attain right view after certain amount of time being restrained. And I thought that’s what Ajahn Nyanamoli said too, I’ve always been confused about this tbh.

During your *training period* to get the Right View you must be restrained and celibate (and for them the conversation with the Buddha was enough training due to less dust in their eyes than people today).

After that, some stream enterers with less samvega would relax and go back to only five precepts because they’re content with what they attained. There are several examples in the Suttas. Pretty much every lay disciple you read about who didn’t become an anāgāmi was because they weren’t celibate *after* they got the Right View and were not really striving to renounce further than that. And that’s why they didn’t get jhānas, not because they lacked focusing skills.

I made a video on this topic which should be released soon on the channel.

And second, everytime someone gets the noble attainment, they always claim they know birth is ended, etc. I’m sure during Buddha’s time, not all of his student believe in the metaphysical teaching and cosmology or about rebirth etc.

That’s because you first need to know what being and birth are (which requires seeing

paṭiccasamuppāda here-&-now), and then you can know when they're no longer there. Birth is not the external event of coming out of your mother's womb—that's a result of your birth already, and that same birth remains there to this day.

When you understand the nature of craving, you see exactly how it necessarily *has* to have been leading you through samsara without beginning, and will do so forever if you don't abandon it, even if you have no recollection whatsoever of previous lives or divine visions. The idea that there could be a beginning to samsara, and an end that would come *by itself* (i.e. you die as a puthujjana and it's over) becomes no less ridiculous than saying that there can be a circle which is not round. It's not a matter of "believing" it anymore.

When you see craving and birth in yourself, you see that it's inconceivable for a new body to be imposed on you if there is no craving, and also inconceivable that you were truly just "thrown into this world" and there was nothing before this.

But yes, until then one will only be philosophizing and inferring things through reasoning, because there is no recognition of the Four Noble Truths, and whatever conclusions one may come to will not be beyond doubt, even if they agree with what the Suttas say.

Also, truly "metaphysical" are religions which talk about God being completely beyond our grasp and so on. The "cosmology" of the Suttas and rebirth sounds "metaphysical" only because the mind is not developed, and it cannot help but interpret everything based on the 5 sense domain, like a scientist.

One doesn't have to "believe" in rebirth to start the practice, but one certainly must not *be sure* that there is nothing after death, because that would be rooted in an unjustified assumption to an even greater degree, and it's inherently impossible to prove it. It would also abolish the reason for practicing and not being heedless to begin with, which is that you don't know if your actions will have repercussions later.

A person who is "sure" that there is no rebirth and also agrees with the Four Noble Truths and unsatisfactoriness of the world is obliged to kill themselves so as to be logically consistent, and thus achieve "Nibbāna".

So whoever practiced rightly and got the right view at least initially recognized that they can't be sure, and therefore they better do the things which they can see in this very life lead to less craving and thus less suffering.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-06 22:19:53 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Is it possible that people who recollect past life or gained psychic powers just a saying to mean other thing but not actually meaning they really see their past lives or gain psychic powers?

No, not to that extent. Sure, sometimes when the Suttas talk about things like how many monks were there or what the Buddha did right after coming out of the womb (with gods holding an parasol over his head, he walked several steps and proclaimed his supremacy

over all beings), they might be just exaggerating or embellishing things, but that applies only to those little details about external events.

When it comes to descriptions of things that Arahants can see and so on, things that are related to the mind and its development, none of it is made up.

But again, one doesn't have to believe it initially if one's opposing *belief* in science and materialism is still too strong, because even if you choose to fully take on faith things like the visions of past lives, you would still be misconceiving them and adding mystical connotations to them which are gratuitous. You won't see the Middle Way of how they are within exactly the same context as the important stuff until you *have* that context to begin with.

In fact, the Suttas always say you need to have fourth jhāna in order to gain all these special powers and whatnot, and even the first jhāna is already inconceivable from the POV of a sensual person, as I wrote in the other reply to u/obobinde above. So trying to conceive how these things that are a byproduct of skill in the fourth jhāna work, being still a sensual person with a tiny mind, is even more futile.

One just has to be careful not to *decide* that they're false, giving way too much credit and trust to one's present understanding of the world which *has* to be faulty.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 12:37:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

The suttas are clear about jhana developed by a still mind.

Not debatable in the slightest.

But I would ask you to show me evidence that the Suttas define "still mind" as the absence of thinking, particularly in the first jhāna which was the main focus of the essay. A mistaken interpretation of the first jhāna inherently makes a true second jhāna and beyond impossible.

I will gladly engage in discussion on this topic, but I do not expect anyone to be able to disprove my points. I am convinced that whoever attempts to do so will be the sort of person with a tendency to use their pre-existing views as the lens for looking at the Suttas, rather than using the Suttas to form their views.

Do also check out the most recent post I made, and if possible, please post your reply there.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 22:23:34 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, I was pretty much just waiting for someone to bring this up.

We have addressed this talk multiple times in the past, and essentially the “process” of purifying the mind that we always describe is entirely based on this Sutta. (See also “Good Thoughts, Bad Thoughts”.

The first thing to note is that there is an Chinese Agama parallel which gives us a clearer picture of the process that the Sutta is describing:

Practicing in this way, I went and stayed in a **remote and secluded place** [not mentioned by the Pali version and it’s obviously important, since otherwise people think “group meditation” is feasible yet it’s an oxymoron], practicing diligently with a mind free of negligence.

[If] a thought without sensual desire arose in me, I at once realized, “A thought without sensual desire has arisen, which is not harmful to myself, not harmful to others, not harmful to both, which will [lead to] developing wisdom without diff i culty, and to attaining nirvana.” On realizing that it was not harmful to myself, not harmful to others, not harmful to both, and that it would [lead to] developing wisdom without diff i culty and to attaining nirvana, I rapidly developed it and made much of it.

Again, [if] a thought without ill-will, . . . [or] a thought without cruelty arose in me, I at once realized, “A thought without ill-will, . . . [or] a thought without cruelty...

[If] a thought without sensual desire arose in me, I intentionally kept on thinking it. [If] a thought without ill-will, . . . [or] a thought without cruelty arose, I intentionally kept on thinking it.

I [then] further had this thought: “If I **intentionally keep on thinking** my body will lose strength and my mind will be troubled. Let me rather keep my mind in check within, continuously dwelling in inner tranquility, unified, having attained [composure], so that my mind will not be troubled.” Thereafter I kept my mind in check within, continuously dwelling in inner tranquility, unif i ed, having attained concentration, and my mind was no longer troubled.

And what does “kept in check within mean”? Does it mean no thinking?

[If] a thought without sensual desire arose in me, **I further [allowed] thoughts to arise that were inclined toward the Dharma and in accordance with the Dharma.** [If] a thought without ill-will, . . . [or] a thought without cruelty arose, I further **[allowed] thoughts to arise** that were inclined toward the Dharma and in accordance with the Dharma. Why was that? **[Because] I did not see that countless evil and unwholesome states would arise because of [such thoughts].**

It is just as in the last month of autumn, when the entire harvest has been collected, a cowherd boy sets the cows free in the uncultivated fi elds and is mindful of them, thinking, “My cows are there in the herd.” Why is that? Because the cowherd boy does not see that he would be scolded, beaten, or imprisoned

for any trespassing. For this reason he is mindful of them thus, “My cows are there in the herd.”

In the same way, [if] a thought without sensual desire arose in me, I further [allowed] thoughts to arise that were inclined to the Dharma and in accordance with the Dharma. [If] a thought without ill-will, . . . [or] a thought without cruelty arose...

Monks, in accordance with what one intends, in accordance with what one thinks, the mind takes delight in that. If a monk often thinks thoughts without sensual desire and abandons thoughts of sensual desire, then because of often thinking thoughts without sensual desire his mind takes delight in them.

If a monk often thinks thoughts without ill-will, . . . [or] thoughts without cruelty, and abandons thoughts of ill-will, . . . [or] thoughts of cruelty, then because of often thinking thoughts without ill-will, . . . [or] thoughts without cruelty his mind takes delight in them.

With the calming of [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation, with inner stillness and mental unification, he dwells having attained the second absorption, which is without [directed] awareness and [sustained] contemplation and with rapture and happiness born of concentration. —Madhyama Agama 102, the Discourse on Thoughts

[note that very last paragraph: *the Buddha was already in the first jhāna when he was “allowing thoughts to arise”*]

Along the same lines, if you read the Pali version closely:

Rattindivañcepi naṃ, bhikkhave, anuvitakkeyyaṃ anuvicāreyyaṃ, neva tatonidānaṃ bhayaṃ samanupassāmi. Api ca kho me aticiraṃ **anuvitakkayato anuvicārayato kāyo kilameyya**. Kāye kilante cittaṃ ūhaññeyya. Ūhate citte ārā cittaṃ samādhimhāti. So kho ahaṃ, bhikkhave, ajjhattameva cittaṃ saṇṭhapemi sannisādemi ekodim̐ karomi samādahāmi. Taṃ kissa hetu? ’Mā me cittaṃ ūhaññī’ti.

The prefix “anu-” here adds a nuance to the words vitakketi and vicāreti, namely the fact that during that initial “stage” of cultivating the right thoughts, one is *actively* “going along” with those wholesome thoughts in order to make sure that their context remains, since “letting go” of them at that stage would entail the unwholesome ones coming back whether you like it or not. (As the talks I linked explain, this is NOT to mean that the wholesome thoughts are simply about attending to a different “object”. Wholesome thoughts are developed by bringing to mind the same objects and experiences that would bring up unwholesome states, but then recognizing the true nature of them and the harm that **delighting** in those objects leads to, instead of allowing the mind to see them in the default way that goes with the grain. That recognition of true nature and harm is the reflection the Buddha was using here about lack of benefit for himself, others, etc. in *delighting* in those objects *while they’re there*, and their presence is not really optional during the first jhāna,

let alone before. And that's one reason why the second jhāna is so much more peaceful than the first one, even though in the first one the *citta* is already perfectly purified.

So what the Buddha is saying here is that “[following] along” (anu-) even the wholesome thoughts (and note that the first jhāna factor is *vitakkavicāra*, so no “anu-” involved) will tire the mind compared to when the mind is calm without having to follow anything. When the mind is externally scattered, it is ultimately not in its ideal, purified state, but that “external scattering” is initially (before the first jhāna is steady) not optional. So one needs be scattering the mind towards the signs of danger and lack of benefit in unwholesome states, so that eventually one withdraw the mind from *everything*, including the wholesome theme.

What it means for the mind to be “withdrawn” is explained through a simile by the Sutta itself:

Just as in the last month of the hot season, when all the crops have been brought inside the villages, a cowherd would guard his cows while staying at the root of a tree or out in the open, since he needs only to be mindful that the cows are there; so too, there was need for me only to be mindful that those states were there.

The meaning here is that once the context has been fully established through actively reflecting on it and bringing it back when it becomes muddled, there is eventually no need to sustain it. One can allow the mind to roam around wherever it wants, and the context will not be forgotten even if one doesn't think about it, and thus there can be no delight towards the same things that arose before, and there will be a profound sense of safety on account of that. This is what the Agama I quoted means with “allowing thoughts to arise that are in accordance with the [Dhamma]”, meaning thoughts that the background *citta* has the right context for naturally without one's input, not thoughts that have a particular *content*.

See also MN 125:

“Just as, Aggivessana, the elephant tamer plants a large post in the earth and binds the forest elephant to it by the neck in order to subdue his forest habits...and to inculcate in him habits congenial to human beings, so these four foundations of mindfulness are the bindings for the mind of the noble disciple in order to subdue his habits based on the household life, to subdue his memories and intentions based on the household life, to subdue his distress, fatigue, and fever based on the household life, and in order that he may attain the true way and realise Nibbāna.

“Then the Tathāgata disciplines him further: ‘Come, bhikkhu, abide contemplating the body as a body, but do not think thoughts **of sensual desire**. Abide contemplating feelings as feelings...mind as mind...mind-objects as mind-objects, but do not think thoughts of sensual desire.’

“With the stilling of applied and sustained thought, he enters upon and abides in the second jhāna...the third jhāna...the fourth jhāna.

This is saying the same thing. Note how it says explicitly *thoughts of sensual desire* must not be there and the satipaṭṭhāna context needs to be the dominating factor instead, since that is essentially what the first jhāna is about. As SN 40.1 shows with Ven. Mahāmoggallāna, it is possible for one to be *sort of* in the first jhāna but which sensual perceptions beginning to arise again.

But it cannot be emphasized enough that “sensual thoughts” and “sensual perceptions” here are determined by the way that the *citta* reacts to the objects of the six senses, and one needs to have grasped the hints of the mind so as to recognize where the sensuality even is. Otherwise, one will only be trying to get rid of objects which does not accomplish anything (while the actual unwholesome remains at back)—and yet even this would ultimately be less harmful than trying to stop thinking altogether.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-14 04:41:31 (in reply to a comment not included)

Hello. The Buddha did not speak Chinese.

And neither did he speak Pāli. Still, I would never put the Agamas over the Nikāyas. I only quote them when they enrich what the Suttas already say.

“**Anuvitakketi**” (which, similar to “anupassati”, refers to “close, accurate, precise, **anu**” thinking rather than papanca) **is about the thoughts of renunciation.**

According to whom, if I may ask?

This in itself refutes your own personal idiosyncratic claims that:

vitakka in the 1st jhana is about thoughts of renunciation/danger of sensuality

It isn’t, hence the Buddha said he stopped deliberately thinking about renunciation because that would be tiresome—that’s the whole point. vitakkavicāra in the 1st jhana is about *anything*. The *mind* (citta) is stilled and unified (ekagga) in its “stepping back” from the entire domain of thinking, and the content of thoughts is now irrelevant. That is what I wrote, if you read carefully.

vitakka in jhana in ordinary verbal thinking

I do not see any implicit rebuttal of the possibility of “verbal” thinking based on your argument above, which you did not back with evidence either. And what I’m describing here is not “ordinary” by the way. If I’ve ever used the expression “ordinary thinking” before, that is absolutely not to be understood as saying that the first jhāna is easy to attain. In fact, it’s because freedom *despite* “ordinary thinking that the Buddha describes in MN 19 is **way** harder than the type of practice you seem to be arguing in favor of below that nearly everyone would go for that instead—it’s easy.

The very fact MN 19 uses the term anuvittaka shows anuvittaka is different to vitakka of the 1st jhana. The vitakka of the 1st jhana simply refers to the mind

apprehending (moving towards) the pleasant feelings to examine/explore the feelings. This weakens the pleasant feelings so the mindfulness & wisdom already developed subtly pulls back the mind from its apprehension & exploring the feelings. **“Jhana wobble” as already explained.**

Where is this said? Apart from Ajahn Brahm’s teaching, I mean.

This is not related to the 1st jhana. The 1st jhana has ekaggata as a factor.

So why the simile about letting the cows roam that the Buddha used? Isn’t that “wobble” you speak about too subtle and insignificant compared to thinking and pondering to merit being compared with cows moving around, **and** with the cowherd *sitting still, at ease*?

Also, please note that I am not dismissing ekaggatā whatsoever. On the contrary, this definition of ekaggatā is so subtle and hard to conceive for most that it literally flies over people’s heads. This is why the jhāna I am describing does deserve to be compared to Nibbāna “in a manner of speaking”, as I mentioned in the recent thread about BB’s essay. Whereas the ekaggatā that is conceived as the literal absorption in an object with the *sixth sense base* (mano), does not constitute a true development in the “higher mind” (adhicitta), a term for samādhi. Because it’s *mano* that has been stilled, not the citta. Even the second jhāna are above are absolutely not about “fixed objects”. That is of no use and will not teach you anything about your life and how you suffer in it, which is essentially about nothing but the movements of mano.

The sort of ekaggatā you describe constitutes a development of a “higher Māra’s domain”, if anything.

It does not roam around in wholesome thoughts of renunciation, non-ill-will & non-cruelty.

And as I said, yes, the mind (citta), the cowherd, is perfectly still and does not go anywhere at all. It doesn’t even roam in wholesome thoughts. Roaming in wholesome thoughts is the *practice towards* jhāna.

MN 125 does not support your own personal idiosyncratic claims. MN 125 says prior to its discussion of Satipatthana that the Five Hindrances have already been ended. Did you overlook this? MN 125 teaches in this order: ending of hindrances > practise of satipatthana > 2nd jhana. It is the Satipatthana here, rather than working to overcome the hindrances, that has been substituted for the 1st jhana. MN 125 here says: “*don’t think thoughts connected with sensual pleasures*”

Again, here you are inserting your interpretations of what the hindrances are, unwilling to even ask yourself whether it’s truly supported by the Suttas. What you’re implying here is that abandonment of hindrances necessarily implies absence of thinking and pondering, and you have not shown evidence for this apart from quoting Suttas that you alone are telling me to interpret through concepts that were not even alluded to within them.

MN 125 here does not say: “*think thoughts connected with renunciation & perception of danger*”. Satipatthana says: “*keen, aware, and mindful, rid of covetous-*

ness and displeasure for the world”. Satipatthana does not say: “keen, aware, and mindful, full of thinking thoughts of danger towards the world”.

Needless to say, all of these are strawmans and it doesn't seem like you're actually engaging with my argument.

Nevertheless, I will just repeat that no, perfectly established satipaṭṭhāna does not entail *active* thinking in the sense that the satipaṭṭhāna would be lost if you forgot to think about danger—it does not require maintenance anymore. What MN 125 is referring to here at the usual place of the first jhāna is a still mind that recognizes *on its own*, without your volition, like the cowherd who sits quietly under the tree in the MN 19 simile, the nature of phenomena within phenomena, in this case of the domain of thinking and pondering that is now operating freely. And because of that lack of need to interfere with the “cows”, only needing to *know* that “the cows are there”, as the Buddha said right before the first jhāna formula, there is an immeasurable sense of relief and safety—**co-existing with living, moving cows**, It doesn't say that the cowherd butchered the cows or put them to sleep.

To end, I suggest to read MN 35, which is metaphor for how your ideas were smashed here, when you decided to try to debate the Buddha on Reddit.

*Then **DBistheB [BadMouth] the BD-son** — sensing that **Anigha-the Hillside-son** was silent, abashed, sitting with his shoulders drooping, his head down, brooding, at a loss for words — said to the Blessed One, “Lord, a simile has occurred to me.”*

“Let it occur to you, BDistheB,” the Blessed One said.

*“Suppose, lord, that not far from a village or town was a pond. There in it was a crab. Then a number of boys & girls, leaving the village or town, would go to the pond and, on arrival, would go down to bathe in it. Taking the crab out of the water, they would place it on the ground. And whenever the crab extended a leg, the boys or girls would cut it off, break it, and smash it with sticks or stones right there, so that the crab — with all its legs cut off, broken, & smashed — would be unable to get back in the water as before. **In the same way, whatever Anigha the Hillside-son's writhings, capers, & contortions, the Blessed One has cut them off, broken them, and smashed them all, so that Anigha the Hillside-son is now unable to approach the Blessed One again for the purpose of debate.**”*

So I'm replying to you now just for the sake of others who may be reading, in case they may have genuinely held a position similar to yours. It looks like there isn't much hope to change your mind.

Edit: >“**Anuvitakketi**” (which, similar to “anupassati”, refers to “close, accurate, precise, **anu**” thinking rather than papanca) **is about the thoughts of renunciation**. This in itself refutes your own personal idiosyncratic claims that:

- vitakka in the 1st jhana is about thoughts of renunciation/danger of sensuality
- vitakka in jhana in ordinary verbal thinking

The very fact MN 19 uses the term anuvittaka shows anuvittaka is different to vitakka of the 1st jhana.

Regarding this, I now realize maybe you're actually inadvertently arguing the very point I made, showing you either misunderstood or didn't really try to understand to begin with. What I referred to as the "anu-" component is the intentional, directed thinking towards thoughts of renunciation that becomes tiresome but is a necessary step. This word "vitakkavicāra" purely refers to thinking and pondering that has no "goal" anymore, because the goal of calming the defilements was accomplished.

"anuvitakketi" occurs in Suttas like AN 7.61 with Mahāmoggallāna falling asleep, meaning it is something that would rouse his mind up due to its active quality. AN 3.112 describes how "anuvitakka" would be the sort of thinking directed towards unwholesome states, and it's that same sort that you use to develop renunciation, which is why, as MN 19 says, renunciation alone is tiresome compared to "just" vitakkavicāra that doesn't need to be controlled anymore.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-15 00:24:51 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Obviously, Bhikkhu Eḷamūga. Why would an individual such as my good self, free from doubts about the Dhamma, senior to you in the Dhamma, have conviction in your clutching at straws & conviction in your Papanca Guru that struggles to speak a coherent sentence in the English language & has no sati-sampajjana in relation to the body established? It appears the case your obsession with overcoming sensuality shows where your mind is in relation to the Dhamma. Minds that attain what is lofty speak of what is lofty. Those still stuck in the mud speak of getting free from the mud. Your social media errand boy blind faith devotees appear to be spamming the internet with your drivel at the moment. It is very embarrassing to observe; which appears 100% reflective of your personal claims that you know better than Ajahn Brahmavamsa & the like. Have you considered disrobing & returning to lay life selling used cars or mobile phones?

Is this what Ajahn Brahm teaches? I think not.

Unfortunately though, giving him the benefit of the doubt and assuming he has good intentions at least, it's the sort of thing that will lie latent within people no matter how many decades they've committed to his teachings and anything that resembles it (which is almost everything you find today).

Thanks for indirectly helping me with my "social media errand boy" mission. Real lofty stuff you must be attaining.

What to know about ordination?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-11-04 05:00:41

I'm in first year of uni currently and half-way finishing the first term. Doing fairly well, but the level of work I'm getting here is making my study of the Dhamma nearly unsustainable compared to a year ago where I had loads of free time to contemplate many things. Not to speak of the fact that there's an increasing level of dispassion at the horrible materialistic solution being sold to me here in the West — and would likely be the same elsewhere as well. My initial plan was to complete uni, get a remote SWE job that pays well enough to help my family, but this plan seems to be fading away now.

I was, and still am, hesitant of the idea of ordination due to my responsibility to my parents. I'm immensely indebted to them for all they've done for me and my sister, and I feel a great sense of responsibility towards them. The fact that my dad has multiple chronic illnesses that makes it hard for him to work does not help either; we're not exactly that well off financially either, though it's certainly sustainable. My fondness of my sister and fear of my mom's anger and upset are also things holding me back. In general, I'm scared of confronting them about this.

However, the rate at which the redundancy of all that I'm currently doing — and missing out on possibly *actually* ending suffering, seems to be overtaking this fear, and I'd guess it's only a matter of time where the fear of not dedicating my time entirely to the Dhamma outweighs the guilt and the general suffering of leaving my family. One thing, that I've just recognized today, that will help me alleviate some of this guilt is the fact that my parents have saved tons of money for me to go to university which would be of immense help to them; so rather than me wasting my time and the money on random uni courses of little relevance to me, it would be better for me and them that I not further pursue uni.

The first and only time I talked to my mom about my disinterest in materialistic values to instead pursue something that at least *appears* to be more relevant to ending my suffering did not go well AT ALL. I'm fairly rational and remain composed, but every confrontation seems to take both of these qualities away and I become unnecessarily emotional, this is especially the case with my mom for some reason. As a result, I become incapable of explaining my position well enough to her. The fact that her questions are all very emotional doesn't help me either. I feel like I don't have enough wisdom to rightly answer questions like, "so does this mean you don't love me?", "you don't care about us?". It is because I love my family and am afraid of suffering being inflicted upon them, and recognizing the uncertainty of all that can occur and the incapability of the materialistic pursuits to help with that to *any extent*, that I want to pursue freedom from suffering (she will most likely find a way to insert the belief that I don't care about them as a result, anyways). But I'm incapable of answering properly, my mind becomes blank. How do I answer such questions? What do I do when telling them about possibly ordaining? There is so much fear at the questions that will be asked, and little belief in my wisdom to be capable of answering them.

I plan on telling them about this before the current term ends so that way, if I get permis-

sion, I don't end up wasting money on the next term for uni. And to prove to myself that I'm willing to go far enough to ordain, I'll also be keeping unbroken virtue until Jan. start (ideally more, but at least this much).

In the meantime, I want to know if there's something I should know about ordination. Where to ordain? Are there certain periods for ordination? What is the minimum age required to ordain?

For reference, I live in Mississauga, Canada, and turn 19 next May. The local sanghas DO NOT look good; if I get in, I doubt I'll have an ounce of seclusion since they seem to be hoarded by a bunch of visitors. The fact that they're all right in the city doesn't help with that either. My family just got our citizenship, and we'll be getting our Canadian passport soon, so perhaps I can travel elsewhere. But again, getting permission already seems impossible enough, but then to convince my parents to allow me to go another country alone seems to make the situation even worse..

I'm looking at SBS Malaysia right now since it seems to offer the possibility of individual practice, and seclusion, but again, same issues as above.

I also haven't considered what to do in the situation where I'm unable to obtain permission to ordain. I'm sure the situation will get escalated if I remain insistent on wanting to ordain and my relatives, grandparents and everyone will get involved, which will not be the easiest for me to deal with.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-04 07:21:15

One thing, that I've just recognized today, that will help me alleviate some of this guilt is the fact that my parents have saved tons of money for me to go to university which would be of immense help to them; so rather than me wasting my time and the money on random uni courses of little relevance to me, it would be better for me and them that I not further pursue uni.

Yes, it would certainly be good to make up your mind before you commit to further mundane investment, especially if those expenses will be covered by your parents. That will be one more argument in their favor in the future if you ever make up your mind to ordain, and you will regret it. (I went through a very similar situation, and luckily decided to cancel my studies right on time instead of trying to juggle both Dhamma and worldly life just to appease my parents, postponing ordination to some ambiguous "later on" that would've likely never come). You also don't know what unexpected obstacles will come up over time, and any sense of certainty is illusory.

But I'm incapable of answering properly, my mind becomes blank. How do I answer such questions? What do I do when telling them about possibly ordaining? There is so much fear at the questions that will be asked, and little belief in my wisdom to be capable of answering them.

If you feel like based on their views and values there is little chance that they will sympathize with you, you have to be ready to be incomprehensible to them. You can't hope

that they will “agree” with you and speak praise of your decision *before* you ordain unless they’re extremely devout Buddhists (which may not even be enough). Their judgement will be clouded by the looming possibility of losing something that is very dear to them, and it’s unlikely that even with the best wisdom and rhetorical skills you would be able to put a dent on their conviction, which will be mostly irrational (because that’s the nature of attachment). They will be arguing from a completely different dimension than you, speaking the same language only on the surface.

They would only be able to see the value in your choice, *if ever*, which is not guaranteed, *after* you’ve left, and once the irrational fear subsides and the reality sinks in that they *can* actually live without you, which right now their minds will be denying too loudly to see.

In the meantime, I want to know if there’s something I should know about ordination. Where to ordain? Are there certain periods for ordination? What is the minimum age required to ordain?

19 years and 6 months to become a bhikkhu, *technically* 7 years old to become a novice. In most places you’d be expected to spend one year as a novice before higher ordination, and, depending on the place, up to a year as an 8-precept layman prior to novice ordination.

But again, getting permission already seems impossible enough, but then to convince my parents to allow me to go another country alone seems to make the situation even worse..

I also haven’t considered what to do in the situation where I’m unable to obtain permission to ordain. I’m sure the situation will get escalated if I remain insistent on wanting to ordain and my relatives, grandparents and everyone will get involved, which will not be the easiest for me to deal with.

Yes, in that regard, you would have to show your determination even more firmly, especially at this age when you’re still regarded as a child. And again, be ready to face the fact that they might think you’ve gone completely nuts or been indoctrinated by a weird cult all of a sudden, and to make it clear that even if you stay, you will not really be “part” of the family as you were before. Not in the sense that you dismiss them rudely, but that you will no longer engage in the things and behaviors which caused them to become attached to you and “love” you in the first place, even if you were to still support them financially.

If they are reasonably unselfish, they would probably not like the idea of having a bore of a son that will do nothing but work, pay their bills, and stay in seclusion the rest of the time, and may prefer to let you go instead, even if it’s with the hope that you’ll eventually change your mind and come back.

Then you just make sure that that never happens, and they may eventually, over time, come to see the whole thing in a different light. If not, then that’s fine too, and saying that it’s still a net win by an immeasurable margin if you make good use of the opportunity is a severe understatement.

(If you haven’t already, check out the latest talk on the YouTube channel).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-06 00:13:19 (in reply to a comment not included)

What do monks do when their parents get sick?

Can't say for everyone because it probably depends on the relationship, and in the Buddha's time it was obviously very different given the advancements in transport and communication. Back then, leaving them may have meant not seeing them again, or finding out too late when something happens to them.

But nowadays if one is living in the same country, there would be no reason to not go and help them out, although one wouldn't usually be expected to stay permanently. There's a rule that a monk shouldn't sleep more than 3 nights in the same lodging as an unordained person.

If living abroad then of course it's more complicated, but either way, that's one reason why it's better not to postpone it and ordain as early as possible if one has the aspiration, i.e. before one's parents even reach old age. Then there's at least some chance that you will have enough time to develop your mind in the best possible conditions, so that if push comes to shove and they *really* can't do without your support, you'll have a solid basis and your practice won't be compromised if you need to return home for their sake (and later when you yourself get old and sick as well, of course).

If one's parents are already old or sick and in need of care then it's hard for the action of abandoning them not to be rooted in aversion/avoidance of responsibility unless one finds a way to ensure they'll be taken care of. What one then has to remember is that having to support one's parents does not in the slightest equal an excuse to ever break the eight precepts and sense restraint, so you can live like a monk while taking care of your parents, like the potter in MN 81, who even became an anāgāmi thanks to his dedication to the Gradual Training.

And what about your personal situation, do your parents have someone to care for them if something happen?

Luckily I have a younger brother who'll be able to bear the burden by the time they're old, and I left home long before that.

Edit: Just to be clear, with "return home for your parents sake" above I meant helping them out temporarily if the support they need is not financial (i.e. never actually disrobing) until a solution can be found.

Directly seeing feeling?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-11-03 01:51:57

I can detect feelings only based on thought. If that thought is anger then feeling must be unpleasant. Even immediately after recognising thought of anger if I directly want to see

feeling. I am unable. this seems like a blind man's strategy. Some other hints are bodily sensations at heart, head and stomach region.

Is this my incapability, or all uses this strategy? Can I say that just like Rupa we can never directly know vedana.?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-03 14:09:43

I can detect feelings only based on thought. If that thought is anger then feeling must be unpleasant. Even immediately after recognising thought of anger if I directly want to see feeling. I am unable. this seems like a blind man's strategy.

It is, because it's based on seeing things in the "wrong order". Your feelings are not detectable *based* on your thoughts. Rather, the things you choose to do, say or think about are a *response* to what you feel, and that's how there is lust, aversion and delusion right there-&-then, in regard to that feeling. Enduring the feeling on the right level means that whatever you do, say or think will not be proliferating the defilements, even if technically you are acting *due to* of the feeling (i.e., not *out* of it, as we say). This "enduring" would also be mutually exclusive with breaking the 5 precepts, celibacy, and aggressive speech.

Actions and thoughts cannot occur apart from pressure/contact, but they are not unwholesome if they're not trying to *get out* of that pressure on the internal level, which is that "right level" endurance.

Some other hints are bodily sensations at heart, head and stomach region.

Not at all. These would be present on account of the "first arrow" alone, which is why it's utterly ill-advised to look for the defilements in the way your body reacts, and, the worst of all, trying to calm the defilements by calming your body.

The only "hints" that matter are the hints of the mind (cittanimitta), and not even in one's wildest dreams would one be able to pin those down onto bodily sensations.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-04 09:47:44 (in reply to a comment not included)

Ok, so you mean to say that choices are prior to action, speech and thought.

That's not what I was saying, but you could describe it that way too. Choice in the broadest sense of greed, aversion and delusion precedes even the specific things you might, do, say or think, which is why restraint is only the (non-negotiable) stepping stone to abandonment of unwholesome. But in this specific case, you only need to worry about properly restraining what you're actually doing first, including mental things like doubt.

so I should make choice/(intention) as the sign of feeling. and endure that feeling. Because action/speech and thought are kamma. and I should restrain from them. rather than making them as sign of feeling. (though it's not easy but I understand)

You should restrain from the actions that are rooted in trying to get rid of the feeling only, because those are what lead to the increase of kamma. You will have to do something whether you like it or not, even “non-doing” is a doing, so the point is to make sure that you are at least not adding more fuel to the fire.

I Also understand you guys are not in favor of body scan. And I am also not scanning body for that purpose. But its natue of Nama and Rupa. its psycho-somatic, as well somato-psychic. some of body sensation are really hints of feeling. it is external sense object but it gives hint of feeling. Not all feeling are mirrored on body. But some intense feeling are mirrored on body. particularly the case of fear. How much ever I try but first I notice on body(its immediate). Its way before any thought occurs. in facts thought are like this ‘why I get this body sensation of fear,when there is nothing to fear’. Tension in body muscles are also signs of stress or unpleasant feeling. **I dont know where is choice in these cases.**

Yes, because it's not there. You have no say in how your body reacts to things, hence it's said that the 6 senses are 6 wild animals. The choice happens when you feel something in your body and *then* you choose to act our of it, and that is always on the mental level.

Obviously you do feel “everything” in a sense, even bodily sensations have vedanā involved, but that's not the level that matters. It's how *you* feel about your body feeling a certain way that matters, which is what leads you to act out of greed, aversion and delusion on account of that body.

You will never find that choice by looking at sensations, and in fact the choice to look at sensations to find some hidden truth is already acting out of the pressure of the same body on a subtler level—pressure which is not at all revealed by any sensations you may look at.

For a puthujjana, the body may feel wonderfully pleasant and light on account of unwholesome things, which already proves that it's not a useful criterion. And in the case of a noble disciple, the body would feel the same fear and its “sensations” if we use that term, but the mind wouldn't feel anything, which is the whole point of that first and second arrow simile.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-06 22:47:05 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

So it is possible that someone when observing an arahant who is faced with a fearful situation and his body reacts accordingly to the observer it may seem like that arahant is fearful but in reality only he can know whether his mind has moved or not?

Definitely, that's why you can't tell an Arahant externally. See for example MN 144, where an Arahant was in severe pain and about to kill himself, and other Arahants, including Ven. Sāriputta himself, were doubting that his mind was truly liberated. Only the Buddha

was able to tell beyond doubt.

“I am not *afraid* of fear,
Our teacher is skilled in the Deathless,
Where fear cannot settle on—
By that path the monks go.
—Theragātha 21

Of course, the red line that Arahants cannot possibly cross is that of *actions* rooted in fear and similar things. So for some Arahants the body/senses *could* still react to, say, a spider if they’ve always been afraid of them since childhood, but they would be incapable of killing or harming it, or running away irrationally, and if there is a reason, they would be able to even pick it up *despite* the fear that is affecting the body, without suffering and being overwhelmed on account of it. Same for the case of pleasant experiences—they would perceive the pressure but be fully incapable of even *wishing* to act out of it or suffering because of how the body reacts.

Bhante, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly liberated in mind, even if powerful forms cognizable by the eye come into range of the eye, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he observes its vanishing. Even if powerful sounds cognizable by the ear come into range of the ear ... Even if powerful odors cognizable by the nose come into range of the nose ... Even if powerful tastes cognizable by the tongue come into range of the tongue ... Even if powerful tactile objects cognizable by the body come into range of the body ... Even if powerful phenomena cognizable by the mind come into range of the mind, they do not obsess his mind; his mind is not at all affected. It remains steady, attained to imperturbability, and he observes its vanishing.

“Suppose, Bhante, there were a stone mountain, without clefts or fissures, one solid mass. If a violent rainstorm should come from the east, it could not make it quake, wobble, and tremble; if a violent rainstorm should come from the west ... from the north ... from the south, it could not make it quake, wobble, and tremble. So too, when a bhikkhu is thus perfectly liberated in mind, —AN 6.55

That’s one reason why the Dhamma is said to be “timeless”. If it required you to re-condition the reactive patterns of your senses, as people usually misconceive equanimity, that would take time, and would probably never be perfectly achievable in every situation.

Arahantship is achieved as soon as the body is fully *understood*, not when you modify it to fit some predefined ideal. And that’s why you can’t even imagine it accurately, because all you can possibly imagine is your body and senses reacting in a different way, not freedom of mind in regard to the same reactions.

(Edit: Through this you also get to see why sensuality is so unbeneficial and is the foremost

obstacle, not because it's "immoral". Whether you realize it or not, you are reinforcing the bond that keeps your mind enslaved by the reactions of your body. It's completely the opposite direction of the Dhamma, and there is no progress towards Nibbana for as long as that's still there.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-07 11:50:43 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Doesn't arahantship also take time for the craving itself to be removed from the mind? Like if a person is fully immersed in sensuality, they would take a much longer time than the person on the contrary.

Indeed, in the broadest sense it takes time, but that's because during that entire time the understanding is incomplete, and you are building it up. So to the exact same extent that there is understanding here-&-now (starting with the Right View), craving has decreased (and it also works the other way around in the sense that you have to restrain the craving that's already there for understanding to arise). See SN 22.55 and -81 for the "immediately" part, though these are some of the subtlest Suttas of all, so it may not make much sense right now. But they are basically describing that complete understanding that leaves no room for craving, and having it is in and of itself the freedom. So the "wait" is to develop it, not for it to have its effect.

Craving is completely gone when you understand the tendencies of these same senses fully, and thus feel no need to get "outside" of the discomfort of those senses liking or disliking things (phassa/pressure which is always unpleasant, even towards pleasure), because you now see that it was inconceivable to "get/act out" to begin with. It was a totally gratuitous assumption that never could've fit with how things actually are.

In SN 35.248, the story of Vepacitti alludes to that wanting to "get out", which is the one and only source of the problem, and the discomfort of the senses is the sheaf of barley being beaten. This shows how the 6 flails are not optional, it's the 7th one, the desire to *respond* to the flailing, to put it coarsely, that is the craving (that's the "second arrow"). With that, all birth, aging, death, sorrow and lamentation are gone, and the rest is "just disturbance until the body breaks apart".

"He understands thus: 'Whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of sensual desire, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of being, those are not present here; whatever disturbances there might be dependent on the taint of ignorance, those are not present here. There is present only this amount of disturbance, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.' He understands: 'This field of perception is void of the taint of sensual desire; this field of perception is void of the taint of being; this field of perception is void of the taint of ignorance. There is present only this non-voidness, namely, that connected with the six bases that are dependent on this body and conditioned by life.' Thus he regards it as void of what is not

there, but as to what remains there he understands that which is present thus: 'This is present.' Thus, Ānanda, this is his genuine, undistorted, pure descent into voidness, supreme and unsurpassed. —MN 121

Also, as you brought up, the person immersed in sensuality will have a harder time developing understanding because they are that much more used to the “link” between their mind and their choices which they *are* responsible for, and their senses which do their own thing. That “link” is the “taint”. So it will be that much harder to “unlink” them correctly, and the inclination to deny the senses instead will be much greater if they take up the practice, and they won't even see themselves doing that and overlooking the Middle Way.

That's what it means to have “dust in one's eyes”.

Arahantship being put to the test?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** ReputationVarious311 2023-11-02 23:00:08

I'm wrestling with the following doubt:

If we were to approach Dhamma from a purely phenomenological/existential standpoint and be only concerned with its immediate utility - namely, ceasing of suffering, without dealing with it being an appropriate wider model of reality *in toto* - it strikes me then that for a such approach to hold water it needs to yield concrete, palpable results. I.e. it needs to produce individuals clearly and observably unable to suffer in circumstances normally conducive to suffering of the pathujjanas (torture, immolation, pathological conditions, skinning, starvation, etc.). Personally I'm unaware of any such examples (but there are sadly familiar counterexamples - the suicide due to chronic pain of Ven Ñāṇavīra Thera, noted representative of existentialist Theravada). If any of you on contrary are informed of such instances it would be of the great consolation to me to be proven wrong.

On the other hand, if we were to think of Dhamma as an objectively accurate world model regardless of the number of its recent or current successful applications, in other words good medicine just without skillful enough doctor to apply it or error-free instruction manual without attentive enough user to go through it, how would it then Dhamma meaningfully differ from usual faith-based religions? Because, it seems to me, only with the leap of faith would it be possible for one to maintain their confidence in the value of Dhamma in such scenario (or am I overlooking something?).

What are your thoughts?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-03 13:39:03

it strikes me then that for a such approach to hold water it needs to yield concrete, palpable results. I.e. it needs to produce individuals clearly and observably unable to suffer

Yes, to hold water *for puthujjanas*, and, as nearly every other Sutta says, the puthujjana is defined by not seeing the Noble Ones and their Dhamma, which in turn means that what they see as noble and inspiring will be misguided.

'It is, monks, for elementary, *inferior matters of behavior* (sīla) that the worldling would praise the Tathāgata. —DN 1

circumstances normally conducive to suffering of the pathujjanas (torture, immolation, pathological conditions, skinning, starvation, etc.).

This issue here is the assumption that *that's* what the “suffering of puthujjanas” is. All such things are simply triggers that are particularly good at *amplifying* and *highlighting* the suffering of puthujjanas, which is the perilous contradiction in their situation of gratuitous entitlement to something that's not actually in their control (the non-arising of unpleasant feeling).

Dhamma as an objectively accurate world model regardless of the number of its recent or current successful application...

It's not a “world model” that requires “proof”, so it's not on the same footing as any other religion or philosophy. A “world model” is still underlied by ignorance, no matter how accurate it is.

If anything, you could say the Dhamma is the understanding of the *nature* of all models (i.e. views), which enables one to transcend *all* of them. It's not just another view you “pick” in favor of the other alternatives—it is so only for a puthujjana, which is why they must never allow themselves to think they know what the Dhamma is (until they cease to be a puthujjana).

On the mildest end, the proof that the Dhamma works is the lack of an emotional need in a noble disciple to defend their understanding from the criticisms of others, which will still be there for a puthujjana, even if their “model” happens to be the closest possible approximation to the Dhamma in the rare, best case scenario.

On the most extreme end, the “proof” is the inability to suffer *internally* despite how your body violently quakes and trembles while thugs are sawing your limbs off with a blunt saw, or the fact that you're doing your best to find a cure for a terminal illness.

If a person's *mind* is emotionally engaged in any way while their body is immaculately still during self-immolation (which is doubtlessly happening, otherwise they wouldn't do such a foolish thing just to prove a point to observing puthujjanas), or while they endure torture externally with perfect equanimity, or while they stubbornly refuse to seek treatment for a disease for no good reason, there is absolutely no Dhamma there. That is just another “model”, and not even a good one at that.

Edit: See also this recent post I made.

how to ask the right question?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** cajuputoil 2023-11-02 10:20:45

How to ask the right question for everyday practice without being too mechanical and not become another method? How to ask the question so that we know ourself about what to do next? (It sounds contradicting since asking “what to do implying discontentment in itself”) How to ask the right question for the right practice?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-03 13:52:19

By first recognizing that there is no such thing as a question that will always work. *Looking in the right place* to find the answers is what “works”, even if the question is primitive or not as intricate as somebody else’s.

The assumption that there is such a thing as a question or way of directing your attention that is *in and of itself* right is what leads to mechanical practice, whether you’re aware of it or not.

That’s why sometimes you can hear a new presentation of the same understanding of principle and it feels like it “clicks”, but then eventually it doesn’t anymore—because you started believing that the specific way of presenting the principle was the what made the principle clear, failing to see that it’s how, by sheer chance, you were looking at the right place at that time.

And this will keep happening endlessly until one gets the Right View, which is why it’s necessary not to settle for anything *specific* that seems like it “works” until then, the most extreme example of which is a meditation/sensation watching technique.

Once one there is Right View, one will be looking at the right place *by default*, and any line of reflection relevant to the Four Noble Truths or anything the Buddha spoke about will be equally fruitful.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-04 00:15:47 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

You should be doubtful, restless and regretful about your virtue and sense restraint if they’ve not been well established yet.

But if they are, then start reflecting on how the *pressure* of doubt is not in itself unwholesome—your need to resolve it and get rid of it is unwholesome, especially when you commit unrestrained actions on account of it.

The only way out is in learning to endure that pressure once your behavior is in check. There is no shortcut, which would only involve suppressing the pressure of doubt and any other hindrance temporarily by ignoring it in favor of something else.

That will not take you *beyond* doubt which is the Right View, but only cover it up.

Acting out of delusion?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Print-Remarkable 2023-11-01 16:02:40

Is acting out of delusion when greed, hatred, and delusion are being discussed. the same as acting out of ignorance. As in ignoring dependent origination or ignoring the womb of the problem?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 23:50:12

You could say that you will only be able to *fully* not act out of greed, aversion and delusion once you abandon ignorance.

“There are, mendicants, these two powers. What two? The power of reflection and the power of development. And what, mendicants, is the power of reflection? It’s when someone reflects: ‘Bad conduct of body, speech, or mind has a bad, painful result in both this life and the next.’ Reflecting like this, they give up bad conduct by way of body, speech, and mind, and develop good conduct by way of body, speech, and mind, keeping themselves pure. This is called the power of reflection.

And what, mendicants, is the power of development? In this context, the power of development is the **power of the trainees (sekhā)**. For when you rely on the power of a trainee, you give up greed, hate, and delusion. Then you don’t do anything unskillful, or practice anything bad. This is called the power of development. These are the two powers.” —AN 2.11

That’s because greed, aversion and delusion are already secondary products of ignorance, i.e. not seeing paṭiccasamuppāda, the nature of the aggregates etc. And only the insight of those things (and the signs of the mind especially) allows one to abandon defilements. Until that point, as a puthujjana, all one can do is *restrain* oneself from proliferating the defilements too far, which at least creates an opening to start addressing the underlying ignorance and trying to get the Right View.

That’s why the Gradual Training is indispensable, even though the Dhamma and abandoning of ignorance is about a lot more than just behavior.

Question about discerning wholesome from unwholesome action

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-10-31 06:52:23

Hello all,

I asked u/Bhikkhu_Anigha the below question within a thread of a recent post, however he suggested it might be more appropriate and provide greater visibility if I post it sepa-

rately, so I've copied it with very minor grammatical tweaks below (any input from others is welcome as well):

How are we to judge whether an action or intention is skillful/wholesome rather than the opposite, when it seems like anything other than sitting perfectly still and dispassionately awaiting starvation and death necessarily entails some manner of discomfort avoidance or expectation of pleasantness? The relevant considerations seem to me to hinge more on time-scale and balance of benefit to cost, but I'm happy to be corrected.

Example: You identified sexual intercourse above as antithetical to wholesome conduct, and obviously celibacy is a part of monastic life. On the other hand, I frequently see on the posted videos Ajahn Nyanamoli and others engaged in playing with and petting the dogs around the hermitage. Now, obviously, sexual intercourse and caring for or playing with animals bear little resemblance in most ways. But, since I'm drawing the comparison in order to try to tease out the **principle criterion** by which one judges such actions: Both involve voluntary interactions between two living entities that seemingly derive enjoyment from the interaction, get beneficial exercise from the act, and (assuming a healthy relationship) sustain no obvious harm aside from potentially becoming accustomed to it in a way that would be unpleasant if the opportunity were removed.

Would the play with the dogs be unwholesome if one were to crave it and feel a loss when it's unavailable, and would consensual sex remain harmless if one were okay taking it or leaving it... or are there other factors that come into play? (If you find it inappropriate to discuss sex in the way this question requires, please swap another example such as listening to music or anything else in its place). Thank you!

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 00:23:06

How are we to judge whether an action or intention is skillful/wholesome rather than the opposite, when it seems like **anything other than sitting perfectly still and dispassionately awaiting starvation and death necessarily entails some manner of discomfort avoidance or expectation of pleasantness?**

This is often taken to be the meaning of “never acting out of craving”, and certainly for a lot of people that is the ideal of an Arahant, which makes enlightenment unachievable (which is good, you wouldn't want to attain such a thing).

It would be more amusing than inspiring to meet such an “Arahant”, in fact: they sit down to meditate, their knee starts to hurt—now they are locked in that position until it stops hurting or they starve, whichever happens first, because “they are incapable of aversion to pain”.

People often don't realize the implications of their ideals of what enlightenment is, and that is further exacerbated by the ubiquitous view that meditation is about stopping your thinking, rather than questioning and upgrading those very ideas, for example, since they

are at the very root of one's ignorance, and no amount of awareness techniques is actually affecting that root.

The relevant considerations seem to me to hinge more on time-scale and balance of benefit to cost, but I'm happy to be corrected.

Not at all. This stems from the widespread confusion of *ethics* and *morality* with what the Buddha called "kusala" (skilful or beneficial). The considerations of kusala and akusala hinge **on your state of mind alone**, regardless of what the perceived benefit for yourself and others would be in an external sense. For instance, helping another person is akusala if your state of mind is affected with anxiety and concern, even though externally everyone would say it's "good" and meritorious (which *does* depend on things like benefit to cost, etc., but merit and skilfulness are not at all the same).

An Arahant could choose to kill themselves if they're under significant discomfort despite the fact that it is more of a net loss to others than a gain, and that action will not a tiny bit less skilful than any other externally "good" action they may do. The Buddha himself said he could have lived longer if he wanted, but he decided to die at around 80 instead, diminishing the amount of benefit he could bring to the world. See also SN 4.23 & SN 35.87, where two Arahants commit suicide on account of severe illness.

In essence, if your mind is polluted with ignorance, **whatever** you do will be unskilful, even with the best of intentions. If it's free from ignorance, **whatever** you do will be skilful and beneficial, even if the entire world disagrees with it (and, as it will hopefully be clear from what follows, sexual activity is among the very few things that fall totally outside that "whatever").

Mind precedes all things. Mind is their chief; they are all determined by mind. If with an impure mind a person speaks or acts, suffering follows him, like the wheel that follows the foot of the ox.

Mind precedes all things. Mind is their chief; they are all determined by mind. If with a pure mind a person speaks or acts, happiness follows him, like his never-departing shadow.

—Dhammapada 1-2

Thus:

Both involve voluntary interactions between two living entities that seemingly derive enjoyment from the interaction, get beneficial exercise from the act, and (assuming a healthy relationship) sustain no obvious harm aside from potentially becoming accustomed to it in a way that would be unpleasant if the opportunity were removed.

That is not at all the criterion. Sure, being in a healthy relationship is more *meritorious/ethical* than being in an abusive, unhealthy one, but wherever there is ignorance and craving, there is unskilfulness *because of that*, not because of how the relationship unfolds or such external considerations as "deriving enjoyment" from it and to what extent.

Which brings me to the main point:

Having sexual/romantic relationships *cannot* but be accompanied by a lustful mental state, which makes them necessarily unskilful and unbeneficial in the quest for freedom from suffering. There is a huge difference in the *sphere that matters* (which is by definition the one people are blind to) between that and the example you give of playing with pets or anything of such nature, even though both things are roughly on the same footing *ethically speaking*.

To illustrate that difference: how many people in the world lose sleep over the fact that they are not allowed to pet their dog? How many people commit mass murders on account of frustration because they couldn't pet their dog? How many people would go fall into full on depression and perhaps kill themselves if one day they can't play with their pets, like they would if one day they woke up with an impaired sexual organ that was previously functional? And, last but not least, how strong would be the impulse for most people to start grasping at straws to justify how they can still pet their dog *and* practice for Nibbāna? (no offense to you personally, it happens often).

Whether one realizes it or not, engagement in sexual intercourse requires attachment and everything unbeneficial that comes with it in order to even desire it, and it carries with it a huge amount of emotional weight, more than pretty much any other form of pleasure you can experience.

Whether one can renounce particular sexual encounters is of absolutely no relevance. What matters is, how much will your mind kick and scream if you tell it that it will never have that ***ever again***? Because *that's* the measure of how much attachment to it there is, and of the unskilful state of mind behind it—which will never be recognized until you actually restrain yourself in that ultimate sense. You don't even feel its presence otherwise, and you may think everything is well and good, because that's how ***ignorance*** works.

It's not the lack of insight into some esoteric truth or secret that you is solved by a special meditation experience. It's the inability to see how you are responsible for your own suffering and that it can be stopped eventually (at a hefty price initially, of course).

And whatever practice one does *while* that deep, underlying addiction is being normalized and swept under the rug, is not actually bringing one closer to freedom from all addictions, which is the freedom from suffering. Any "peace" one can get within that is tantamount to the drug addict genuinely having a good day every now and then. Fundamentally, they're still in just as much of a bad place until they address the addiction, i.e. *actually stop taking the drug*.

And this is why it's said in our teachings that if you keep the 8 precepts (minus the one on eating if there's a reason to break it), almost everything else can be done in moderation, when you are crystal clear that the state of mind behind it is not rooted in craving.

In the example of the dogs, if you know internally that you will not be affected if those dogs die or are taken from you the next moment, there is no problem at all, and it is perfectly possible for the mind to be dispassionate during that action, regardless of how it looks to others who still don't know what dispassion is.

But if with sexual and amorous engagement in general it *seems* like you wouldn't be affected if you can't have it, yet **you still choose to engage in it**, then you are either not looking deep enough or are fooling yourself, just as you wouldn't be scratching your skin if it doesn't itch at all—it's *literally painful*.

Sure, that itch can be present with almost any other action as well, including the dog example, but the point is, it doesn't *have* to be, and one thing for sure, scratching any other itch will not be as hindering to the application of the cure to the skin condition.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 08:22:17 (in reply to a comment not included)

Bhante what about if it's platonic relationship with parents, siblings or friends where we seem passionate and hug each other a lot. Can we be not affected with them dying like we do with the dogs or is it unavoidable like lust being present in sexual relationship?

Well, in this case, it's not necessarily *because* you hug them that you are passionate, but rather, passion is there *and* you are hugging them, which is simply proliferating the passion by acting out of it.

As I wrote, the state of mind is what determines the quality of the action, and when there is a state of mind of attachment, whatever you do will be wrong, and the *least-wrong* thing is to abstain from giving in to anything your mind may be craving, since that can at least allow you to learn how to uproot the attachment.

If there is a truly dispassionate state of mind, hugging a close family member wouldn't be *completely* impossible in the way sexual intercourse is, but you would likely not do it to the degree most people do, and certainly not "a lot", as you say. You would not be *wanting* it, and would do it only to not be rude, for example.

And until one has seen for oneself what non-attachment is and gained the Right View, it's certainly better to err on the side of caution and avoid even such "platonic" actions, including even playful conversation altogether, because they will only be obscuring and increasing the passion that is already there at that stage. Especially with other humans, the emotional weight of interaction is never small, and that's just how the aggregates work.

In fact, you would be better off not getting too close even with animals until you have learned how to be dispassionate in every conceivable scenario, see the signs of your mind, no longer feel any displeasure at the prospect of abandoning everything you love, and are not at all afraid of sickness, aging and death.

Then you will be able to see what is attachment and what isn't, and at that stage you can basically do whatever the mind wants, because *the mind* is purified and does not even try to pull you into the charcoal pit of passion anymore. It refuses to go back there on its own.

(The things that a purified mind categorically cannot have any interest in are the specific actions listed in AN 9.7).

Is 'Rupa' external object?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-10-31 03:22:40

Again Sorry to Ask very basic Question.

Is the Rupa in NamaRupa,/ PancaKhanda/6 dhatu same thing? or different thing?

Is that Rupa

- (1) the external object that we see taste touch,....
- (2) Or its my Body that's host other 4 aggregates/NAMA

“cakkhu ca paticca Rupe ca upajjati Vinnan”. In this case its obvious that the Rupe is external sense object. but whether its part of PancaKhanda/NamaRupa/6 Dhatu . that I am confused. Or is it that we only perceive external object? So physical external Rupe is never part of experience , instead it is represented by sanna only in the field of experience.

History. I asked related question in the thread of 'Body within Body'.

(can you draw line between 5 aggregate 4 satipatthana and NamaRupa.)

^(can we say this secondary kaya/vedana/citta/dhamma. as 5 aggregates which is also Sense of Self for non Arhant.)

^(so basically each experience is 5 aggregate but always contained within more fundamental existence, kaya,citta,vedana,dhamma.)

^(OR IF NOT)

^(And If NamRupa = 5 aggregate = 6Dhatu.then why we created 3 different representation.why sakkay is discussed in reference to 5 aggregates only, while viññanā is discussed with reference to NamaRupa. and 6 Dhatu are discussed independently.)

^(Why PaticcaSmuppada says NamaRupa ->salayatana->vedana/(5 aggregates when NamaRupa already is made up of {Rupa+(vedana,sanna,sankhara,mansikar,cetana}.)))

For Which Bhikhu Anigha gave this reply .

(Any of these different ways of looking at experience works, and the point is not to try to draw parallels between them, which most Arahants in the past surely wouldn't have been able to do because they didn't have access to every single Sutta like us today.)

^(When you learn to see your experience as a whole properly (sign of the mind, you don't need to label it as 5 aggregates, namarūpa and whatnot. You simply see that the whole thing that you can control is there enduring, standing upon something else that you have no control over. Sakkāya will be there for as long as that is not seen correctly through any of these frameworks that the Buddha formulated.))

On that I asked this above question on Rupa. and still waiting for answer.

NOTE : I also think that everyone should contemplate on these discussion. hence sharing this as a separate post.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 05:03:13

Is the Rupa in NamaRupa,/ PancaKhanda/6 dhatu same thing? or different thing?

Trying to figure out whether it's the "same thing" or it's a "different thing" already implies misconceiving what is, as if it's something you can just look at and examine from the outside. Rūpa is that which is "below" your experience of asking a question about rūpa, making that experience what it is, and you need to learn to *discern* it there, which is the only way to "resolve" this sort of question.

With "resolve" I mean to say that it will be seen to be **based on a wrong premise**, i.e. that there is a sense of self that sits outside of the experience and can "observe" its fundamental components to say whether "this rūpa" is the same as "that rūpa".

You will never find neither nāmarūpa, nor the aggregates, nor the 6 elements on that level that you can "compare" in that manner. All you will be comparing and analyzing is the *byproducts* of nāmarūpa, etc. *already* being there, and that is ayoniso manasikāra that leads nowhere of relevance.

Is that Rupa

- (1) the external object that we see taste touch,....
- (2) Or its my Body that's host other 4 aggregates/NAMA

"cakkhu ca paticca Rupe ca upajjati Vinnan". In this case its obvious that the Rupe is external sense object. but whether its part of PancaKhanda/NamaRupa/6 Dhatu . that I am confused. Or is it that we only perceive external object? So physical external Rupe is never part of experience , instead it is represented by sanna only in the field of experience.

That rūpa is the foundation for your experience of being confused at this very moment—*that's* the level where it really needs to be seen. You could say "mañña paṭicca dhamme ca upajjati manoviññānaṃ" (in dependence on the intellect and phenomena, there arises intellect-consciousness). That has given rise to your experience here and now. And there is rūpa (earth, water, fire and air) involved in that *mental phenomenon* of being confused, to the extent that the phenomenon changes, persists, and changes-while-it-persists across time. Rūpa is the reason why even your thoughts are not yours—if the rūpa of a thought is gone (e.g. you forget what you were thinking about), you can't continue thinking it for a millisecond longer.

Thus, rūpa has nothing to do with “external objects”, which is the extreme of materialism, nor do you only perceive “only representations through saññā”, which is idealism. Your *idea* of “external object” or of “representation through saññā” has its own rūpa right then and there, and by thinking that the rūpa is “out there” or *anywhere* for that matter, you will fail to see the rūpa that is manifest.

You can’t say that rūpa is “out there” or “somewhere” because rūpa is not **in** space. Rather, your experience of rūpa is the foundation for any notion of space whatsoever.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 06:21:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I just laugh at myself, when I read ‘notion of space’.. that so true , space is a idea/ manyana.

Just to be sure, space is also perfectly real (hence it’s listed as the 5th of the elements). The notion of space is not “maññanā” (conceiving) in and of itself. The conceiving happens when you expect to find rūpa IN space, rather than seeing that space *is real*, but it’s the (simultaneous) result of rūpa being there.

You can’t experience anything *apart from* space and see the “pure matter” either. Rather, when space is present (you could say perceptions, ideas, etc.) you have to discern form as the basis of it.

You *need* to have both form and space simultaneously, but each must be put in its “right place”, so to speak.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 10:04:44 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Ok so you equate perception, ideas etc to space?

It’s not that they’re the same. Rather, space is experienced within the domain of perception, so perception is more general than space. But practically speaking, if you’re trying to understand form, you could say you will find space if you recognize the domain of perceptions (and nāma in general, so contact, intentions and feelings too) as a general phenomenon, and form will be “that because of which” space is there.

Hence, the form is never “in” space, which is putting things “in the wrong order” as we say.

“5” cords of sensuality

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** owechi 2023-10-30 11:23:47

It’s a stock frase we find in the suttas, I often wonder why just the 5 are mentioned why not 6.

Why is the delight in mental phenomena not mentioned why did the Buddha make this distinction mentioning explicitly the five, or on other occasions mention in expanded form the 6 bases, objects, and consciousness.

I also commonly see people holding the view that the pleasure born of object focusing meditations is a pleasure born out side of sensuality (the 5 cords). Thus contributing to the view they have found the escape, that which is beyond sensual pleasures.

This goes along with another view I've heard, it is further more good to crave for this kind of pleasure. On the basis of the Buddha's reflection on not needing to fear jhana as it is not within sensuality shortly before his enlightenment. They also support this view by the fetter model saying rupa raga and arupa raga are later fetters so there is no need to worry about that until much later.

How does one understand why there is the distinction between 5 and 6 made? And how does one come to know that object absorption is sensuality?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 00:21:44

Why is the delight in mental phenomena not mentioned why did the Buddha make this distinction mentioning explicitly the five, or on other occasions mention in expanded form the 6 bases, objects, and consciousness.

Firstly, the framework of 6 instead of 5 senses is used in the context of sensuality many times (see SN 35.63, SN 46.6, SN 35.246).

But the reason why it may sometimes not be mentioned is that the mind (*mano*) operates "in regard to" the 5 senses when it comes to anything unwholesome. You cannot have sensual desire for something you think about unless it's something you *could* see, hear, smell, taste or touch. And that's why sensuality is never about *perceiving* the objects; it's about the fact that you're **looking forward to having them with the body** on the level of the mind. Hence the Suttas always talk about "sights *cognizable* by the eye that are agreeable, etc." when discussing the 5 cords.

I also commonly see people holding the view that the pleasure born of object focusing meditations is a pleasure born out side of sensuality (the 5 cords). Thus contributing to the view they have found the escape, that which is beyond sensual pleasures.

Yes, that's a widespread idea. But the reason this is mistaken is that *jhāna* is not the escape from sensual pleasures in the sense that you *stop perceiving them*, it's the escape from *sensuality* in regard to sensual pleasures, and those are two different things which people often can't distinguish.

You can't have sensuality without sensual pleasures, but for someone who is free from sensuality, sensual pleasures still arise for as long as they still have operating 5 senses. It's not even a matter of choice that those 5 animals will perceive certain things as pleasant (which you will not engage with if you're properly restrained) because they're *not yours*.

What’s “yours” is your delight and lust towards that pleasure and acting out of it.

The escape beyond sensual pleasures, as the Suttas mention several hundred times at least, is the *subduing of passion* for the five cords of sensual pleasures as a result of seeing the danger in them, not a special meditative state where you become unaware of them, and taking that to be the escape only goes to show one’s lack of understanding of what the problem really is (and because of that, that “escape” is still underlied by sensuality, even if the person is not thinking about those objects at that time).

This goes along with another view I’ve heard, it is further more good to crave for this kind of pleasure. On the basis of the Buddha’s reflection on not needing to fear jhāna as it is not within sensuality shortly before his enlightenment. They also support this view by the fetter model saying rupa raga and arupa raga are later fetters so there is no need to worry about that until much later.

Yes, another common misunderstanding. You cannot “crave” for jhāna in the way you can crave for objects of the 6th sense base, and whatever comes as a result of craving is by definition not jhāna. Jhāna arises when you give up craving temporarily, and that’s why it takes way more development of mind than people usually think, since they take it as a “replacement” for the pleasure that they know. It’s by *abandoning* all pleasure that you can think of, *including* your preconceived notions of “meditative joy”, that you reach the joy and happiness of jhāna.

It is *impossible* to be “attached” or “addicted to” the pleasure of jhāna, because it’s reached by abandoning attachment and addiction.

Here, **with seclusion from appropriation/acquisition** (upadhi), with the abandoning of unwholesome states, with the complete tranquillization of bodily inertia, quite secluded from sensual pleasures, secluded from unwholesome states, a bhikkhu enters upon and abides in the first jhāna...”
—MN 64

So it’s wrong to think that one can even *imagine* what rūpa and arūpa rāga refer to unless one has abandoned kāma rāga first and become an anāgāmi. All passion and desire that you can possibly recognize before that point is sensual, even if it inspires you to abandon the coarser stuff as meditation techniques do.

And how does one come to know that object absorption is sensuality?

Just ask yourself whether you would be annoyed if someone were to knock on your door and interrupt your meditation once you’ve finally achieved perfect focus on the object. With the pleasure that is truly beyond sensuality, being annoyed by even the most annoying things is impossible. Also, why is it pleasant? If it’s not because you see sensual desire as a charcoal pit that you managed to escape from and thus feel immense relief (SN 35.244), it’s not the pleasure born of withdrawal from sensuality, and focusing on an object precludes having the *context* of sensuality as a “charcoal pit” (or the context of anything, for that matter).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 09:55:27 (in reply to a comment not included)

Thank you for your response Bhante.

Sure.

So there is no need for going here and there through the suttas to find the answers to justify things. “Free from patchwork”.

Exactly. It’s about being honest with oneself about what is truly rooted in craving. Before getting the Right View, one by definition cannot see the full scope of what craving is, but if every single practitioner would at least apply that *mildly* accurate criterion they do have access to but without compromises and wilful omissions, with relentless self-transparency, many of the contemporary approaches would not even exist. The “patchwork” is always a result of such compromises.

As the Buddha said, he does not praise or encourage even a fingersnap of being (bhava), because just a tiny bit of excrement smells just as bad as a lot (AN 1.328) So whoever presents nurturing of craving and attachment, even of a subtler kind, as part of the practice is going wrong somewhere.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 04:52:24 (in reply to a comment not included)

is bhava/being equal to mara’s domain?

Most certainly not, in which case freedom would not be possible. An Arahant does not “destroy” Māra’s domain, they abandon involvement with it (i.e., with the eye, ear, etc. and all the feelings associated with that).

Bhava is your *attitude* of assuming the ownership of Māra’s domain, which includes trying to abolish it and not perceive anything beautiful, etc., and that attitude is most acutely reflected in unrestrained actions of sensuality and aversion. So if that attitude is abandoned, there is no bhava, despite Māra’s domain remaining exactly where it was.

“What, bhikkhus, is the Nibbana-element with residue left? Here a bhikkhu is an arahant, one whose taints are destroyed, the holy life fulfilled, who has done what had to be done, laid down the burden, attained the goal, destroyed the fetters of being, completely released through final knowledge. However, his five sense faculties remain unimpaired, **by which he still experiences what is agreeable and disagreeable and feels pleasure and pain.** It is the extinguishment of lust, aversion, and delusion (=of bhava) in him that is called the Nibbana-element with residue left.

—Itivuttaka 44

So the “place” where you go to escape from Māra is dispassion, which is to say that you don’t actually go anywhere else. But, at the same time, the journey towards achieving that

dispassion is by far the most challenging of all. It's not like "we're already in Nibbāna", as it's sometimes said.

Seeing A Body Within The Body - by Bhikkhu Anīgha

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** SevenCoils 2023-10-29 20:20:26

When that simultaneous relationship is seen, whether in terms of the body, feelings, mind or phenomena, it becomes inconceivable to exercise a sense of ownership over both thing[1] and thing[2], the sum of which nothing can possibly be outside of. You now see that you cannot be that center even if you wanted to, and body[1], which is clearly not yours, becomes the "center" instead. Same principle applies to the other *satipaṭṭhānas*. They render ownership redundant and inconceivable.

This "ownership becoming inconceivable" point cannot be emphasized enough, given that it's possible for people to think that, because they can now apparently overcome the sense of self by "applying" some practice, they therefore have right mindfulness or became *sotāpannas*. This is not it. It is entirely out of the question for the assumption of self and its associated suffering to ever arise again if "body within the body", etc., has been understood—even if one doesn't do any meditation for the rest of one's life - Bhikkhu Anīgha, Seeing A Body Within The Body

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-30 06:19:51 (in reply to a comment not included)

See the note I wrote at the very end. This is a different way of explaining the same principle, which Ajahn Nyanamoli usually illustrates in terms of a "container" that is more fundamental than everything in your experience, including your sense of self. I also used it myself in the Yoniso Manasikāra essay, drawing a comparison between the "womb/yonī" and that "container", seeing which there can be no notion of *me* being the first, "outside" of everything else that manifests and controlling it at leisure. Instead, "I" exists only as a result of being "nourished" by that container/womb (i.e. anything I can volitionally choose to do or even think requires my body to "allow me" to do so).

So, indeed, in that paradigm the thing that is "within" is the thing that is secondary, dependently arisen, and its "container" is that which it depends upon.

I opted for this alternative description this time primarily because it appears to correspond to the Pāli most literally, which I realized through my own reading of the Suttas long ago. It works particularly well in elucidating the meaning of the Bāhiya Sutta, and it's also good because it makes it explicit that there *is* a center, which people are often all too quick to deny through various views and ways of misinterpreting *anattā*, to the

point of believing that cessation of “I am” is cessation of **individuality/subjectivity** or of agency, and thus “we are all one in the end”, etc., a slipshod, misguided attempt to solve the problem of bhava, which ends up only *hiding* it.

This emphasizes more the fact that no matter how “internal” or “close” something feels, which there is no need to deny, it’s still just as much of a mistake to regard it as yours and try to control it as something that is “out there”. As a matter of fact, most of people’s meditation is inadvertently about trying to control those “internal” things, such as their feelings, moods, etc., failing to see that that’s another way of saying “mine”. This is why we say you need to *endure* your own “personal” moods, for instance, the way they arise and not try to replace them. People want to endure only “external” things like physical pain and bodily sensations, which hardly does anything in and of itself.

But, as I wrote, it doesn’t really make a difference in the end, because the point of both this and the “container” description is to point towards seeing “with this, this is”, which is the paṭiccasamuppāda/simultaneous dependence principle that is the only way out of the sense of self.

In fact, it may also be a test of one’s understanding to see whether one perceives any seeming discrepancy between the two explanations/essays, which there isn’t.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-31 04:30:17 (in reply to a comment not included)

Not totally sure what you mean with “verbal thinking”, but I would really caution against the idea that the “voice in your head” needs to be stopped in order to gain samādhi, unless you’ve already mastered the first jhāna (and are thus a once-returner at the very least) and are trying to move on to the second. The first jhāna is the cessation of the possibility of *breaking into speech*, not the cessation of thinking and pondering, which is what you might be referring to as “verbal thinking”.

That “verbal thinking” has to be *harnessed* to develop the right context, not gotten rid of, so as to withdraw the mind from sensuality and unwholesome states.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 04:34:31 (in reply to a comment not included)

Absolutely. A noble disciple will remain a sotapanna *because* of their lack of skill in at least the first jhāna, and—it doesn’t hurt to repeat whenever possible—lack of skill in the first jhāna is because of not knowing how to fully purify the mind from sensuality, not due to lack of success in concentrating on one object continuously.

Jhāna tends to be regarded as a special “state” that happens to you and is limited to that one occasion, but *in order to* enter jhāna you need to make your mind totally dispassionate and then find pleasure in that dispassion and detachment. Which means, attaining jhāna

necessitates a complete transformation of your attitude towards the world, which sees passion and attachment as pleasant by default.

That process of making the mind dispassionate through right recollection of the context of danger in sensuality (that he already sees to an extent), is exactly what a sotapanna has not completed yet, which is why by the point they succeed in that (which could take years) and thus start to abide in the first jhāna, they're well on their way to non-return already. *Mastering* it would entail being a non-returner, if not Arahant.

Even though a noble disciple [i.e. sotāpanna or higher] has clearly seen as it actually is with right discernment that sensuality is of much suffering, much despair, and greater drawbacks, still — if he has not attained the joy and pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful states, or something more peaceful than that — he can still return to sensuality.

But when he has clearly seen as it actually is with right discernment that sensuality is of much suffering, much despair, and greater drawbacks, and he has attained a joy and pleasure apart from sensuality, apart from unskillful states, or something more peaceful than that, he cannot return to sensuality. —MN

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(This very Sutta was given to a layman who was a sotāpanna, when he asked the Buddha why he still had unwholesome states arising for him despite having the Right View. The Buddha's reply is evidence that this person could not attain jhānas yet despite his Right View.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-01 04:40:16 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

whether I understood it or whether it was true ALSO counted on the body being first.

Indeed. This is the only way to actually transcend the sense of self and thus the fetter of doubt, not to “figure it out” in theory.

It's by applying that principle in regard to *everything*, not making an exception even for your state of confusion and lack of answers, that you find the way out of doubt and uncertainty about the Dhamma. And *then*, when you overcome all doubt in that “indirect” manner, you will recognize all the “theory” in the Suttas on the level where it needs to be seen, which means it won't be theory anymore.

Beings are owners of their actions

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-10-21 13:46:47

In a way it's funny the Buddha had to mention that beings are owners of their actions since beings normally regard the aggregates as mine, but this ownership doesn't fully

apply to their actions. Or rather, their ownership applies to their actions but there's a kind of hiding mechanism from that ownership. It's like the example Nanavira gave of the Judge giving death penalty (I think this was the example?), but excusing it as not *really* *their* action, since they're just playing the role of their job. But in doing this, they forget that they were the ones who chose the job, and very well could've not. So the excuse doesn't work.

Since the Buddha had to explicitly mention to us to see we genuinely *are* owners of our actions and their results, it means we *haven't* been owning up to the full extent and are hiding the fact of our ownership somehow. I'm wondering, what are all the ways in which ownership of actions can be hidden from? Is there *a single* particular thing at fault which leads to hiding from it?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-22 00:13:06

Is there *a single* particular thing at fault which leads to hiding from it?

Yes, that's why accepting responsibility for actions is not *merely* about reflecting on the fact that one should, as if it were a matter of choice (at least the *complete* acceptance isn't). One needs to know the root of the issue, especially to take that responsibility to the point where it can give rise to the Right View.

In a nutshell, there is one thing that if you learn how to do, you will always accept the right amount of responsibility even if you've never heard that expressio before. And that is, learning to endure ("on the right level", as we say) the mental displeasure which is the *result* of your past actions up to this point.

That's because it is only possible to avoid responsibility by assuming that you have an external escape in any shape or form from that displeasure, which will automatically entail trying to use that assumed direction of escape to avoid that feeling.

That "result" of past actions is not about some linear chain of cause-&-effect that has led you to your current *external* circumstances of being sick, poor, or something like that. The "result" is on the level of the wildness of the citta—how strongly it shies away from pain, and how fiercely it pulls towards the offers of pleasure.

That wildness is brought about through the past choices of of greed, aversion and delusion by body, speech or mind that one has made, and it is through failing to pin that wildness down *this time around* and endure the tantrum that one commits more actions rooted in craving that bring about more results that you refuse to own up to and endure... and so on ad infinitum. That's saṃsāra, pretty much.

When you make such choices, you're avoiding responsibility in the same way as you would when you're forced to take care of somebody else's dog that's been heavily spoiled prior to that. Given that it's "someone else's dog" and eventually you'll be rid of it (or so you assume), instead of actually trying to train it and subdue it's bad habits, you just give it a treat or let it go whenever it wants when it starts whining.

But the problem is, the dog is entirely yours, literally more than anything in the world you're have affection for, to the point where you will never be able to break away from it no matter how hard you try. Even death itself will not make you part ways.

And, to be a broken record, seeing the signs of the mind through the Gradual Training is the first step towards "training the dog". Before that, you haven't even discerned what exactly its wild behavioral patterns are, and will just be blindly wrestling against the secondary pain that's already the *byproduct* of those patterns—potentially pissing off the dog even more while it's still not properly tied onto the leash.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-22 06:36:05 (in reply to a comment not included)

When a sensual option has arisen for me, and I can pursue it, I *know* I can get rid of the pressure, even if it's temporary, by pursuing it. There genuinely *does* seem like an escape externally, how does this escape not exist?

Yes, I think this is something people would tend to get confused over. Another way of describing it that may be more useful:

Instead of trying to tell yourself that it "doesn't exist" in the way you're doing, acknowledge that there *is* an escape being presented to you, but now ask yourself whether it can actually provide what you're assuming it does.

When you experience sensual desire, what you are actually wanting is to be free from pain and disturbance. So when you have a desire and you go on to "escape" the pressure through giving in, do you actually feel at ease in the way your desire was promising you, or is there a sense that when the next thing comes, you will feel even more pressure to go for it (or even that this same thing of which "just one bite" seemed like all you'd ever need, is now not enough)? Is there a sense that unpleasant things you experience are now even more harrassing than before you had given in to the pressure? Do you feel *safe* or do you feel *more vulnerable*?

Also, does it work the same way when you engage with a sense object without desire, say, to eat when you're truly hungry and not for the sake of pleasure?

(This will be more apparent if you had been properly restrained for a while before you gave in. If you hadn't been restrained, then you may not be able to feel the transition from wild to "wilder". And when you've been restrained for a while you don't even need to actually give in to recognize what's coming. You will feel the impending loss of control of your mind if you know how to look for it.)

It seems according to what you've said, my practice of acknowledgement is entirely contrived and redundant since I'm not taking responsibility at the right place and the right time? Taking on responsibility rightly and unwholesome actions cannot both exist simultaneously? So to the extent that one is repetitively acting out unwholesomely whilst reminding themselves of the fact

that *they* are doing that to pretend there is some acknowledgement of ownership/responsibility of one's action, it is actually just piling up further where *true* responsibility is?

Yes, it's piling up the avoidance further. As I wrote, whether you've ever even *heard* the word "responsibility" before and been told you need to take it on, what truly matters is if you're able to endure the result of your past actions. That result is the extent to which the citta feels obligated to go for something that the *eye* likes and avoid something that it dislikes.

So pasting a label of "I'm responsible" on top of your actions is in and of itself irrelevant, because your ability to act is already what you're owning *too much* when you engage with sensuality and aversion.

What you truly don't want to own up to, yet should be if you want to be free from kamma, is the displeasure that will occur if you *don't* committ the actions that are pressuring you. That's how you take responsibility for having willingly brought your own mind to that present state carelessly, and taking on that responsibility is what eventually "starves" the impulse to act and calms the mind down.

As said in "The Mind Whisperer", the mind only understands the "language" of you *actually* not acting out of craving. It doesn't understand a word of English.

Sometimes, the pressure is so strong, there is so much mental chaos, confusion, uncertainty, pain, that it feels I'm forced to act out, that there is no other option apart from acting out.

Sure, that's how it feels because of the assumptions, but if you start contemplating rightly you would see that there is no such thing as true "forcing". Even if someone puts a gun on your head and asks you to do something, *you* are the one who chooses not to die and go along with the request instead. This may sound bleak and harsh, but it's actually hands-down the most liberating insight of all, that frees you from *anything* that could ever possibly impose itself on you (seemingly).

This connects with SN 35.228, the Sutta about the Arahant enduring the terrors of the ocean that I quote often. And a slight glimpse of that freedom is verifiable here-&-now, right where the presented "obligation" to act is, if you give up the assumption that whatever bad things will happen if you don't act out are "too much to bear"-that there is such a thing as a "too large wave". It will be so only if you choose to gratuitously decide upon a degree where "pressure is too much" that will ultimately be arbitrary, and you would be responsible for settling on any such notion.

Of course, you don't have to try to become an Arahant in one go and renounce everything immediately, but real progress is only possible if one puts one's foot down to endure what seems like "too much", so as to not give up on the gradual commitments toward increased restraint that one already made. The mind presents things as "too much" only as a form of scare tactic so it can go back to the same dose of the drug it was getting before. If you don't let it for long enough, it will stop wanting to have it, and it will get used to the wholesome type of food you've been giving it.

I find myself intending to not give in, and then the next moment I find myself already engaging in that act and the intention already “changed on its own”. But this doesn’t just happen suddenly, it almost always occurs after I’ve been delighting in this sensual option for a while (over the time of some hours, or days), in some subtle sense, and then there needs to be like the right mixture of loss of context of the importance of restraint and certain level of pressure of the sensual option for this “automatic” shift in intention to occur. In these instances, I don’t really feel the one responsible for starting this, yet it’s precisely in these instances, as I understand what you said above, that I can truly acknowledge my responsibility/ownership of my actions; that it is entirely on me to give in and *not* do all the other possible things I could instead be doing.

Exactly. The fortunate thing is, if you had been restrained beforehand, you never *actually* end up by accident at the point where not giving in feels “too painful”. It always has to be because of the little, at the time seemingly harmless, delight and lust that you were cultivating, which was gradually inclining the mind away from restraint towards wildness again. Kind of like a small leak in your plumbing that you choose to ignore until it has caused visible structural damage to your house.

So you need to take responsibility for those little choices (as in, endure the pain of not making them), and then you won’t ever have to worry about being overwhelmed. Endure this relatively smaller pain now so you don’t have to endure the greater one later—it’s a great deal, but no one wants to take it.

Bhikkhus, whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind. If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of sensual desire, he has abandoned the thought of renunciation to cultivate the thought of sensual desire, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of sensual desire. -MN 19

“Inclining to thoughts of sensual desire” here doesn’t mean the sensual *objects* arising on their own, as if the goal was to get rid of them and focus on something else to forget they exist. It means the pressure you begin to experience to act out of such objects.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-22 06:46:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Isn’t being born in a bad environment also result from bad karma?

It is, but it’s not the aspect of kamma that matters when it comes to the practice.

The real vipāka that matters is the amount of greed, aversion and delusion that you have to deal with in the future and how far you will be from peace, because you can end up being born in a good environment even if in this life you were very lustful and angry. Your mind will have a greater tendency towards craving, and *that’s* the reason you will suffer in your next life despite your fortunate environment.

And if you were going in the direction of renunciation, you will suffer less if you are born in unfortunate circumstances.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-22 23:33:09 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

My heart rate was up, I was agitated, and I felt a persistent need *to keep looking over my shoulder*. I felt totally, inexplicably vulnerable.

That's how it becomes, and the amazing thing is, we spend our whole lives happily riding that feeling, to the point where we don't even recognize it anymore, and when it's not there we feel "bored". That's why the Buddha compared a sensual mind to a sick person whose perception of things is distorted.

This is what will eventually lead to these acts completely falling away as possibilities; the training should be leading to the trainer becoming completely redundant.

Yes, and that's also how you start to see for yourself that "action is intention", as the Buddha said. You realize that this vulnerability only arises when *you* choose to go and pursue or delight in the pleasure. Eventually it becomes impossible to fall into self-mortification, where you think the *objects* are the problem, to any degree of subtlety (which one does in the beginning, even if one doesn't explicitly think of it that way), and equally impossible to compromise your own safety through actions.

A Common Misconception about Equanimity

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-10-20 23:36:17

Bhante what about gross things like poop or puke? I can't imagine it's really possible someone doesn't quiver when they see it and smell the nastiness.

This is actually not relevant and it's quite a prevalent wrong view, based on a misconception of what equanimity is (denial of the reactions of the senses), and confusing the "first arrow" (SN 36.6) to be the second. It reveals people's identification with their senses and failure to recognize the signs of the mind when they think their citta is equanimous because their body doesn't react in certain ways anymore. Like the idea that because someone doesn't flinch during self-immolation, they must be an Arahant.

True equanimity is being *internally undisturbed* when the senses react to things, be it strongly or weakly. That's the message behind SN 35.228 of "withstanding the force of the waves" and AN 6.55, which says the Arahant's mind is unmoved like a mountain *despite* the force of a violent rainstorm. Not that "there is no rainstorm anymore", which is possible only when one sheltering oneself from things.

When the famous SN 36.6 (see HH video on it) talks about "bodily feeling", the first arrow, it's often implicitly interpreted as "bodily sensations" (because it's not uncommon

to think *vedanā* means “sensation”). But all feeling is mental, even the bodily one, and goes as deep as where your moods are (the Sutta itself says there is “bodily feeling” in regard to the intellect). Seeing or remembering a close friend dying, being diagnosed with a painless terminal cancer [and smelling disgusting things] are bodily feelings that are unpleasant even for an Arahant, but there is no resistance of their *citta* to it and thus no second arrow. The first arrow is in Māra’s control, and by hoping to control it, one is in turn still controlled by him.

(From <https://www.reddit.com/r/HillsideHermitage/comments/17be6s2/comment/k5p4dkt/>)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-21 08:28:40 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Bhante, can arahant still cry? There used to be debate about this sort of thing, because a respected teacher claims he’s an arahant and he was crying when he told everyone this because he felt compassion towards everyone.

An Arahant could cry in the case of severe physical pain, which can cause the eyes to tear up naturally, or perhaps in the case of some nervous disorder. But crying that results from wrongly attending to an emotion and taking it as mine—the type that accompanies sorrow, lamentation or despair—would not be possible, because that requires one to crave against the pain of that emotion.

If someone really is crying due to “compassion towards everyone”, that sounds like a second arrow striking, and confusing compassion with empathy, i.e. *feeling* the pain of others, which is the *taking up* of a burden, as opposed to abandoning all burdens and wanting to help others to do so too (true, based compassion).

behave like every other normal human externally.

So you can’t really go as far as this when it comes to things normal people do that involve greed, aversion and delusion.

But certainly there are things that people, due to their own misconceptions of what unwholesome is, wrongly project into an Arahant, such as that they wouldn’t be repelled by a bad smell, would be dismissive of all mundane affairs and conventions, would not recollect the past or plan for the future, would not change their posture or environment when experiencing discomfort, would always move and speak in a certain way, would not have preferences, etc.

Bhante let’s say we have to take care of a sick person that need our help in defecating and other things. Isn’t quivering and trying to look away and not wanting to see those nasty things and want the experience to be over quickly means the mind is still affected.

Yes, if you are experiencing internal suffering and feel like you can’t be at ease until the experience ends, the mind is affected. But if you experience intense unpleasant feeling

yet are not afraid of the displeasure lasting forever hypothetically, then the mind is not affected.

But this is only possible with the Right View and beyond, and it's impossible to imagine it before that—whenever the puthujjana's mind is not affected, it's because the arisen displeasure is not actually intense.

Doing Nothing or Contemplating

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** sahasaransi_mw 2023-10-19 08:21:50

This is a question I had asked Bhante Anigha, and Bhante has advised to make a separate thread for it, so here it is!

My confusion has to do with whether what Ajahn Nyanamoli means by “not doing anything” has to do with literally not thinking any thoughts that arise, or whether we should actually be making an effort to contemplate and think in this period?

I always thought what Ajahn Nyanamoli had meant by doing nothing/non-activity is that one should sit and allow thoughts to come up but not engage with or think any of them, regardless of their nature as wholesome or unwholesome.

“Just allow your mind to come up with ideas and things to do, and then don't commit to them. Let those thoughts endure and just sit about”. - The Only Way to Jhana

Contemplating still seems to be doing something - actively thinking - rather than allowing thoughts to endure and not thinking any of them at all?

Which of these should I be doing? Actively contemplating, or not thinking any thoughts that arise and endure? The thing that Ajahn describes in The Only way to Jhana seems to be to have the benefit of increasing to one's ability to endure unpleasant thoughts and emotions, but the downside is that you are not engaging with any arising thoughts at all, as opposed to not engaging only with thoughts of an unwholesome nature, but cultivating those thoughts not of an unwholesome nature (like you would do through contemplation).

The Ajahn Chah quote below is something that shows a bit of what I mean by actively contemplating and cultivating arisen thoughts of a wholesome nature.

“Different phenomena may contact the senses, or thoughts may arise. This is called initial thought (vitakka). The mind brings up some idea . . . Once the mind has brought it up, the mind will want to get involved and merge with it. If it's an object that is wholesome, let the mind take it up. If it is something unwholesome, stop it immediately.” - Ajahn Chah, Monastery of Confusion

Sorry for the long question and any difficulties reading my phrasing, it was a bit challenging for me to reword my reply as a separate question.

Thank you !

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-20 00:20:11

The answer to the confusion you have is simple: you are not truly “just allowing thoughts to come up” unless you have actively clarified the right context beforehand, because it’s not a matter of choice. That “allowing” is possible only when the mind has been tamed to the necessary degree through the right context. (See SN 35.246 & MN 20).

Instead, what you would need to do to *eventually* allow thoughts to endure is to understand (not just intellectually but concretely in your experience) what the expression “non-activity” is actually pointing to, as an example. This means seeing what the unwholesome activities that you are responsible for is and abandoning them, and that’s done by seeing the sign of the mind, and right contemplations gradually point in that direction.

Otherwise, your attempt at “non-activity” will be about denying something that doesn’t need to be denied and is not unwholesome, such as volition in regard to your thoughts.

The problem is that usually when people try to “actively contemplate”, they’re just rehearsing ideas with restlessness and doubt, and when they start “just allowing things to endure”, they’re denying their volition and degree of real control (practicing “no-self” as opposed to “not-self”).

So true non-activity can only be present if you have learned how to contemplate correctly *without* falling off of the endurance of thoughts and trying to get rid of things, and learned how to endure thoughts rightly *without* losing the clarity of context which will mean you’re not actually enduring them.

“Just allow your mind to come up with ideas and things to do, and then don’t commit to them. Let those thoughts endure and just sit about”

In other words, this in itself is a contemplation, because you also need to be doing the work of clarifying what “let thoughts endure even” means (even this is not really understood by a puthujjana), not just sit back passively. The clarity of what “non-activity” is in itself a wholesome thought that you’re cultivating. Wholesome and unwholesome is not about what *objects* arise, but about clarity and lack of clarity about the true nature of things.

One who abides in non-activity is still perfectly able to choose what to think and what not to think, recall memories, think about the future, contemplate the teachings, decide to stand up, walk or sit down, etc. (AN 3.64). What defines the non-activity is that there is full clarity on the peripheral level which remains steady *on its own* amidst the movement of thinking, volition and choice (even a very coarse choice to “actively contemplate” this or that) and that the mind is unmoved even when thinking about the most alluring or aversive things.

This and this explain the kind of contemplation would contribute to seeing what activities actually need to be abandoned. My essay also presents a similar line of inquiry while simultaneously highlighting the need not to misuse that inquiry to try to get rid of any arisen phenomena.

Edit: And just to be clear, when I say “the mind is unmoved even when thinking about the most alluring or aversive things”, I really mean that you’re not holding anything back. You throw pure “gasoline” at the mind (the same things that would previously agitate it), and there is no possibility of a fire. This is the simile of the battle elephant in MN 125, who doesn’t flinch even when threatened by spears on all sides. It’s not because you’re being gentle with the provocations.

So that’s the true “allowing thoughts to endure” (samatha) that one is training towards, because that’s what can give rise to a mind that doesn’t quiver in the face of anything, including death. One can’t assume that one is already succeeding in that “allowing” before that point.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-20 23:28:00 (in reply to a comment not included)

Bhante what about gross things like poop or puke? I can’t imagine it’s really possible someone doesn’t quiver when they see it and smell the nastiness.

This is actually not relevant and it’s quite a prevalent wrong view, based on a misconception of what equanimity is (denial of the reactions of the senses), and confusing the “first arrow” (SN 36.6) to be the second. It reveals people’s identification with their senses and failure to recognize the signs of the mind when they think their citta is equanimous because their body doesn’t react in certain ways anymore. Like the idea that because someone doesn’t flinch during self-immolation, they must be an Arahant.

True equanimity is being *internally undisturbed* when the senses react to things, be it strongly or weakly. That’s the message behind SN 35.228 of “withstanding the force of the waves” and AN 6.55, which says the Arahant’s mind is unmoved like a mountain *despite* the force of a violent rainstorm. Not that “there is no rainstorm anymore”, which is possible only when one sheltering oneself from things.

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Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-21 04:48:07 (in reply to a comment not included)

Could this example of how I restrain myself regarding speech be taken further to the restraint of intentions to act mentally? An intention to think is present, and while it is present, neither denying it nor acting how it wants/pressures

me to act, I reflect on it's nature? Basically, there is ACTIVITY, but no unwholesome activity, thus - "no activity"?

Yes, that's a good example that you can extrapolate to any form of pressure. You can't control how your senses react to certain people (thus it's not *in itself* unwholesome), but you become "complicit" in that reaction when you are not able to allow the displeasure to endure for as long as it wants, and are acting out of it even mentally, be it by indulging in hate or by trying to replace it with something else ("love").

You need to be willing to endure that arisen intention to say something in anger "forever" if that's how it ends up being, as opposed to saying "no, this shouldn't be here because it's unwholesome", in which case that denial would become your activity, and you'd fail to see that the real source of dukkha is your *craving*, no matter whether it's to accept or deny the arisen intention.

Instead, **I use thinking neither to deny nor to proliferate the arisen intention**, and instead use thinking to reflect on the arisen intention in order to assist my restraint and understanding.

Indeed, that's the point I was making. You wouldn't be able to do any of this if you didn't first use thinking to recognize what exactly needs to be allowed to endure, and proceeded to just blindly "do non-activity". Furthermore, that recognizing of the intention and knowing that you should neither welcome nor deny it is all the wholesome thinking you need. You don't need to then go and try to love the person, for example, because where there is fabrication of love there will be hate (towards your own displeasure that arose on its own), and that's not wholesome. Genuine mettā would arise by itself as a result of you *enduring* the intention until you no longer care at all about its presence, not as a result of replacing it with another intention you think is better.

Hence:

because if the intention didn't persist, what would even remain for me to reflect on in the first place?

Exactly. Wholesomeness is none other than clarity and discernment of the offers of unwholesome kind while they persist. It's not in going somewhere else in the experience, as if you had an object that will magically not be underlain by craving if you just move your attention to it. Craving is always "behind" your attention.

Truly allowing things to endure requires discernment, and discernment that isn't abstract depends on allowing things to endure.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-22 07:44:02 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

This is a good summary.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-02 19:10:01 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Could you please confirm this is AN 3.64 that convey this idea? Because when reading it I don't find this idea, but that might be my understanding of it

Well, it's not explicit, but the point is that if you are able to change postures, your mind is free to move in any direction. You are not locked in to some fixed state like people think. In the first jhāna at least you would be able to think about the past and future for sure, as there is no reason why certain types of vitakkavicāra should be prohibited. It's seeing the entire domain of vitakkavicāra as a phenomenon that leads you to the first jhāna, and once you see that, it doesn't matter at all *what* that vitakkavicāra is about. Memories of the past and thoughts about the future are no more special or likely to be unwholesome than the intention to stand up, for example. Both of them could equally be rooted in hindrances, and thus neither of them is a problem when the hindrances are absent.

Could you also confirm that in the last sutta cited in this essay, namely AN 10.61, the translation is "lack of ayoniso manasikara" and not "lack of yoniso manasikara"?

Yes, a typo, it seems.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-12-02 19:50:22 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I see, yes. Sometimes the Bhikkhu Bodhi translations I normally quote from are one sutta ahead of the SuttaCentral version.

Collection of Q/A type comments on the HH channel

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GooseResponsible6172 2023-10-18 20:44:38

I have greatly learned and cleared some of my misunderstandings from the comments section of HH videos especially when someone from HH replies to the comments. I thought it would be good to have a collection of all such Q/A kind of comments.

Here is an easy to read document for the same.

Hope this helps and please let me know if there are any issues with this or anything else. Thank you.

Edit: Doc link that will get updated periodically

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-19 00:35:59

This is quite useful, since those comments get buried up and forgotten. I'll show it to Ajahn Nyanamoli so perhaps he'll publish it too.

Is it possible to compile the new comments from there onwards in intervals of time as well?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-19 07:04:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

☒

Please me identify that state I keep going in.

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2023-10-18 08:37:01

Hi everyone,

I have a question but some context first. I'm a tibetan translator, been meditating for 2 decade or so but mostly in the Theravadan traditions. I recently found Ajahn Nanamoli and Hillside Hermitage and immediately tried to understand and implement his teachings.

Since then, I've been trying to pay more heed to peripheral awareness and stay mindful in my daily life but something unusual is happening. Since a few days it seems I can trigger some kind of awareness watching state that I know nothing about. Basically, while I'm talking I'm able to observe myself talking, it feels that "I" is the one watching. What's strange is that when I speak I don't know who is speaking or how those words are coming out as I'm not in charge and I can't see myself thinking before words come out. What's weird is that this watcher that I feel is me is kinda empty because I don't choose/think the words coming out yet they come out. By the way, I'm a translator and I'm able to trigger this state while translating which normally requires a fairly high mental work. At times I'm also able to watch myself thinking. To trigger this state requires next to no effort, it's like switching a switch. It does not feel bad, it's just that this watching consciousness feels totally empty yet stuff/words are coming out of it ?? I wonder what is this ? I mean, should I try to cultivate that state/awareness or is it totally useless and should be discarded ? What is that state/ability ?

Thanks to all and sorry for my poor attempt at describing it.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-18 10:57:54

This is the sort of thing one would tend to wrongly emphasize when there's still a remnant of a view that insight into the Dhamma is defined by some sort of "experience", or that it's an "altered mode of perception" that you just tap into, just without the aid of psychoactive drugs.

If it were to be relevant to the path in any way, you would need to for instance see a crystal clear connection to the *inability* to act out of sensual desire (even if you wanted to) in the future as well, when you're not abiding in that state. This is what the "states of awareness" the Buddha taught necessarily lead to (which is the sole reason he taught them), as

opposed to just providing you with something that's more captivating than sense indulgence at the time. Besides, I'm sure tons of people achieve special states of awareness "empty of I", or so they think, during sexual intercourse and similar, proving that it's not even right mindfulness/samādhi/liberation which hinge fully on right intention and right effort.

And if you were anywhere in the neighborhood of the right type of "states", or at least got a sense of how to direct the mind so as to develop them, you would also be equally clear about the sheer amount of work you've had to put in to dry your mind out from sensual desires and craving way beforehand, often involving quite a bit of internal turmoil in that *long* process, as opposed to them arising from some shift of attention that you suddenly discovered.

You would be immensely closer to finding the way out of the sense of "I" by sincerely questioning why you regard this as special in the first place, because the "I" is where *background passion for, interest in, and enchantment with anything*, no matter how "spiritual", is. Understanding The Way out of any such passion whatsoever (which is essentially the Right View) is how the right type of "states", i.e. Right samādhi and Arahantship, eventually can be *developed* with total deliberation by means of that blueprint, instead of experienced by chance.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-18 23:26:25 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

My question remain : while continuing to strive for right view and cultivating Sila with sense restraint, should I try to cultivate this way of being aware, this watching consciousness, and investigate more or should I just focus on sense restraint striving for understanding ?

Well, even if, say, you put aside what I wrote above, there's still another reason why this wouldn't be something to cultivate. The phrases "I don't know who is speaking or where the words are coming from", are very likely revealing a subtle view that anattā is about "agecylessness", and that the lack of "I am" is about the actions somehow happening on their own or being disconnected from your point of view. This is a common misunderstanding of what anattā is, and the fact that you seem to regard this state as important points to that view being present to a degree.

When you correctly "step back" from your experience to discern the unownable nature of your actions or similar, you know *exactly* "who" is talking, moving, etc. It's not that you "don't know" or it seems like it's "just happening". Anattā is about the fact that EVEN if you exert infinite amounts of control over anything and everything and manipulate your aggregates to a T, all that is *still not yours* (which is why an Arahant still "controls" things externally). So, contrary to popular belief, in order to see anattā, you need to actually begin with accepting that *everything* you do is "yours". When you manage to abandon everything without forsaking that recognition, you are abandoning ownership on the right level, as opposed to denying the ownership through a preconceived idea of what the end-

ing of kamma is.

The right type of “stepping back” that even a puthujjana can do is something that would inevitably lead him to freedom from sensuality, and does not carry with it such coarse misconceptions of what not-self is—it’s in agreement with mundane right view that “I am the owner of my actions” and so on, whereas “agencylessness” errs into the denial of self. That’s why if a puthujjana develops the right type of “awareness” (which would lead them to samādhi like the Buddha’s first teachers), they are *reinforcing* mundane right view and self-transparency, so if they were to hear the teaching on anattā, their minds would be swiftly liberated.

Also, for the last few months I’ve been trying to be as mindful as possible and I realise that I may have made a mistake when trying to keep track of peripheral awareness and instead I think I was maybe in this state.

So the peripheral awareness we teach would be about acknowledging that there is a sense of self and that *you* are doing everything without exception. It is also about putting everything in question and not taking for granted anything you experience, no matter how “right” it feels. Abandoning that “taking for granted” and “regarding as right” is much closer to overcoming the sense of self than a state that seems to be “empty of a doer”.

As a puthujjana, one would fail to recognize that there is a very real “I” craving behind that whole “state”, and would block one’s own progress by thinking the sense of self has diminished to any degree.

In short, it will only serve to foster wrong view.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-19 06:58:56 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

maybe MN2 is relevant to the OP. “when he attends ayoniso the view ‘I perceive not-self with self’ arises in him as true and established” or maybe “Or else he is inwardly perplexed about the present thus: ‘Am I? Am I not? What am I? How am I? Where has this being come from? Where will it go?’” could be apt?

The most important thing to note when it comes to this is the nature of a *view*. When MN 2 (and SN 22.1 has an equivalent variation that recurs often) says that “the view arises for him”, people often misinterpret that as “he willingly takes up this philosophical standpoint and openly proclaims it”, and by extension believe themselves to not have any of these views despite being puthujjanas. But a view is much subtler than that, and a puthujjana *must* be having one of these despite all their conviction in the idea of anattā. Hence the Buddha does not give a third alternative somewhere in-between these views and the Right View, neither here nor anywhere else.

A view is basically something that is “embedded” into your point **of view**, thus your “eyes” (including the mental “eye”) carry the view no matter where they look (even if it’s at the Dhamma and the Suttas that you understood intellectually). That’s why “not holding to

fixed views” is not a matter of choice. Not holding certain *opinions* is a matter of choice, but that’s trivial, and the Buddha was pretty “opinionated” despite holding no views.

This is why it’s not about figuring out which one you’re holding, and even if the Buddha himself told you, it wouldn’t necessarily make a difference. If you “see” which one you have and are still a puthujjana, that’s not it. And when you tell another, they will misunderstand and think they just have to change an *opinion*, or something on that deliberate level. So the Buddha is not telling one to “diagnose” which view is present. He’s just saying, “there is self view; it will have to particularly manifest as one of these at any given time; this is the way out of it”.

Its the kind of thing Ajahn is talking about when he brings up the wild animal tamer simile isn’t it? a way of rephrasing what you are saying about how you (I/this intender of possible intentions/this king’s cook) should taking up responsibility for what you are responsible for (this self im bound to/citta/wild animal)?

Yes, you could say what you take responsibility for is your **feeding or starving** the views of self, which will depend on your bodily and verbal actions, and then your accurate understanding of what yoniso and ayoniso manasikāra are, as MN 2 says. For as long as the citta is not tamed through actual restraint and so on, self will be somewhere in the picture.

And it’s because views depend on the citta that you cannot take a neutral position outside of it and suddenly not have “I am” anymore, or even start grasping what not-self means until you tame it. If you forget that and start thinking you can temporarily have no sense of self as a puthujjana, it’s not even that you will “start holding”—you will *proliferate* the already existing view of self, whichever form it takes.

Sampajāno=Alert!!!

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-10-18 04:29:04

Sampajāña is big word in other tradition. whereas here Satima is big word. and discussed in immense detail. However I could not find any video, where Sampajāno is discussed in detail.

is it that simple , Sampajāno =alert!!!!

HH usually warn again practice of observing,focusing, attending etc. but never mentioned that attending or observing is same as sampajānakārī. or is there any value addition of being alert on what you attend.

Also when he says discern. does it mean anupassana?. like kayanupassana= discernment of kaya.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-18 23:52:32

Sampajañña is big word in other tradition. whereas here Satima is big word. and discussed in immense detail. However I could not find any video, where Sampajāno is discussed in detail.

Practically speaking, these are not two different things as overly methodical traditions/approaches might present them. Rather, both sati and sampajañña are necessarily present when one with Right View engages in Right Effort. So the aim must be to acquire that first, making sure not to think that one's current sati and sampajañña are right even if it all makes sense in theory.

HH usually warn again practice of observing, focusing, attending etc. but never mentioned that attending or observing is same as sampajānakārī. or is there any value addition of being alert on what you attend.

True, because “observing” is not sampajañña.

“So too, bhikkhus, here some foolish, incompetent, unskilful bhikkhu dwells contemplating a body in the body (a feeling in feelings ... a phenomenon in phenomena) ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, having removed covetousness and displeasure in regard to the world. While he dwells contemplating the body in the body (etc.) his mind does not become concentrated, his corruptions are not abandoned, he does not pick up that hint.

That foolish, incompetent, unskilful bhikkhu does not gain pleasant dwellings in this very life, nor does he gain mindfulness and clear comprehension (**sati-sampajañña**) For what reason? **Because, bhikkhus, that foolish, incompetent, unskilful bhikkhu does not pick up the hint of his own mind.** —SN 47.8

In other words, you can try to be as “alert” as you possibly can, registering every single tiny movement your body makes, not slipping for a second, and yet still there will be no sati or sampajañña. That practice will actually be going in the opposite direction, because you can't be seeing the peripheral attitudes your mind exhibits *and* at the same time be intentionally focusing on particular objects that are way coarser.

And note how this whole Sutta points out that the unskilled monk's practice is insufficient *simply* because he doesn't take the hint of his mind. It doesn't say that his effort in terms of the 4 satipaṭṭhānas is wrong, so he is already at least trying to reflect and look at the background of his situation instead of irrelevant details. So if one takes the effort to be about focusing and observing, one ends up even worse than that unskilled monk.

Also when he says discern. does it mean anupassana?. like kayanupassana= discernment of kaya.

Not quite. Anupassana is more like “contemplation”, which means it's not necessarily accurate (as will be the case before the Right View). “Discernment” (which you could even argue is equivalent to sampajañña) is there only when the contemplation is right,

i.e. when one takes the hint of the mind, as the Sutta says.

And, just to emphasize, the cittanimitta and the Right View are intimately linked, so this Sutta also heftily reinforces the point that to do any mindfulness practice correctly, Right View must be present.

How is the mind trainable when it is not in my control?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Tao_389 2023-10-16 07:20:12

So Ajahn has been teaching about training the mind as the goal of the gradual training. But if really the mind is not in my control i.e. it is of the Mara's domain - is it really trainable? I mean it is but where am I wrong in this reasoning. Can't Mara keep my mind "wild" as in the simile of wild animals? Thanks.

(I am sorry if this seems a hypothetical question but just wanted to put it here. Let me know if this question is of the "unanswerable" or similar kind where the basis is wrong.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-16 21:39:03

Can't Mara keep my mind "wild" as in the simile of wild animals? Thanks.

No, that's actually the whole point we try to emphasize in various ways (with the whole "right endurance" especially).

Māra has control of your *senses* (which includes the sixth, *mano*), but you and your past actions are solely responsible for your *citta*, and that's where Dukkha is rooted. That's why freedom from it is possible in the first place.

The eye is mine, ascetic, forms are mine, and the base where eye-pressure is cognized is mine. Where can you go, ascetic, to escape from me? The ear is mine, ascetic, sounds are mine ... The nose is mine, ascetic, odours are mine ... The tongue is mine, ascetic, tastes are mine ... The body is mine, ascetic, tactile objects are mine ... The mind (*mano*) is mine, ascetic, mental phenomena are mine, and the base where mental-pressure is cognized is mine. Where can you go, ascetic, to escape from me?" —SN 4.9

Venerable sir, it is said, 'Māra, Māra.' In what way, venerable sir, might there be Māra or the description of Māra?"

"Where there is the eye, Samiddhi, where there are forms, eye-consciousness, things to be cognized by eye-consciousness, there Māra exists or the description of Māra.

"Where there is the ear ... the mind, where there are mental phenomena, mind-consciousness, things to be cognized by mind-consciousness, there Māra exists or the description of Māra.

“Where there is no eye, Samiddhi, no forms, no eye-consciousness, no things to be cognized by eye-consciousness, there Māra does not exist nor any description of Māra.

“Where there is no ear ... no mind, no mental phenomena, no mind-consciousness, no things to be cognized by mind-consciousness, there Māra does not exist nor any description of Māra.” —SN 35.65

And, to put it concisely “the place where Māra does not exist” is not a mystical realm that results from a meditation experience; it’s the complete dispassion that results from understanding the nature of the six senses, recognizing that even the pressure they exert is not in one’s control, but one’s craving in regard to it can be *indirectly* abandoned (i.e. “tamed”).

The issue is of course that the whole reason why a person remains without the Right View is that they don’t see that which must be “tamed”, since they’re used to recognizing only the things they can *look at*, which is necessarily going to be within Māra’s domain, not the attitude in regard to it which is the *citta*. Even when they try to practice dispassion, this is what happens:

“Herein, what are the six kinds of equanimity based on the household life? On seeing a form with the eye ... on cognizing phenomenon with the mind (*mano*) equanimity arises in a foolish infatuated ordinary person, in an untaught ordinary person who has not conquered the boundary **[of the six senses]** or conquered the results of actions and who is blind to danger. Such equanimity as this does not transcend the form ... mental phenomenon; that is why it is called equanimity based on the household life. —MN 137

In other words, they can only make their *6 senses that belong to Māra* equanimous, but the *citta* remains on a subtler level untamed and liable to do whatever “it” wants (i.e. peripherally harbor greed, aversion and delusion) once they stop suppressing the sense domain, which is why the equanimity is fleeting and not fundamental. This is what pretty much any meditation technique or focusing practice gives you.

Instead, by unwaveringly committing to virtue, sense restraint and watchfulness of intentions behind everything including your restraint—there is no way to just “figure out” the *citta* correctly by reflecting on it—it becomes clear that despite your 6 senses having their own tendencies to “pull” towards pleasure and away from pain, your *citta* does not need to be partaking in that (and you begin that “disconnect” in it’s most basic form by none other than not acting out of desires).

Once the *citta* is completely dispassionate towards the six senses as a result of the Gradual Training, you can’t say that they are “pulling” anything anymore, no matter what Māra does with them. They can pull and cause dukkha only when there is a suitable basis of resistance to pressure in the *citta*.

“Bhikkhus, the uninstructed worldling speaks of ‘the ocean, the ocean.’ But that is not the ocean in the Noble One’s Discipline; that is only a great mass of water, a great expanse of water.

“The eye (ear... nose... tongue... body... mind), bhikkhus, is the ocean for a person; its current consists of forms (sounds... smells... tastes... touches... mental phenomena). One who **withstands** that current consisting of forms (...etc.) is said to have crossed the ocean of the eye (...etc.) with its waves, whirlpools, sharks, and demons. Crossed over, gone beyond, the brahmin stands on high ground. —SN 35.228

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-17 05:29:29 (in reply to a comment not included)

I thought the citta referred to the mind.

Well, yes, the issue is there's no good term as far as I've found to distinguish citta from mano in English. “Heart” has unhelpful connotations.

I just looked into Nanavira's Note on Citta and I wasn't able to understand anything there right now

Yes, I think he doesn't talk about citta in this acute sense anywhere in the Notes, although it's certainly implied. That's one of the reasons why, if one misunderstands him, which is not unlikely, one can end up thinking that seeing the Dhamma is *only* about grasping an idea with mano (which ignorance already implicitly believes). One would miss arguably the most important half of the equation, which a very explicit emphasis on restraint and Gradual Training makes harder to overlook.

It seems mano is a sense in the same way as the eye, but the citta is not?

That's right. The citta and its affairs are not perceivable as objects of your senses. But it can't be emphasized enough that this doesn't mean it's “hidden” or that you need to wait for it to suddenly reveal itself. It's no more “hidden” than suffering, craving and defilements are, because the citta is what those things find footing in.

To have any chance of discerning the citta, one needs to first at least intellectually acknowledge that it will not be found where objects are. Even if it's the “right” objects such as the accurate reflections that the Suttas talk about (which pertain to mano), that's still does not mean seeing the citta, and thus those reflections won't necessarily “land” where they have to (see SN 47.8, simile of the cook).

In the case of a puthujjana, for as long as they are suffering or even *could* be suffering, they can know beyond doubt that the citta must be there: which means, it's always there.

So if it sounds inconceivable that there can be something in your experience which is not on the same level as all other objects, reflect on the nature of suffering itself (of the existential kind). It's clearly not an “object” in the way one is used to, because if it were, you could simply stop perceiving it just like when you shut your eyes or cover your ears. You would at least be able to “stop thinking it” with mano. But you can't do any of that, and nevertheless it's there, manifest.

A reflection that points in the direction of distinguishing citta from mano:

Imagine a disagreeable experience. Now, that disagreeability itself is not the citta yet. No matter how sharp or personal it feels, that's still an affair of the senses ("the first arrow"), coming from mano in this case, and all this is "Māra's bait".

Transparently asking yourself to what extent there is a seeming *need* to respond to that disagreeability and act out of it points in the direction of the citta. And, again, you wouldn't possibly be able to pin that "need" down into an object, in which case abandoning aversion would be as easy as stopping the sense object or arisen thought (and it's not rare to believe that's how it is, thus assuming the first and second arrows to be identical, and meditation to be about hiding away from any and all arrows).

Hence, when there is none of that "need", which is the end result of the Gradual Training, then there is no suffering, despite Māra continuing to do with the five senses and mano, and their corresponding feelings, whatever he wants. When the Suttas say Māra was "tempting the Buddha for seven years", that's not *just* by coming to him face to face and engaging in poetry duels as it may superficially seem throughout the Mārasaṃyutta.

The temptation comes from the fact that even he had no ultimate control over the feelings/pressure of his six sense base. Māra was just verbally reminding him of that on top of laying out the bait. So all the Buddha did is tame his citta to the ultimate degree so that it stopped wanting to *take* the bait, and that's all that's needed.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-17 23:47:31 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, and also there are many "layers" to that "getting absorbed", and thus also an increase in being able to allow particulars to endure without going with the grain of them (which is the whole point—to eventually not have to be actively holding back one's mind in any way in order for it to be free).

So it's about containing the assumption and then keeping it so until becoming absorbed is impossible even if you want to, not until a perfect way of relating to particulars is figured out, which is still "management".

a *driving need* to do something about *this*.

And even this is not necessarily an issue if there is no driving need to do something about "the driving need to do something about this" (hence there's no such thing as "subconscious urges", or valid excuses for not being restrained.) The developed mind is always effortlessly "one step ahead" whether you tell it to or not, and doesn't need to get rid or suppress anything.

So the practice is to be trying to be a step ahead and restrain any unwholesome need *without* craving to get rid of it, no matter how subtle or peripheral it gets.

Telegram

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Print-Remarkable 2023-10-15 23:19:00

Is following HH on telegram needed for serious followers of the Venerable I noticed a couple of interesting articles on there but besides that I'd rather not need another app to deal with. But don't want to miss out on any good teaching?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-15 23:53:01

Yes, some things are posted only on Telegram.

You can use this link to do without the app:

<https://t.me/s/HillsideHermitage>

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-17 02:16:04

To be more precise, on Telegram there are some transcripts/summaries of selected YouTube talks that haven't been uploaded the website as of yet.

So technically it's not new material, and the old talks not on YouTube are on the website.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-17 03:44:33 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

You don't *need* more content; in fact, if you stopped consuming any new content from HH, and simply engaged deeply with what is currently out, that would be enough.

That is true in a general sense. But practically speaking, when there is the opportunity to do so, it's useful to hear the same thing put in a slightly different way a million as opposed to a thousand times if possible (*with an authentic attitude of trying to sift out misunderstandings*), since it reduces one's chance of thinking one understood it when one didn't to the maximum degree.

The key is mainly to not start just collecting information and building an intellectual system for the sake of satisfaction, which will entail premature complacency, because then you'll be inadvertently more preoccupied with fitting the new things you hear into your understanding, rather than the other way around. One can also be seeking more content due to pure, irrational craving against the pain of doubt, which is futile.

Hence, again, the "authentic attitude of trying to sift out misunderstandings".

What is the best way for me to familiarize myself with the Nikayas?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-10-14 16:35:10

I had asked Ven. Anigha this question in one of the threads, but it was far too deep in the thread and so I've created another thread for this question upon Bhante's request. I'd appreciate anyone's advice.

I've only read MN "properly", and I barely remember the content from the MN because there are so many suttas and they're so long. I usually just research suttas based on a topic that I'm currently contemplating and MN and SN are usually more than enough for that. I've never tried to do any systematic reading of SN because there are just so many suttas to read from I don't know where to start and the same with AN. For DN, this is probably the one Nikaya that I've neglected the most because I the others were more than enough.

Even when I pick a topic I want to research, it's so hard to find the relevant suttas for those topics. Any strategy for familiarizing myself with them would be appreciated.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-15 00:08:43

On the one hand, one should remember that ultimately one lacks the Right View not because one hasn't read enough Suttas and/or lacks the correct interpretation of "SN 95.30", but because one's mind has not been sufficiently cleared from obstructions (acting out by word, deed and thought; lack of sense restraint).

Having said that, more familiarity with the early texts is never a bad thing *if one doesn't forget what the goal is* and instead begins to simply collect information to fit into a neat Dhamma "system".

The problem with trying to get too systematic about reading them is that, ultimately, what helps one recall Suttas easily *in the way that matters* is to actually understand them, and to see what they're talking about in one's own experience.

The results of a systematic study that isn't paired with that understanding will not only be inadequate in the ultimate sense, but even in the mundane, sheer intellectual familiarity sense.

Because let's say you go through the Suttas by topic: that list of topics will likely have been arranged by someone who doesn't truly understand the *meaning* of the Suttas, and would not realize that some of them are actually very poignantly yet quietly describing, say, paṭiccasamuppāda. So you won't have truly learned the Suttas by topic except superficially.

Nevertheless, one has to start somewhere, and pretty much any study you can put in, as long as, again, it's done for the sake of furthering clarity of discernment and not intellectual satisfaction, will be better than nothing. And as understanding increases from actual practice, you will see in hindsight that those Suttas actually meant more than you could

even fathom at the time, and that is then building a “mental database” of the truly useful kind.

Finally, learning Pāli for those who have the time to spare is highly beneficial, because that allows one to search for Suttas by their contents. Since they tend to use specific phrases again and again, once you know how a passage about say, sense restraint, is like in Pāli, you’ll be able to find *all* Suttas on sense restraint. And if you’re *reading* them in Pāli to boot, you’re actually remembering all those phrases as you go on, so that will allow you to look them up in the future.

Personally, I have never done “systematic study”. Knowing Pāli and reading everything in it, coupled with a good memory which is a useful bonus, unlocks a different level of familiarity than reading translations ever could, not to mention the inability to be silently fed someone else’s views as the Buddha’s words. The problem is most people can’t resist the temptation to become mere Dhamma scholars on account of this.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-15 04:27:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

That would depend on each individual, and fundamentally it’s only right to say that they become particularly inspiring when one starts to understand them and *sees* the freedom from suffering being pointed at by those descriptions. That counts as “true inspiration” because a noble disciple’s partially liberated mind can become fully liberated simply on account of it, whereas for a puthujjana, getting *too* inspired could mean they’re overestimating their understanding—there should always a degree of doubt and confusion if they’re being self-transparent.

Besides that, I would probably just advise to read the entire Saṃyutta and Aṅguttara Nikāyas if possible, but not in a rush or as a scholarly endeavor (and there’s tons of repetition so it’s not as much as it seems.) The reason for that is that there’s a lot of widely unknown material in there that’s not only valuable in itself, but demolishes many wrong views generally endorsed today.

To give examples: SN 46.30 proves that the seven enlightenment factors are *acquired* by the stream enterer, whereas people like to believe they’re already developing them before that point. Same with the five faculties: SN 48.18 shows that they are only present in at least the sotāpatti-magga (who is already a noble one, as the prior Sutta makes clear). All this squarely supports the point we so often repeat that there is no right practice, not even the basic faculty of mindfulness, present before sotāpatti.

AN 10.61 shows that it’s ceasing to act out by body, speech and mind that starves the five hindrances, not a focusing practice to stop thinking. There’s also a myriad of Suttas disproving the common perceptions of what the jhānas and meditation are.

So there’s no particular selection; these gems are scattered all around, and they should provide enough “inspiration” to do away with all the mainstream approaches.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-15 23:49:53 (in reply to a comment not included)

Reminds me of the preface of Clearing the Path:

Indeed, and there's another equally important quote of his

“...the Notes attempt to provide an intellectual basis for the understanding of the Suttas, without abandoning saddhā. It was, and is, my attitude towards the Suttas that, if I find anything in them that is against my own view, they are right, and I am wrong. I have no reason to regret having adopted this attitude.”

Often one will not realize/admit that one's judgement of “what resonates” or not is not accurate, and thus even allow oneself room to, if not reject specific Suttas, then at least shuffle over them inadvertently when they contradict one's view, especially when they threaten to demolish one's little “system”.

So it's just as important to deliberately use the Suttas *for the explicit purpose* of finding those discrepancies and correcting them, which is more unpleasant because it requires you to be fully authentic *the whole time* about your ignorance and the fact that you are seeking external help.

Just like a terminal patient who is intelligent enough to put away his pride and admit that he can't put his own inkling of what's helpful over whatever the head surgeon says. With the texts it has to be like this, especially the 4 Nikāyas. With modern teachers there's a lot of incompetent, even if well-meaning, “nurses” that pretend to understand the procedure the doctor has in mind, but will absolutely botch the *entire* thing up and have the patient die even sooner. So more circumspection is needed in that regard.

I tend to rely on my memory a lot - I remember what passages say, but I haven't made an effort to save references for others. Maybe I could try to do this more in the future - but I don't want to fall into a mode of collecting and organizing references.

Yes, it's kind of not even “organizable” in a way unless it remains comparatively superficial. It will always be incomplete in a two-dimensional medium, though creating a reference “outside” can still be beneficial initially (especially for those Suttas that “don't resonate” which should be given the highest priority) if it's not made into scholarly data collection.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-16 03:00:03 (in reply to a comment not included)

Going through and being confident with A.K. Warder's book (there might be some lessons on YouTube) is already more than enough, and greater mastery than that might mean getting into scholarship for its own sake. There's also “A New Course in Reading Pāli” and perhaps others as well.

It's not necessary to know everything perfectly to start reading Suttas in Pāli. If one gets

to the point where one can read them, generally understand the formation of words and needs a dictionary only for rarer terms, one might even put aside the books and just stick to the Suttas, and learn more technicalities later on if it seems necessary.

If one can read Pāli like one reads English, that ought to be enough, and one will know when there's a need to analyze specific expressions more closely.

Tool like digitalpalireader and Tipiṭaka Pali Reader (app) are extremely helpful. SuttaCentral can show Pali and English side-by-side (though the English is sometimes misleading when it comes to the profound stuff).

(Hadn't seen the answer above. Mosly equivalent with what I wrote.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-07 22:30:47 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I usually quote from Bhikkhu Bodhi's translations. They tend to have less deviant renderings at least compared to the others I've found, but even then, when I quote here I modify the terms that have been interpreted instead of translated, e.g. in the recent thread asking for two Sutta references it was "really knows" instead of "knowingly knows".

His translations also tend to make use of Commentarial interpretations, such as that paticcasamuppada is a 3-life explanatory model, leading him to translate the literal "with this, this is" of the Pali to something like "when this exists, this *comes to be*" implying a temporal succession.

Disambiguating the ambiguous notion of "contemplation" in the context of practice

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-10-13 15:10:12

In one of the comments in this subreddit a few weeks ago, I believe I stated that not *all* kinds of ambiguously-defined and ambiguously-directed contemplations are beneficial. But then I asked myself: well what kind of contemplation *is* beneficial? And I've been returning back to this question on and off for the past few days but haven't been able to make any progress.

When I refer to contemplation being "ambiguously-directed" I refer to the fact that it can be directed at any topics: politics, latest fashion trends, sensuality, non-sensuality, etc. There's an infinite quantity of subjects that can be contemplated, and certainly not all are considered good in the Dhamma. It's like having a bow and arrow: aiming the arrow everywhere is NOT good; if I end up aiming it at a person I will end up in a jail. So how to *decide* where to "direct" the arrow? Suppose I say I want to aim it at topics relating to the Dhamma:

- What does it mean to be "owners of your actions", and how do we ensure that we don't hide from that ownership?

- What is meant by *vinnana*? What is its nature? How does seeing its nature result in liberation?
- ...

I still do not know whether doing so is good or bad because that is determined through my current framework of good and bad which is rooted in wrong view according to the suttas. There have been many talks by HH about abstract vs practical Dhamma/contemplation/understanding, so it seems the “abstractness” is another factor used to determine whether a subject is useful or not. But abstractness isn’t necessarily bad is it? It seems to be bad only if it’s abstract for the sake of abstraction and has no practical roots. Practicality is good because I want to see whether that abstraction I’ve determined applies meaningfully to result in “*qualities that lead to dispassion, to being unfettered, to shedding, to modesty, to contentment, to seclusion, to aroused persistence, to being unburdensome*” as the suttas say. I can for instance abstractly contemplate the nature of *vinnana* as being liable to change, but it doesn’t result in any particular orientation in experience itself that may contribute to “dispassion” of any kind. On the other hand, there are times where I’ve been thoroughly restrained and secluded and I can contemplate “all that is in front of me (the six senses) is dependent upon the body: is it possible for this ‘all’ to change? does its change have anything to do with my wish?” and immediately the “orientation” of the experience gets disturbed as its autonomous and independent nature is *revealed* and no longer points to ‘me’ as that too is equally liable to change; for a few minutes any pressure of whatever kind, physical or mental, ceases in its appearance.

There’s quite clearly a distinction in *how* the contemplation takes place here: the first one was theoretical in the same way math would be, the second one was phenomenological (???). And this ambiguous difference in the *manner* of contemplation is what I refer to as “ambiguously-defined” contemplation; perhaps it should be “ambiguously-done” contemplation, but either way it refers to the *technique*. To apply this to the bow and arrow simile, the technique of holding the bow and arrow determines significantly where the arrow goes: holding it wrongly can end up hurting me myself since the string can hit me, or holding it wrongly can make the arrow go where I did not want it to be directed.

I’ve just *defined* the problem right now: that it is ambiguous to me from every perspective I can imagine. I have not even an ounce of clarity on this. I want to disambiguate this and have a precise notion of contemplation, is this possible? Or is this a wrong “direction” of the contemplation? Why is it wrong?

I would appreciate any insight on this problem.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 06:09:57

I want to disambiguate this and have a precise notion of contemplation, is this possible?

Practically speaking, the attempt to “disambiguate” it too much will result in it becoming theoretical, *even* if it makes perfect sense and is guided by phenomenology and the Suttas.

However, this is not at all to say the right practice is somehow “indescribable and beyond words words”, which is mysticism.

“Theoretical” simply means that it’s leaving the sense of self out of the picture, and this can happen no matter what you contemplate. Otherwise, somebody *telling you* the exact theme to contemplate would result in enlightenment automatically (which the extreme of rationalism as opposed to the mysticism of an esoteric meditation experience). What gives rise to wisdom is not the subject of the contemplation itself, but rather being able to see the “level” where contemplation applies. Without seeing that level, the sense of self remains unperturbed by the contemplation, which means no true dispassion, even if you contemplate death itself and the utter destruction of everything that’s dear to you with the utmost urgency.

On the other hand, you may have not read a single word from the Suttas or even heard the word mind or consciousness, but if you see that what makes up your body is fundamentally not different from stones, leaves, and branches, and you are, first and foremost, discerning the body as a general phenomenon and not an object of perception, *and*, furthermore, also seeing that the things you hold dearly depend upon it, including your sense of self, then that “basic” contemplation will give rise to total dispassion.

So it’s about learning how to “trap” your sense of self into whatever you’re contemplating. If you fail to do so, then, whether you recognize it or not and regardless of your views, the sense of self is the one contemplating at that moment, and thus craving is at work.

You won’t be able to get this perfectly right in the beginning, but this is exactly where virtue and restraint comes in. When your mind is throwing a tantrum on account of not giving it the things it wants, that’s the perfect opportunity to start “trapping it” within your contemplation, because it’s “movements” get highlighted. People often think restraint is for the sake of suppressing those movements and reaching the peace of an “empty mind”, but that’s not the case. It’s to *reveal* the movements even more.

Moreover, when you’ve been acting out of things, engaging with needless company, distractions, etc., your discernment and skill in contemplation will need to be manifold times sharper to be able to re-establish an accurate picture, and all your attempts will likely be theoretical even if you bring back all your past insights.

And this is why an ordinary person needs to be manifold times more unforgiving with their restraint, while the one with the Right View and beyond can afford to drop the practice and *seemingly* get careless (as that layman Sarakāni who was drinking alcohol in the Suttas), but would be able to pick the right level of contemplation back up in a fingersnap as if nothing happened.

That ability is also what makes the grasping at virtue and practices completely redundant, because one realizes that sitting cross legged 2 hours a day or any routine actions whatsoever one might assume are indispensable, do not magically contribute to having the right level to contemplate upon. Sure, certain habits of *abstinence* need to be in place well beforehand, but that in itself does not guarantee seeing the right level of contemplation.

Rather, seeing the right level to contemplate on guarantees seeing the right level to contemplate on.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 22:34:03 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Thank you for the reply Bhante. So practical contemplations are those that involve trapping the sense of self, or seeing the redundancy of its mastery?

I wonder, does this apply to all contemplations or is this only for the sati-patthanas? For example, we're told to contemplate that we're owner of our actions as part of daily contemplations, how would we do this in a manner that traps the sense of self?

The point I was making is that no contemplation, no matter how accurate, traps the sense of self in itself, in which case enlightenment would be easy, and the utterance of another explaining such a contemplation would do 99% of the work for you.

Instead, you learning how to trap the sense of self traps the sense of self. If you do so (which entails grasping the sign of the mind and getting the Right View), *anything* you reflect on will work and thus further develop the mind.

Then, even something like this would “trap” lust, and thus the sense of self by extension:

“Come, bhikkhus, towards women old enough to be your mother set up the idea that they are your mother; towards those of an age to be your sisters set up the idea that they are your sisters; towards those young enough to be your daughters set up the idea that they are your daughters.’ This is a cause and reason, great king, why these young bhikkhus ... lead the complete and pure holy life all their lives and maintain it continuously.” —SN 35.127

Also, we're told to contemplate so many different things in the suttas, the breath, body, feelings, mind, sickness, old age, death, etc. And it's difficult to figure out which contemplations apply to me and which don't, or at least which ones I should do. How should I go about figuring this out? I've just stuck with contemplation of the body for now

You can take your pick from the Suttas. It doesn't really matter as long as you never forget that it's still not applying to the right level, and keep continuously making effort to discern what that “level” is.

If today you contemplate the body and tomorrow your actions, the only relevant part that could contribute to the Right View is how with either of them you will be making the effort to uncover the signs of the mind. Intellectual insights about what the body/mind are and so on can be had by an intelligent puthujjana, and thus are not ultimately what liberates the mind (you would lose those when you die or get Alzheimer's, or when you're simply busy ATM). What liberates is the ability to know peripherally/implicitly the nature phenomena in their very arising, without you actively doing anything.

Which is why, hypothetically, some Arahants could give much less technical descriptions of such things and be no less free from suffering. The point is that there is no longer ignorance, not that there is some *specific* knowledge that you could just directly hand over to someone else and “transfer” the Dhamma to them. Or rather, that’s only half the picture.

Hence, “to be seen by the wise for themselves”, as the Suttas say.

Edit: re “insights you would forget when you die”: People who think special meditation experiences, visions, ideas and “eureka moments” constitute actual insight don’t realize that all that will disappear if they just died or got Alzheimer’s. Yet, this it not to say that insight is “beyond words” in some mystical sense.

body within body !!!

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** deepcommand21 2023-10-13 05:41:40

I asked youtube but did not get answer.. Lets see if someone here can help me.(I am sorry for very basic question..)

when you say body within body.. what is container body? and what body it contains?

do you mean the contained body is the separate self or ego/panca-upadan-khanda. in other word see the self is contained by this physical body.?

In other words the nama-kaya(mind) is contained in rupa-kaya(physical body)?

I asked this question 2 month back on old video titled ” Four Foundations of Mindfulness to Enter Jhana “. which was based on MN125.Today I was again going thr latest video” The Mind Whisperer” also based on MN 125.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-13 14:42:11

“Body[1] within body[2]” means that you learn to see your entire experience, the six senses and their objects, as a body[2] that is secondary, less relevant, on the “surface” of body[1]. “Within” means just that: body[1] sits at the “center” of body[2], and thus is more fundamental.

Body[1] can be anything that is a simultaneous foundation for the body that you see, use, and are attached to. It’s the material things that your body[2] relies on to exist, such as your organs, the 4 elements, your breathing, and mere material form that is no more special than that of a corpse.

By repeatedly seeing that simultaneous *relationship* correctly— not by focusing on one thing alone, which would only sustain the sense of **me** being at the core of the experience and looking at it—you eventually become unable to exercise any passion and ownership over *both* body[1] and body[2], which together constitute your entire life. You now see that you cannot possibly be that center even if you want to, and body[1], which is

clearly impermanent, becomes the center instead. Same principle applies to the other satipaṭṭhānas.

The well-known “in the seen just the seen” utilizes the same imagery of something being “inside”. One learns to see that that “center”, where the notion of self gets established, is nothing more than subtler phenomena that pertain to and thus depend on what is seen, namely less palpable thoughts, intentions, feelings, notions, memories, etc. If you actually discern that that “center” is a *thing*, just much subtler than the sights are, you can no longer take it as your self. “In the seen just the seen” has nothing to do with the fallacious idea of “bare perceptions”.

But the caveat to all this is that, unless a person has the Right View, they cannot actually see this principle on the right level (because if they did, the view of self wouldn’t be there still—it can’t survive when those two things are seen simultaneously). So one must remember that whatever one is contemplating is still on the level of theory until that point, and not think that one already understood right mindfulness.

Lastly, what allows one to get the Right View and see those two levels is seeing the “hint” of the mind (cittanimitta we often talk about), and for that hint to be grasped, one needs to have been living restrained from sensuality and not delighting in the company of others for a long time. Unrestrained actions (“me here” seeking the pleasant objects “out there”) and company (“me here” and other people “out there”) automatically abolish perspective and thus reinforce that wrong “center”.

Bhikkhus, (1) it is impossible that a bhikkhu who delights in company, who is delighted with company, who is devoted to delight in company; who delights in a group, who is delighted with a group, who is devoted to delight in a group, will find delight in solitude when he is alone. (2) It is impossible that one who does not find delight in solitude when he is alone will acquire the hint of the mind. (3) It is impossible that one who does not acquire the hint of the mind will fulfill the Right View. (4) It is impossible that one who does not fulfill the Right View will fulfill Right Composure. (5) It is impossible that one who does not fulfill Right Composure will abandon the fetters. (6) Without having abandoned the fetters, it is impossible that one will realize Nibbāna.
—AN 6.68

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 03:48:19 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

It’s impossible to determine in advance how long it will take. (See SN 22.101 & AN 3.92).

Practically, one should be thinking in terms of years and not months or weeks. Obviously, the quality of one’s effort and the views that one carries are influential factors, because one can live two times more isolated than most enlightened monks did in the past, never see anyone, and eat once a month, but because of one views (e.g., that meditation is about focusing and Nibbāna is a special experience or vision that just “occurs”), one wouldn’t see the signs of the mind any better no matter how long one’s been locked up in a cave.

Also, the learning to recognize those signs is not like gaining proficiency in some contemporary meditation technique. It's something that you cannot even imagine until you already achieved it, because your very imagination is fully immersed in the ignorance of those signs, regardless of how much the Dhamma "makes sense". On the other hand, you can certainly imagine how it'd be like to master a focusing practice, which means it's not in any way a profound development of the mind resulting from abandoning ignorance.

Lastly, the Sutta speaks of *delighting* in company, not in company per se. So what one needs to do is strive for immaculate and relentless self-transparency in regard to every minute one spends in the presence of other people, and avoid it if no justifiable reason for it is apparent. Noticing when the mind is clearly just craving for its frequent dose of distraction and entertainment: one needs to start *taking the hints* of how "I have to talk to this person for X practical reason" turns into "let's have a fun chat".

That's how one stops delighting in company and will automatically start reducing it to the lowest possible minimum.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 23:10:44 (in reply to a comment not included)

Can you also throw some light on what is internal and external, in context of "Body[1] within body[2]"

That's a more advanced topic and it's not even essential to know about it.

I will mention though that it's not, as generally interpreted, about contemplating external things like people as opposed to internal ones, which I've seen leads some to think that reflecting on worldly phenomena contributes to enlightenment.

Rather, when the person with Right View practices satipaṭṭhāna, they will be doing so automatically in *any* one of these 3 ways at any given time, and they will be abandoning covetousness and grief towards the world. And that's what matters.

So the effort is in truly trying to *discern*—not just "figuring out" through reasoning—what "body in the body" even means. Once one learns to discern it, one will have the Right View.

Moreover , when You say 'Same principle applies to the other satipaṭṭhānas.' that is tough to grasp, as all bhikkhus leaves that on us to contemplate,. so I humbly request to repeat it for other satipattha.

At list Vedan[1] within Vedana[2].does that means two vedana symulteniously exist? same is to Dhamma[1]->dhamma[2], citta[1]->citta[2].

Yes, liberation is possible in the first place because there *are* always two things simultaneously present—one less "far away", the other more "far away"—in one's experience (thus the fallacy in "non-duality"), so one can never be a true master of it. The two things mutually determine each other at the same time (this is paṭiccasamuppāda) and there's no

room for a master in that, despite the fact that the same feelings and significances continue to manifest.

In the case of feeling, there's always a feeling in your experience that's more "central" than all the others, which are comparatively fleeting. An example of this is when you've having a good day, and all the particular things you encounter, some of which may be quite unpleasant, don't disturb you as much.

So you see that at the core of those other feelings, determining them, lies that more primary feeling. When this is seen, you don't then need to go and remove the sense of ownership and tell yourself that feeling is not yours. It won't be yours because you're no longer the center whether you like it or not, but rather that "core" feeling is (and always was).

With the mind it's the same. A more primary state of mind always underlies all the more particular moods that may arise. So you discern that as the center. This is how you would begin to see what actually determines an action as unwholesome. It's whether that "core" has greed, aversion and delusion in it and you're acting out of it, not whether externally you move like this or talk like that.

With dhammas it's more varied, but to give an example, you would see the sense bases as the "center" and everything else as surrounding that. Only by not seeing that that's the actual center and thus automatically *being* the center oneself, can there be lust or aversion towards sense experiences. And that's also how the hindrances work: they hinder you because their center is "inside you" and you don't know how to see it so as to "vomit it out", thus everything you do is acting out of those hindrances, even the Dhamma practice initially. It's not because of what comes *to* that center, which is why it's futile to try to stop one's thinking, concentrate, etc.

But it doesn't hurt to repeat that one is *trying* to discern all this. It's catastrophic to fall into the view that one is already doing it correctly and is somehow not a sotāpanna yet, or worse, that one is when one is not.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 23:32:27 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

It's just that "center" for me has connotations of "me" surrounding the body(1) which is at center, instead of "me" being enclosed by body(1).

Yes, that's pretty much the point. It's not about denying that experience has a center, because it does even for an Arahant, otherwise there would be no differences in traits between two Arahants.

Correctly seeing that the "gravitational center" of experience is a *phenomenon* (say, your actual heart), and that everything else is "orbiting around it", automatically prevents the assumption of self from taking place (thus it gives rise to the Right View automatically). One doesn't need to go and "stop the self", which only results in still maintaining that same self.

How can we understand body(1) when all our experiences are from the perspective of body(2)?

We can be peripherally aware that body(1) exists beneath body(2) by recognizing that our perceptions are only possible due to our senses, which cannot be directly perceived outside of our sensory experiences. In essence, we can't directly grasp "body(1)" but can only "experience bodily perceptions (body(2))."

Exactly; that's the difficulty. If you just try to *look at* body(1) (even with your direct thoughts), it will for that very reason be within body(2), and thus *you* as the center/master will be implicitly existing behind that "looking", even if you whole-heartedly believe that "there is no self" and "it's just a body".

It's about learning to "take the hint of" how body(1) is *implied* in body(2), without making it into a new thing. As I mentioned in the other post above, sense restraint is the primary aid to that. When your experience is "swirling" because of a desire that you're not satisfying or an unpleasant thing you're not getting rid of, it becomes much easier to see what that "swirling" is happening around. This would over time reveal what the sense bases actually are, i.e. the *actual* center that you have no say in.

So if body(1) is not clear, or if it feels like you already see it and are somehow still not a sotāpanna, then improving your sense restraint is the way to break the plateau and uncover the work that is left.

The extent to which you suffer when you increase sense restraint is the extent to which you still don't actually see body(1).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-24 23:53:52 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Yes, some of these will definitely be the starting point for essays to come.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-25 23:31:28 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The "swirling" (agitation on account of not giving in to desires) is a symptom of the illness, which is the lust in the citta. One needs to allow the the "swirling" to endure so as to be able to discern its actual root eventually, and not try to get rid of the symptoms by attending to bodily sensations and similar instead. That would make one even more ignorant of the simultaneous cause of those symptoms.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-28 00:11:58 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Any of these different ways of looking at experience works, and the point is not to try to draw parallels between them, which most Arahants in the past surely wouldn't have been

able to do because they didn't have access to every single Sutta like us today.

When you learn to see your experience as a whole properly (sign of the mind), you don't need to label it as 5 aggregates, *namarūpa* and whatnot. You simply see that the whole thing that you can control is there enduring, standing upon something else that you have no control over. *Sakkāya* will be there for as long as that is not seen correctly through any of these frameworks that the Buddha formulated.

How Gradual Training, Not Focusing, Leads to A Calm Mind

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu_Anigha 2023-10-11 07:34:48

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-16 00:19:41 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

There seems to be clear distinction between me and my mind - there is me training my mind, me taming my mind, me suffering on account of mind's actions, me communicating with mind.

What is this "me" and what is that mind?

"Me" is rational part of mind and "mind" is more primitive, hidden under surface part of mind or something different altogether?

It won't quite be possible to figure it out through reasoning alone, because that will be "you" theorizing, even if it's perfectly accurate (though it often isn't), with the mind invisible "behind you".

A crucial view not to fall into is that it's "hidden" or "subconscious" by any means, which leads people to believe in "subconscious urges". The mind right "there" from the day you were born, just "closer" than the actions, thoughts and ideas that you would call "me" or "mine". And it's certainly not "in your head/brain", because that's the *result* of the mind being there and enduring.

Practically, the best way to *discern* this distinction as it really is is sense restraint. The longer you spend not going towards pleasure and avoid pain impulsively, the clearer it will become, in the way that matters, that there is "something" there that does not obey your will and actions ("you") directly and has its own agenda. That's the only way to discern it for what it is and not just theoretically.

Also, some people seem to think speaking in terms of a "me" is contradictory to the Dhamma, but that's disproven by the Suttas.

"Bhikkhus, I will teach you the burden, the carrier of the burden, the taking up of the burden, and the laying down of the burden. Listen to that....

"And what, bhikkhus, is the burden? It should be said: the five aggregates subject to clinging. What five? The form aggregate subject to clinging, the feeling

aggregate subject to clinging, the perception aggregate subject to clinging, the volitional formations aggregate subject to clinging, the consciousness aggregate subject to clinging. This is called the burden.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the carrier of the burden? It should be said: the person, this venerable one of such a name and clan. This is called the carrier of the burden.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the taking up of the burden? It is this craving that leads to renewed existence, accompanied by delight and lust, seeking delight here and there; that is, craving for sensual pleasures, craving for existence, craving for extermination. This is called the taking up of the burden.

“And what, bhikkhus, is the laying down of the burden? It is the remainderless fading away and cessation of that same craving, the giving up and relinquishing of it, freedom from it, non-reliance on it. This is called the laying down of the burden.” —SN 22.22

And innumerable others where the Buddha says, “the monk directs *his* mind like this and like that”.

Theragāthā 19.1 is about a monk “talking to his mind”.

It’s also good to note that it’s “citta” being discussed here. *mano*/the realm of thinking is not that which is liberated, and is part of what the Buddha called “the All”, i.e. where dispassion must be developed (which is not *at all* to say “stop thinking”).

This goes into the difference between the two.

Lastly, contrary to this mind being taken as a self as one discerns it more and more, that very discernment of it is what prohibits the assumption of self.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-16 00:31:10

See also post made here, a collection of talks on “grasping the sign of the mind”.

Has Ven Nyanamoli talked about the anapanasati sutra, right mindfulness and right concentration?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** phueh 2023-10-09 23:24:46

I find his talks advanced and a bit tough to follow. It’s my fault, I just find it like trying to learn quantum mechanics from listening to a fast conversation between two people who are already experts in quantum mechanics.

But I have read his two books and I like most of what he says. But he says focusing meditations are not what I’m supposed to be doing.

Instead I should be trying to get right view, or just sit and endure sitting there without doing anything in the present moment. I know I’m butchering his instructions, but you get

what I'm talking about - I'm not supposed to sit there and focus on my breath or whatever.

But unless I'm misinterpreting his definition of "focusing meditation", didn't the Buddha teach being in the present moment with right mindfulness and right effort, and being aware of the breath in a one pointed way, and doing that all the way to jhana? Isn't that how the Buddha himself reached enlightenment?

Am I missing something obvious here? Thanks very much for your insights.

Sorry, autocorrect changed 'sutra' to sutra in the title.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-10 10:05:40

didn't the Buddha teach being in the present moment with right mindfulness and right effort, and being aware of the breath in a one pointed way, and doing that all the way to jhana? Isn't that how the Buddha himself reached enlightenment?

In brief, no, he did not, assuming we agree that the Suttas are the only reliable guide and put aside the Commentarial notions that have seeped into contemporary views of meditation.

Hypothetically, if you took somebody who has never heard a word about Buddhism or meditation at all and made them go through the early texts, they would 100% not end up with the idea that the Buddha taught one pointed focusing on one's breath (which is not what Anapanasati is). They would instead conclude that the Buddha mainly taught *contemplation* of wholesome and unwholesome phenomena, and that samatha and jhānas are a result of that.

They would also realize that Anapanasati cannot possibly be something *completely different* than that right reflection and thinking which he taught 99% of the time, so they would interpret the meagre amount of occurrences Anapanasati in light of that other 99%, instead of the other way around as it is today. Anapanasati, although highly praised by the Buddha in only a handful of Suttas, is nowhere near a frequent mention, which is vastly incongruent with how many people today cannot conceive of "meditation" that does not involve the breath.

In fact, there is evidence to think that the Buddha only intended Anapanasati for advanced practitioners (i.e. with the Right View), given the assembly of exclusively Noble Ones that received the Anapanasati Sutta, and the fact that he discouraged his own son from doing Anapanasati before he was ready, in MN 62. And what you most certainly won't find anywhere is an instance of him instructing laypeople (i.e. non-renunciates) on Anapanasati as it's done today.

Furthermore, the "meditation" for abandoning the hindrances and entering jhāna that recurs all over the Suttas, unlike Anapanasati that is extremely rare in comparison and doesn't occur in explicit connection to jhāna, is *contemplating and reflecting* on the dangers of sensual desire and unwholesome states.

“One-pointedness” for ekaggatā and “absorption” for jhāna are also completely inaccurate renderings, and thus ideas too. These have become ingrained due to translators and Buddhist teachers reverse-engineering the Dhamma— by means of the views of what jhāna/meditation was *already* assumed to be in times when nobody acknowledged that the Commentaries don’t agree with the Suttas. And most of them continue to spread those ideas even now, despite often labeling themselves as early Buddhists who reject later interpretations.

“Agga” (from eka-agga, “one point”) never actually means “point” in *any* context in Pāli. It means “tip; peak” or even “place”. And “jhāna” (from the Pāli *jhāyati*) actually means “1. to meditate, think upon, contemplate”. Plus, the English word “meditation” itself had nothing to do with one-pointed focusing 2 centuries ago, before Buddhism (*of the Commentaries*) made its way into the West. The latin word from which “meditation” is derived means “to think or reflect upon, consider, design, purpose, intend”, not “observe physical sensations exclusively until you lose all reflective awareness”.

Thus, when the Buddha told monks “Monks, meditate (do-jhāna), do not be negligent!”, as he frequently did, he was literally talking about *contemplating rightly*, which is what results in Right Samādhi when there is Right View (see DN 2, MN 19, MN 20, MN 39, MN 106, SN 35.246... the list goes on.)

So, technically, you don’t need to sit down and literally “do nothing” the whole time. If you want to “meditate” even if you don’t have the Right View yet, you simply do precisely what that word actually means, and which the Buddha instructed innumerable times:

Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu resorts to a secluded resting place: the forest, the root of a tree, a mountain, a ravine, a hillside cave, a charnel ground, a jungle thicket, an open space, a heap of straw.

“On returning from his almsround, after his meal he sits down, folding his legs crosswise, setting his body erect and establishing mindfulness before him. Abandoning covetousness for the world, he abides with a mind free from covetousness; he purifies his mind from covetousness. Abandoning ill will and hatred, he abides with a mind free from ill will, compassionate for the welfare of all living beings... —MN 39

And how does he do this?

...bhikkhus, a noble disciple **considers** thus: ‘Sensual pleasures here and now and sensual pleasures in lives to come, sensual perceptions here and now and sensual perceptions in lives to come—both alike are Māra’s realm, Māra’s domain, Māra’s bait, Māra’s hunting ground. On account of them, these evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill will, and aggression arise, and they constitute an obstruction to a noble disciple in training here. Suppose I were to abide with a mind abundant and exalted, having transcended the world and made a firm determination with the mind. When I do so, there will be no more evil unwholesome mental states such as covetousness, ill will, and presumption in me, and with the abandoning of them my mind will be

unlimited, immeasurable, and well developed.’ When he practises in this way and frequently abides thus, his mind acquires confidence in this base. Once there is full confidence, he either attains to the imperturbable (**=up to the fourth jhāna or the dimension of infinite space**). —MN 106

*(incidentally, synonymous language permeates the entire Anapanasati instruction—“he **understands/discerns/reflects upon/considers** his breathing in this way and that way”, not “he focuses on its (irrelevant) sensations”).

And the catch is, you *need* to have purified your behavior and livelihood from those same unwholesome things for these contemplations to yield any significant result, because otherwise your considering of sensuality as a trap is not genuine, evidenced by the fact that you still go and pursue it when you’re not meditating. Hence the necessity of virtue, celibacy and gradual training that we often emphasize.

This essay goes into further detail on the type of contemplation that can result in the samādhi that the Suttas portray.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-10 13:34:08

One additional remark I didn’t include: Note that MN 106 quoted above goes all the way up to the *base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception*, and this is probably the only Sutta where the Buddha gives explicit instructions on how to reach the formless states. And in every single case, this hypothetical monk—who nobody can deny is doing full-on samatha—does so by frequently **considering/reflecting** on the right themes until the mind is confident in them.

What is then to be said of someone who, under the pretext of samatha, wants to *deactivate* their capacity to reflect upon anything by focusing on tactile sensations of breathing and thus supposedly reach the first jhāna.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-11 06:12:30 (in reply to a comment not included)

I don’t use translations; I read the Pāli directly.

But when I have to quote in English, I usually use Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translations for convenience, and also because he tends to be more loyal to the Pāli. I still often make amendments on certain terms, since he uses Commentarial/Abhidhamma/Visuddhimagga concepts to interpret things and sometimes skews his renderings so that it all fits his overall view (especially when it comes to rebirth, paṭiccasamuppāda and meditation).

Every translation is an interpretation to a degree, but one should take any seemingly necessary deviations from the Pāli as a sign that *one’s interpretation* is wrong, rather than as a sign that the Buddha meant one thing but said another (or could not come up with a more accurate term) and then distort the entire Canon accordingly. A good example of this the

various translations of “vitakkavicāra”, whose meaning is actually as unambiguous as it gets.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-11 06:50:47 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Well, perhaps “discouraged” is not the right word. The point was that Rāhula asked him solely about Anapanasati, and he replied with all these other things instead and left Anapanasati for the very end.

The Buddha never answered something other than what he was asked without a good reason. So, at minimum, he was implying to Rāhula that he also needs to understand the principle behind these other practices; at most, he was telling them he needs to learn how to do them *before* Anapanasati. And both scenarios are in conflict with the common idea of Anapanasati as the core of the practice, *the* meditation everyone should be doing (another notion from the Commentaries and nowhere found in the Suttas), and everything else as merely complementary or even optional.

Notice especially the very first thing he starts with: “be like earth, so that agreeable and disagreeable things will not overwhelm your mind”. This is crucial because it’s the principle behind *any* correct meditation, which is why he mentions it first, and it’s exactly what people miss when they do Anapanasati as a form of focusing. They’re using it to run away from agreeable and disagreeable things and towards the random breath sensations (“stopping the mind-wandering”), and not using the *memory/context* (sati) of the kāya-saṅkhāra as a basis to “be like earth” in the face of pleasure and pain—which are experienced precisely through that very “mind-wandering” they so crave to get rid of.

This means that it’s not even “pure samatha” as it’s sometimes claimed, because samatha is about being totally undisturbed by anything like the earth (which is why it’s not *exactly* identical with vipassanā, but obviously the two are inseparable). Samatha is not about *not perceiving* those pressures, in which case, how would you even know you’re truly calm and undisturbed.

On a similar note, see what you need to do *before* practicing mettā in AN 8.63. People instead tend to practice mettā **because** their mind cannot remain internally steady in the face of displeasure/annoyance, so they seek to contrive this artificial feeling of pleasure and happiness to cover up the displeasure ASAP, because if they don’t, they will eventually crack and indulge in ill-will. But the Buddha says here, similar to MN 62, that you must be unmoved by the pressuring things *first*, and not use mettā to get rid of them.

And because people take it the wrong way around, it all remains a mere-cover up that doesn’t address the underlying problem. So even after a lifetime of Anapanasati, mettā, or whatever, defilements would come back if they stopped meditating for a while (and deep down they know, which is why they cling to their formal meditation sessions as a sacred ritual).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 00:09:52 (in reply to a comment not included)

...that seem to talk about focusing on the breath in some way.. are not correct in that they are instructions based on a tiny sliver of the suttas and more aimed at expert monastics?

No, not quite. The point is more nuanced than that, so sometimes people don't fully get it. Those instructions are not correct because they are not what Anapanasati is, given that they're based on a notion of what **sati** is that does not agree with the Suttas. In other words, we're saying nobody who wants to practice Buddhism needs to do that, and an "expert" even less so.

On the other hand, Anapanasati as taught in the Suttas, which most certainly should be practiced by one with the Right View, is not about focusing, but about what literally everything else the Buddha expounded on is about—contemplation and discernment of the relevant things (=not bodily sensations). And it being a form of contemplation is exactly why it requires the Right View to provide the rewards the Buddha spoke so highly about.

If Anapanasati—the “*abiding of the Noble Ones and of the Tathāgata*” as described in SN 54.11—were about focusing, anyone at all could obtain right mindfulness and right samādhi if they just follow a specific set of instructions, and this is exactly the modern belief that is not supported by the Suttas. If it really worked like that, you'd expect him to be handing those instructions out like free alms for the poor, but he never did. Not once do we see the Buddha teaching Anapanasati to laypeople *at all*, let alone those who were not celibate and were not stream enterers.

Most Buddhists are saying one thing, and you and Ajahn Nyanamoli are saying a different thing. Both sides can't really be correct. The simplest solution is that the majority is correct, but what they're saying doesn't align with the suttas. This is a strange situation.

And that shouldn't be a deterrent if one is using the correct criteria to determine what's right or wrong (to the limited extent that it's available even without the Right View).

All you need to ask yourself is: do you *see* how focusing on your breath mechanically (which, to repeat, is not Anapanasati) will free you from suffering, or does it only provide a temporary relief from it by *preventing* the things that cause suffering from coming to you?

Do you *know* that being tremendously skilled in focusing will prevent the severe pain of sickness, aging and death from affecting you? Isn't that already assuming that those overwhelming experiences will manifest in the way *you* expect them to, thus giving you the necessary “space” to focus away from them?

With death especially, the whole point of it is that you *can't* look away to something else to lessen the pain anymore, hence the famous simile the Buddha gave of the four mountains crushing you from every direction. It's your mind and the mental suffering (which, incidentally, people wrongly assume ends when the heart stops beating). No more objects of

your senses to hide behind—nothing else to focus on.

“Like an approaching mass of fire, are death, sickness and aging. There is no power to oppose it, no speed’s enough to flee.” —Sirimaṇḍa-Theragātha

Actual Anapanasati paired with the Right View, on the other hand, would free one from death once and for all.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 06:24:26 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Only in that dozens of Thai forest teachers say that if my sila is good and I focus on my breath in the right way for long enough, and apply right effort to bring up the seven factors of enlightenment, then samadhi will happen which is yoked with vipassana and the resulting insights will free me from suffering to some degree. Supposedly.

Yes, and that sounds good enough to most people. The problem is that, as the Buddha often emphasized, hearsay and tradition should not be the guides for one’s practice. Of course, some degree of faith is necessary, but not to the point where you “just do it” and have not clarified your views into first of all what freedom actually is, and secondly how this will lead you to it.

Even as an unlightened person who doesn’t know what Nibbāna is, one needs to know *why* what one is practicing is at least most likely to be right and how it’s freeing one. Fundamentally, suffering is caused by wrong view, and what these techniques do is take your *existing* views and run with them, because you’re not supposed to be thinking and questioning such things but only watching the breath, or whatever focusing object you might be instructed.

And any insights you might get from it will not change your actual *views*. You might change your *opinions* about certain things, but psychotherapy also helps with that. Views are much more fundamental, on the level of *why* are you even practicing anything in the first place, so your views are actually lurking untouched *behind* all that focusing and pleasure of the wrong kind. You can see that people often describe their insights as “special experiences”, and none of that is changing the view behind it all.

You’d also see that the amount of suffering it will permanently have allayed when you skip your daily dose of these practices for a good while is about the same as when adhering to literally any religion, that makes you be more careful with your actions and attitudes. That’s the only permanent change that’s really occurring, and it wasn’t even because of the focusing per se. People don’t realize how much their serious commitment to meditation techniques is simply getting them to be more restrained, and that *that’s* why they suffer less.

Furthermore, it’s good to note that when one speaks about “the tradition”, even specific subsets like the Thai Forest or any other, the sense of uniformity is actually illusory. They may agree on the focusing as a principle, but even then they disagree on what degree of

it is necessary, and on other points that are not as minor as people think. Therefore, it's not even an "us vs. the rest" thing, as if "the rest" were actually on the same page except on the surface. And people who practice these techniques usually turn a blind eye to that, because syncretism is always the easier route.

What the myriad of teachers describe are not "different takes on the same thing"—there are irreparable discrepancies on doctrinal points from teacher to teacher that would simply not occur within the Noble Saṅgha.

*"What do you think, Ānanda? These things that I have taught you after directly knowing them—that is, the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right kinds of striving, the four bases for spiritual power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, the Noble Eightfold Path—do you see, Ānanda, **even two bhikkhus** who make differing assertions about these things?" "No, venerable sir, I do not see even two bhikkhus who make differing assertions about these things. —MN 104*

"Isn't that already assuming that those overwhelming experiences will manifest in the way you expect them to, thus giving you the necessary "space" to focus away from them?"

I don't quite follow this, I'm interested in reading an expansion or unpacking of this.

This is basically a phenomenological description of how a focusing practice wrongly attempts to deal with suffering. With the ordinary issues and concerns in your life that make you suffer, you always have a bit of room to block them from your awareness and forget about them, by attending to something else instead. A whole gamut of things can serve as that "something else"—drugs, relationships, food, psychology, positive affirmations, God, entertainment, a focusing object. This is essentially how sensuality works.

As the Buddha said in SN 36.6, when a puthujjana is struck with suffering, he knows of no other way to escape it other than to replace it with pleasure. Following the same tendency in another form, when your mind thinks of something unpleasant, you immediately shut it off by focusing on a different object to get a relief, and you just keep doing that until all you have is the chosen object. You then feel pleasure because the pain is gone, like someone who lies down on a perfectly comfortable mattress. It's not the pleasure of someone who abandoned craving against pain.

Hence the point I made: death or any severe form of displeasure, even the death of a loved one before your own, is called "severe" precisely because you have no room to shy away from it and find a mental hiding spot. It takes over your experience completely and doesn't allow you to look away.

Therefore, to put it concisely, the only way to not suffer internally even in the face of extreme displeasure, which is what everyone wants, is for the mind to be at peace without having to replace that displeasure, so that *while facing it*, there is no anguish.

In MN 125, the Buddha compares a battle-elephant that can withstand blows in battle without flinching with the developed mind that results from the right practice. The Grad-

ual Training and Right Mindfulness train the mind to be just like that, and focusing, ironically, is training the mind to be more tender and often shirk back from things that it could withstand in the past, so it develops neither samatha (imperturbability) nor vipassanā.

(And just to be clear: none of this means you need to go and torture your body. Withstanding pain refers to the mental kind of not getting what you want, or getting what you don't want. That's what death is when taken to the utmost, so bodily endurance alone will not train you for that. Even if you do ascetic practices, it's to train the mind, not the body.)

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-13 03:23:43 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

If you want to sit and practice, you don't need to "do nothing" literally. Ajahn phrases it like that because, to someone who is used to always having some technique to distract them from their own mind and feelings, this feels like "nothing", and it can be overwhelming because you come face to face with what you actually have inside for the first time.

When you're alone with nothing to do, you should make effort to ponder on the Suttas, think about what views you may have that may be preventing you from understanding them, see if there's anything you can improve in terms of your restraint, and contemplate to what degree your practice has truly *freed you from* (not covered up) severe forms of suffering, and your greatest fears and worries. Eventually, that will become "concrete" enough, and you'll see that there's a mountain of real work yet to be done.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-19 08:03:23 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

It'd probably be good to make a separate thread for this because it's a confusion that many people likely have.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-12 17:00:46 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

But Anapanasati is for the fulfillment of the Satipatthana, right, just with breath as peripheral anchor while attending to and contemplating them?

More accurately, the breath is a peripheral anchor to let the senses pull as hard as they want without actually being allowed to reach their intended targets, and the four satipatthānas are inherently implied in that for one with the Right View, although later on the noble disciple can choose to emphasize one of them more (See SN 54.6, "How to Calm Your Mind" chapter in Dhamma within Reach, and "Recollectedness of Breathing and Calming of Aversion" in the newer Jhāna Book from AN, as well as their respective talks on the channel).

And these trainees, who were still aspiring and hadn't attained security yet, weren't sotapannas with Right View yet were they?

No, the word “trainee” (sekha) in Pāli always refers to sotapannas or higher (they “aspire” to the security *because they see* that other shore). This fact alone reflects the point we often make that the “training” *starts* with the Right View, and before that one is more like trying to rescue oneself from the incoming misfortune of training and advancing further in the Eightfold Wrong Path (“aṭṭhaṅgiko micchāmaggo” discussed many times in the Suttas), which starts with none other than the lack of knowledge of the Four Noble Truths (wrong view).

I’d recommend to revisit as many Suttas as you can with this actual meaning of “trainee” in mind in case you were not aware of it before.

Nevertheless, the Buddha in the Sutta you cite *does* advice monks who are newly ordained (whose separate mention proves that they were still not “trainees” despite having fully committed to the holy life) to practice the four satipaṭṭhānas before the Right View. What needs to be kept in mind is what the Buddha said is the prerequisite for the four satipaṭṭhānas, which gives one a hint of why they are never taught to laypeople who are not *already* stream enterers at least (and even that was rare—Anāthapiṇḍika is moved to tears on account of hearing a discourse on the six senses for the first time in MN 146, and Nakula’s Father who was also a stream enterer was exhorted on the five aggregates in SN 22.1)

But, Master Gotama, what things, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the four establishments of mindfulness?”

“The three kinds of good conduct, Kuṇḍaliya, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the four establishments of mindfulness.”

But, Master Gotama, what things, when developed and cultivated, fulfil the three kinds of good conduct?”

“Restraint of the sense faculties, Kuṇḍaliya, when developed and cultivated, fulfils the three kinds of good conduct. [i.e., he’s not just referring to the 5 precepts. Not even the 8 or 10, for that matter]

—SN 46.6 (AN 10.61 says the same)

(And obviously the point is the restraint, not the robe and shaven head)

Also, see the point I made on this thread about Rāhula, the Buddha’s own son who was then a novice, in MN 62. He was essentially being exhorted on the more rudimentary four satipaṭṭhānas, and Ānāpānasati was left for the very end. AN 8.63 is about how your mind needs to be “unmoved by unskillful states” (which obviously rules out actions by body and speech out of such states) before you can really start practicing things like the brahmavihāras an—also not taught to laypeople in the Buddha’s time—and satipaṭṭhānas. Though one may think even non-celibate laypeople should be perfectly able to generate warm feelings for others, mettā, which is undebatably perfect friendliness and absence of hatred, is much closer to the complete dispassion of the first jhāna than people realize.

They give up these **five** hindrances, corruptions of the heart that weaken wisdom.

Then they meditate with a mind endowed with friendliness towards the first, second, third, and fourth directions. Below, across, everywhere, **to [the] All-ness** (sabbattatāya)—they **dwelt having pervaded** (pharitvā viharati) the world **consisting of [the] All** (sabbāvant) with a mind that is abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

—DN 25 (my own, literal as possible translation)

Compare this with a popular rendering:

Then they meditate spreading a heart full of love to one direction, and to the second, and to the third, and to the fourth. In the same way above, below, across, everywhere, all around, they spread a heart full of love to the whole world—abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will.

Which has very different implications. Firstly, there is a tinge of the first hindrance not having been abandoned, and secondly, the “and to the second, and to the third...”, showing that the idea of a “process of spreading” is being read into the Pāli, which only says “thus the first, thus the second...” which there is no reason not to understand as “all simultaneously”, coupled with the “they **spread** a heart...”, whereas the Pāli really says “they *dwelt having spread/pervaded*”.

Regarding what my translation says about “the All”, this is essentially what Ajahn Nyanamoli has made sure to explain in the videos addressing Brahmavihāra (search for “Brahmavihara”, “metta”, “friendliness” and the second anapanasati talk I mentioned above on the channel), that the non-ill will is to be fundamentally directed towards one’s own senses (the All) so as to apply on the right level, whereas “pervading individual people with love” fails to do so, and always entails that “process” of well-wishing that was read into the second translation above.

The “having pervaded” as opposed to the “they spread” part also proves the same point essentially: it is by seeing that entire “All”—which does not *take time*, only discernment—that the friendliness starts applying to the whole world/All as soon as one “sees” it and directs that attitude towards it. (“sign of the mind” we often talk about is pretty much what allows one to recognize the All). It is therefore inherently a completely detached, dispassionate and thus *unlimited* attitude, as opposed of “going towards” things which is what you’re doing when you’re “spreading” to beings one by one. And this does not change the fact that the term “friendliness” is perfectly accurate to describe the attitude too.

See this reply on what causes one to not be able to recognize the “All” properly, which again connects with the point in AN 8.63 about what needs to be done *before* practicing mettā.

(I know half of the reply was not directly related to your question, but in the process of writing it occurred to me, so I’ll probably be recycling it as the nucleus of a future essay on mettā. It’s not totally unrelated anyway).

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-11-13 02:30:46 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Also, forgot to bring up the fact that the satipaṭṭhāna refrain always says “he abides independent, not holding anything in the world”. This is often taken to be a simple matter of choice, more or less regardless of what one does “off the cushion”, but ultimately “not holding anything in the world” *starts* on the level one’s actions, and of course a commitment to morality and ethics is not enough to avoid unwholesome. Hence the necessity of purity in regard to the 3 doors for satipaṭṭhāna to have a real foundation.

Online forums

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Print-Remarkable 2023-10-09 17:17:37

Does anyone remember the Venrable’s video that talks about the redundancy of using online forums in discussing Dhamma . It was fairly recent I believe a few months ago

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 08:05:15 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

That may be true, but overdoing sense deprivation before you are ready will end up being counter productive.

“Overdoing sense deprivation” at any point is counterproductive, and it’s not what Ajahn Nyanamoli is teaching. I’m assuming you’re not referring to keeping the precepts and not seeking sense pleasures as “deprivation”, which would be absurd. Being unable to see the difference between sense restraint and sense deprivation is being unable to see the Middle Way.

Here’s what the Buddha had to say on breaking sense restraint:

It would be better, bhikkhus, for the eye faculty to be lacerated by a red-hot iron pin burning, blazing, and glowing, than for one to grasp the signs and features of a form cognizable by the eye. For if consciousness should stand tied to gratification in the signs and features, and if one should die on that occasion, it is possible that one will go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm. Having seen this danger, I speak thus.

“It would be better, bhikkhus, for the ear faculty to be lacerated by a sharp iron stake burning, blazing, and glowing, than for one to grasp signs and features in a sound cognizable by the ear. For if consciousness should stand tied to gratification in the sign or in the features, and if one should die on that occasion, it is possible that one will go to one of two destinations: hell or the animal realm. Having seen this danger, I speak thus... —SN 35.235

There’s a universe of difference between “not grasping signs and features” and “sense deprivation”, and Ajahn Nyanamoli expounds on this incessantly in different ways, to the

point of (necessary) redundancy, because the distinction mostly eludes people, especially those who haven't gotten used to correct restraint yet, for whom it will feel like they need to deny the entire world and go blind and deaf to be perfectly restrained. Sense restraint, on the other hand, can never be overdone, just like mindfulness cannot.

What the Buddha said to someone who seriously broke his commitment to restraint (the first monk who broke the 1st pārājika):

Haven't I in many ways taught the abandoning of sensual pleasures, the full understanding of the perceptions of sensual pleasure, the removal of thirst for sensual pleasure, the elimination of thoughts of sensual pleasure, the stilling of the fevers of sensual pleasure? It would be better, foolish man, for your penis to enter the mouth of a highly venomous snake than to enter a woman. It would be better for your penis to enter the mouth of a black snake than to enter a woman. It would be better for your penis to enter a blazing charcoal pit than to enter a woman. Why is that? For although it might cause death or death-like suffering, it would not cause you to be reborn in a bad destination. But this might. Foolish man, you have practiced what is contrary to the true Teaching, the common practice, the low practice, the coarse practice, that which ends with a wash, that which is done in private, that which is done wherever there are couples. You are the forerunner, the first performer of many unwholesome things. This will affect people's confidence, and cause some to lose it."
—Bhikkhu Vibhaṅga, Pārājika 1

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 16:50:20 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Of course we should strive to grasp at no forms, but being able to do this is a gradual development. I think some leeway in sense restraint is acceptable as someone is developing on the path.

You seem to be making a leap from the inevitable fact that, sure enough, one's restraint will not be perfect overnight, with *justifying* unrestrained actions and presenting them as compatible with the path, and these are earth and sky.

Firstly, you can't be perfectly sense restrained overnight no matter how hard you try and how many things you refuse to perceive, because sense restraint is a matter of right mindfulness and discernment, and not of blind avoidance of everything. Renouncing everything suddenly and locking yourself in a cave is rooted in aversion most of the time, so it's actually a *breach* of sense restraint. It's a lazy attempt to take a shortcut, and leads to another form of craving instead.

What everyone can certainly do is abandon *actions* that they obviously know are rooted in desire and aversion, and this is covered ideally by the Eight Precepts (7 if one meal a day is not an option).

Now of course, not everyone can take them on all at once, but if they allow themselves

to hold a *view* that they can still practice towards Nibbāna with subpar virtue, they'd be shooting themselves in the foot big time, because it's almost guaranteed that they'll find a comfort zone in a level that's far from sufficient. So what one needs to do is tell people the truth—that they can't have their cake and eat it too—and they will decide for themselves how far to go. And at the end of the day, if the practice does not give the result they expected, they won't be left wondering why.

It can be compared to a drug addiction. The average addict will undoubtedly not be able to quit cold turkey, but if you diminish his sense of urgency to quit by telling him that it's not *that* bad, and he can be healthy enough if he just exercises and eats better, he likely won't be able to quit all the way ever, or at least not soon enough.

With the addiction to sensuality it's even worse of course, because there's a whole thicket of deeply ingrained views ensuring that it's not abandoned. Give yourself a chance not to swim against that torrent as hard as you can, and you're done. It may take you years and you may slip sometimes at first, but you can't *not* be giving it your 100%, especially as a layperson in modern times flooded with temptations, and still reach the other shore. That'd be wishful thinking, based on not even seeing the magnitude of one's predicament.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 22:18:28 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

But what would you say to an addict who tries to quit cold turkey and becomes severely distraught. Would you tell them to take a step back and approach the issue more gradually?

Sure, but never to *excuse* his inability to quit cold turkey through a view. That's why the Suttas speak of a "sense of shame and fear of wrong doing". Nobody starts perfect, but the closest to perfection initially is having this quality to the greatest possible degree. It may be rather jarring to feel perpetually inadequate, but one shouldn't expect the practice to be pleasant right off the bat, because every *real* increase in abandonment of the drug will produce more withdrawal symptoms.

Reduce the amount of addictive substances they are taking and spend more time developing the Eight Fold Path, etc, with the understanding that as one develops, their capacity to let go of the addiction will improve?

This is mainly where I don't agree. Firstly, there is no Noble Eightfold Path for one without Right View. Secondly, even for a Noble individual, there would be no partaking in the Eightfold Path if they fell into a view that they're practicing it despite not being sufficiently restrained (which is why they wouldn't believe such a thing; at best they would transparently admit that they've derailed from the path temporarily). So rather than watering down what the path is, one should be clear that it won't be accessible until one's virtue and behavior is brought in order. If this recognition is compromised, any "understanding" that comes will be based on wrong view.

But then you say there's a risk of becoming complacent. So how does one strike

that balance?

By turning up the sense of urgency to the max, and keeping the eyes on the actual prize, without falling for a prize that presents itself as more accessible. You won't get there right away for sure, but you will not fool yourself, and that's what matters most.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-12 22:55:18 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

But I also think it's counterproductive to expect or force a result that's not ready to be had.

Yes, but the problem is one cannot be the one *deciding* how much is ready to be had, because one's judgement is thoroughly infected with ignorance. So what one needs to do is maintain the honest recognition that there is no practice happening yet, and then one won't have to be "forcing" anything. The "speed" of abandonment will adjust itself automatically. If within this container, an option to abandon something comes to mind, it's because you *can* do it without tightening too much, although you may not *want to* because it'll hurt. Most importantly, one will allow no room to settle prematurely on something that seems like the path (to one's ignorance) but isn't, which is all too likely to happen.

Fundamentally, one has to abandon the view that one can determine what is too tight and what is too loose before stream entry (and the monk who was given this lute simile was most likely at that level at least). It's not something that depends on an opinion or view. For a puthujjana, those will always be affected with avijjā, which seeks to preserve itself in the sneakiest ways at any cost.

and then practice other aspects of The Path so that your capacity to reduce increases further.

The issue is, there are no "other aspects" that don't rely on the abandonment of what is unskillful in word and deed *beforehand*. If you're referring to mindfulness and meditation, that *presupposes* purity of behavior. Meditation that operates within and excuses non-restraint only fuels wrong view. So at that point, a person's "meditation" (in the correct sense of that word) should be to reflect on how to go about purifying their behavior, how many unskillful things they still need to give up, and why they should be giving them up.

"Bhikkhus, when one knows and sees the eye as it actually is, when one knows and sees forms as they actually are, when one knows and sees eye-consciousness as it actually is, when one knows and sees eye-contact as it actually is, when one knows and sees as it actually is [the feeling] felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact as condition, then one is not inflamed by lust for the eye, for forms, for eye-consciousness, for eye-contact, for [the feeling] felt as pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant that arises with eye-contact as condition.

“The view of a person such as this is right view. His intention is right intention, his effort is right effort, his recollectedness is right recollectedness, his composure is right composure. **But his bodily action, his verbal action, and his livelihood have already been well purified beforehand.** —MN 149

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-13 04:03:18 (in reply to a comment not included)

Yes, I anticipated that common argument. The thing people overlook with it is that all these stream enterer laypeople you read about in the Suttas became enlightened after *talking to the Buddha for the first time*. They didn't need to spend years building up their practice. That's not due to some magical cause, but because that's how much those people's minds were already not *as* passionate for sensual pleasures, which is what determines how well it will “absorb the dye” of the Noble Truths. And if you read closely, you see exactly what the Buddha did before teaching them the core of the Dhamma.

Then the Blessed One gave the householder Upāli progressive instruction, that is, talk on giving, talk on virtue, talk on the heavens; **he explained the danger, degradation, and defilement in sensual pleasures and the blessing of renunciation. When he knew that the householder Upāli's mind was ready, receptive, free from hindrances**, elated, and confident, he expounded to him the teaching special to the Buddhas: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path. Just as a clean cloth with all marks removed would take dye evenly, so too, while the householder Upāli sat there, the spotless immaculate vision of the Dhamma arose in him: “All that is subject to arising is subject to cessation.” —MN 56

“Free from hindrances”, the foremost of which is sensual desire, means that the person's mind was able to, at that time at least, *completely* abandon any interest in sense pleasures from the very bottom of their being (since that “bottom” is where the true hindrances are). They didn't just stop thinking about sensuality for 30 minutes of formal sitting or a 10 day retreat. In other words, you could say that person was internally a complete renunciate at that moment.

So, if a person has spent years practicing, knows *dozens* of Suttas (those laypeople got only one) and knows more details about Buddhism than even some monks back in the day and yet are still not stream enterers, it's because their mind is not as naturally clean as these laypeople's. That means they will have to spend potentially years drying up their mind from the moisture of sensuality to the best of their ability, which means strict virtue and restraint to eventually, to get to the point these people were *already* at, and light the fire of true wisdom.

There is no other hidden reason for failing to understand the Dhamma when you hear it in so much detail apart from the mind not being sufficiently confident in renunciation, which is what determines the actual hindrances. (Note incidentally that for these people there were no concentration techniques involved to purify the mind).

Lastly, the Sutta says this man was drinking *as* a stream enterer. One should not think that a stream enterer's external engagement with sensuality in any way compares to what's happening with a puthujjana internally.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-13 04:30:11 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

What people need to be told is the harsh truth: that the Dhamma is out of bounds for whoever is not willing to give up sensual pleasures. The majority of people will not be able to stomach this, and that's fine, because it means that at least sometime later on, if they ever decide to take up the practice, they will be clear about what it is and won't be cheating themselves with a watered down version of it.

The people who reject the instruction forever when you tell them this will do so because they were not ready to hear it to begin with, and even then it's better for them to dismiss it and take up some other practice, and at least not forsake the undistorted recognition of Dhamma as Dhamma, whether they agree with it or not. The Buddha didn't teach the Dhamma for the majority—he even refused to teach at all until he saw a handful of beings with little dust in their eyes.

If someone *is* able to stomach this, then the strength of their faculties will by itself take care of how quickly they will be able to give up their addiction. It's a much more uncomfortable route than believing the Dhamma is compatible with at least a bit of sensuality, and will involve uncertainty, remorse and internal conflicts more often than not, but that's the comparatively microscopic price to pay for actual liberation.

Also, when people have mental breakdowns after trying too hard to be restrained, that because they were acting out of craving and impulsiveness, even if they were living naked under a bridge, eating once a month from a dumpster. Correct sense restraint (i.e., with discernment) will result in a lot of (necessary) internal discomfort, but breakdowns and similar would only happen when there's been craving involved. Thus, no amount of it can bring bad results if done properly.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-13 23:54:35 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

The Suttas are abundantly clear about this if one reads them honestly. A few specific examples that stand out:

“Now these three similes occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. Suppose there were a wet sappy piece of wood lying in water, and a man came with an upper fire-stick, thinking: ‘I shall light a fire, I shall produce heat.’ What do you think, Aggivessana? Could the man light a fire and produce heat by taking the upper fire-stick and rubbing it against the wet sappy piece of wood lying in the water?”

“No, Master Gotama. Why not? Because it is a wet sappy piece of wood, and it is lying in water. Eventually the man would reap only weariness and disappointment.”

“So too, Aggivessana, as to those recluses and brahmins who still **do not live bodily withdrawn from sensual pleasures, and whose sensual desire, affection, infatuation, thirst, and fever for sensual pleasures has not been fully abandoned and allayed internally**, even if those good recluses and brahmins feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment; and even if those good recluses and brahmins do not feel painful, racking, piercing feelings due to exertion, **they are incapable of knowledge and vision and supreme enlightenment**. This was the first simile that occurred to me spontaneously, never heard before. —MN 36

“And how, bhikkhus, is there nonrestraint? There are, bhikkhus, forms cognizable by the eye that are desirable, lovely, agreeable, pleasing, sensually enticing, tantalizing. If a bhikkhu seeks delight in them, welcomes them, and remains holding to them, he should understand this thus: **‘I am declining away from wholesome states. For this has been called decline by the Blessed One.’** “There are, bhikkhus, sounds cognizable by the ear ... mental phenomena cognizable by the mind —SN 35.98

I say, bhikkhus, that ignorance has a nutriment, it is not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for ignorance? It should be said: the five hindrances. The five hindrances, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the five hindrances? It should be said: **the three kinds of misconduct**. The three kinds of misconduct, too, I say, have a nutriment; they are not without nutriment. And what is the nutriment for the three kinds of misconduct? It should be said: **non-restraint of the sense faculties...** —AN 10.61

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning birth, old age, and death. What three? Lust, hatred, and delusion...

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning lust, hatred, and delusion. What three? Personality view, doubt, and grasping at virtue and practices...

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning personality view, doubt, and grasping at virtue and practices. What three? Careless attention, following a wrong path, and mental sluggishness...

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning careless attention, following a wrong path, and mental sluggishness. What three? Muddle-mindedness, lack of clear comprehension, and **mental distraction...** *[all things that result from sensual engagements]*

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning muddle-mindedness, lack of clear comprehension, and mental distraction. What three? Lack of desire to see the noble ones, lack of desire to hear the noble Dhamma, and a mind bent on criticism...

“Without having abandoned these three things, one is incapable of abandoning lack of desire to see the noble ones, lack of desire to hear the noble Dhamma, and a mind bent on criticism. What three? Restlessness, **non-restraint, and lack of virtue...**” —AN 10.76

And that’s only a short selection.

Also, are you saying a drug addict who cannot give up their addiction cannot make progress on the Dhamma path?

More accurately, a drug addict has made progress on the Dhamma path *to the degree* they have given up their addiction. There is no measure of progress *apart* from that because Dhamma is non-greed, non-aversion, and non-delusion.

And the addict has acquired something worse than the addiction itself if they develop a view that *excuses* their not giving it up as soon as possible. Even though the person without that view—who transparently acknowledges that no amount of the drug is OK—may initially stumble in their attempts at giving the drug up entirely, it’s a completely different situation happening in their mind. As the Buddha said, wrong view is by far the most pernicious of all unwholesome things.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-14 03:36:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

If you don’t mind, it might be good to create a new thread for this question. People might otherwise not come across the answer when it’s buried deep in here.

Daily Routine

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-10-05 14:45:33

What would be the ideal daily routine for someone on a holiday with a whole month to devote themselves to the practice of Dhamma, while adhering to the precepts, practicing restraint, and maintaining moderation in eating, according to Bhikkhu Nyanamoli’s teachings? How can one structure their day to get the right view and make the most of this extended period of Dhamma practice?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-06 13:49:31

Having a routine or not is not what determines one success. If a person has the tendency to procrastinate, not do things they know they should do or get easily distracted, then

establishing a routine could be useful. But if that's not the case, then the desire for a routine could be a sign of an achievement-oriented mindset that's not in line with how progress in the Dhamma actually works.

Development in the Dhamma is measured by how much one is incapable of suffering amidst suffering, and that criterion, or what that even means, is inherently not seen by one without the Right View.

Thus, the measurable results that such a person could be hoping for at the end of their adherence to a schedule will necessarily be things that don't pertain to the ultimate goal, such as intellectual familiarity with the teaching, or the more "palpable" yet mundane return on investment that is obtained from wrong meditation. It is already too easy to confuse these things with real understanding, and not challenging the assumptions behind one's insistence on a routine can make that mistake even more likely.

How do 'Choiceless Awareness,' 'Open Awareness,' and 'Do Nothing' align with Nyanamoli's Mindfulness Approach to Peripheral Awareness?

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** 7x07x3 2023-10-03 05:49:14

Hello everyone, I'm seeking some insights.

When Nyanamoli discusses the correct approach to maintaining our mental state—avoiding excessive focus (absorption) while retaining peripheral or contextual awareness— which mindfulness practices or teachers, such as 'choiceless awareness,' 'open awareness,' or 'do nothing,' closely align with Nyanamoli's concept of peripheral awareness? I'm in search of an alternative explanation of Nyanamoli's idea to gain a better understanding, specifically only in the context of establishing mindfulness.

Thanks!

EDIT:

Perhaps I have expressed myself in a confusing manner. I am not referring to comparing the entire practice of "choiceless awareness" or "do nothing" or any other practice with Nyanamoli's peripheral awareness/contextual awareness. Rather, I am referring to whether the way peripheral awareness is explained is similar to that of other teachers who use different terminology, regardless of what you do with what you are aware of during meditation; that would not be the subject of comparison in this case.

For example, on the contrary, imagine a teacher who asserts that attention should be very focused on the object and seek absorption. An example of this would be to say that Pa-Auk understands mindfulness in the same way as this imaginary teacher.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-04 04:13:06

It would be misleading to draw comparisons based on the technicalities of how the practice of mindfulness is explained, because there's nothing in that which inherently guarantees that the relevant approach will be in line with the Dhamma. Such technicalities are secondary.

To illustrate, someone could easily extract a “system” from HH teachings that would in the letter be very similar to what some “choiceless awareness” teacher says, who also happens to encourage that same awareness during sexual intercourse, for instance, as opposed to presenting that as antithetical to the development of right awareness (which is made “right” by none other than the abandonment of unwholesome as its foundation).

On the other hand, there could hypothetically be a teacher who does not speak in terms of peripheral awareness or of “how to meditate” at all, but who insists on complete renunciation and abandonment of the world *without* resorting to absorption into trance states (which precludes abandoning anything relevant), and that would actually be much closer to the meditation Ajahn Nyanamoli is teaching. The Suttas define right meditation as the surmounting of sensuality and all unwholesome states, not as a specific manner of directing your attention.

If it were clear to people (which it seems to have been back in the Buddha's day) that concentrating upon one thing cannot possibly constitute samādhi—but only *suppression* of those unwholesome states, which isn't samādhi—then there would be no need to give any detailed descriptions of what to do with one's awareness. Ajahn Nyanamoli does so only because of the prevalence of such misunderstandings contemporarily.

To put it simply, Ajahn Nyanamoli's instructions are not merely an approach to peripheral awareness coupled with a greater emphasis on Right View and dispassion, and it cannot be reverse-engineered by combining those elements. The whole is more than the sum of its parts in this case.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-30 09:15:08 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Great question, and I'm sure many people can relate to it. Would you mind making a new thread so that the answer will be more visible to others? You can just copy and paste what you wrote and add the link to your comment on this thread.

My shaky reasons to keep the precepts

Subreddit: r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2023-09-30 19:07:36

I had been keeping the 8 precepts quite easily last month, but near the end of the month I asked myself whether I really knew how keeping the precepts would lead to the ending of suffering. And I could give an artificial reason as to how it would: acting out of the 8

precepts necessarily implies acting out of craving, and if I abstain from acting out rightly, I would be diminishing craving, which is the cause of suffering. By this reason, I would be less liable to suffering.

This felt artificial because although “craving is the cause of suffering” seems intuitively true, I haven’t arrived at the truth of that for myself. Since if it were the case that I *truly* identified craving as suffering, 99% of present efforts in my life would collapse. It felt like someone else did the homework for me to arrive at the “truth”. Instead of knowing the Noble Truth of Cause of Suffering, I know, and can guarantee, the equivalent Puthujjana Truth of Cause of Suffering: the World *has* suffering, and removal of *things in the World* is removal of suffering. It is of absolute certainty to me that when I’m suffering, I can, by means of interacting with the world, remove that suffering. If I have some diagnosable dental issue, I can get it fixed. Except of course when I can’t, which is what happened to me and what led me to look for some internal way out of suffering when I had significant chronic pain. This kind of certainty is not present to any extent with holding the view that “craving is suffering” although it sounds intuitively true.

I never had a single strong reason for keeping the precepts, the reasons would fluctuate. Sometimes it would be because of the fact that I was suffering significantly and keeping the precepts could somehow help in removing the suffering *eventually*. Sometimes it would be for worldly reasons like removing entertainment to get work done. But the reason was never established on genuinely seeing a correlation between breaking them and harm. I now am utterly clueless regarding why I should keep the precepts since I can simply abstain from entertainment while doing work to get it done quickly, and then proceed to go back to entertainment. But after a while, I start to see some kind of fundamental dissatisfaction in all the entertainment I engage in: I hop from one thing to another thing to another thing, and there’s just constant dissatisfaction on some level while doing all of this even though it feels pleasant on the surface. But this fundamental dissatisfaction doesn’t seem dissatisfactory enough for me to quit entertainment. I can tell myself that I had suffered significantly before, and it was indeed quite a significant amount of suffering but it barely causes any emotional reaction now. Same is the case for future suffering, it feels artificial.

I can’t find good reason anymore even though I’d really like it if I had one. I want a reason that is absolute in some sense, that I can keep regardless of my mind’s moods. But I don’t know if that absoluteness depends on the reason *itself* or on myself to keep that reason absolute. I went from the 8 precepts to just the 5 now since they’ve been the natural state for me. I would like it if I could get some help on how to proceed from this slug. It feels like I’m stuck in some kind of loophole here. What is a good reason to keep the precepts?

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-01 12:04:02

In order for the practice to be correct in the first place, one has to be doing it without the aid of external motivations. Having an external motivation for your practice is none other than *sīlabbataparāmāsa*.

“External” doesn’t just refer to things literally out there in the world; it includes even an inspired mood that you might have one day but not the next.

And the crux of the entire Dhamma is that the ignorant mind inherently *resists* the burden of having to say no to unwholesome things—that’s the *sole problem*, which is why one is responsible for it. That’s why it feels like there must be a *justification* for renunciation: you wouldn’t do work that is uncomfortable unless there’s a reward at the end, and this itself is the principle of gain and sensuality.

So the solution is not the find the perfect motivator, which will mean you’re still operating in terms of sensual craving, but to stop resisting the work altogether, so that it’s not uncomfortable anymore. Only then your views about sensuality can start to change; otherwise, subtler sensuality will be your motivation for abandoning coarser sensuality.

So, counterintuitively, renunciation becomes pleasant and sustains itself *not* when that burden of responsibility to say no to things is not there anymore, but when you start finding that *same burden* pleasant. That will happen if you learn how to stop resisting it and see it for what it is. And nothing that just happens to you or that you hear from someone else will magically get you to stop resisting it in an instant.

I can’t find good reason anymore even though I’d really like it if I had one. I want a reason that is absolute in some sense, that I can keep regardless of my mind’s moods. But I don’t know if that absoluteness depends on the reason *itself* or on myself to keep that reason absolute.

You keeping the reason absolute is what can eventually result in the reason that is absolute *in itself*. That’s why enlightenment cannot be attained without “manly restraint, manly effort, manly determination,” as the Suttas say. You can’t expect it not to be *your* burden to go against the grain of your mind’s moods until then. Nevertheless, that “manly effort” will not be equally unpleasant forever. You just can’t know for how long.

This is why there’s always a need to keep one’s trust in the practice one step ahead of one’s reasoning (not *discard* one’s reasoning like some would say), and endure the pain of doubt that results from that.

Insisting in having the reasoning first and the trust second will lead to one’s practice being dependent on one’s moods, because reasoning is subjective and is inherently secondary to moods, despite what rationalists would like to argue.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-04 00:09:03 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

How do I develop trust when by definition a person without Right View is steeped in ignorance?

Precisely by not forgetting this. The thing is that trust (*saddhā*) is often misconceived as an unquestioning attitude towards one’s practice or teacher, which leads people to either adopt blind faith and wishful thinking, believing that that’s somehow wholesome in-&-

of itself, or to (rightly) reject that attitude, but then go too far into the opposite position and become skeptics who put their own judgement above all else and insist on following their own personal system of beliefs, or assume that whether bits and pieces from various teachings “resonate” with them is an accurate criterion. And *both* of these attitudes overestimate a puthujjana’s ability to know what is beneficial and what isn’t.

To start with, right trust needs to remain on the level of “there is suffering, there is a way out, and there are those who have attained it”. Nothing can be done until this is acknowledged. One’s reasoning then needs to assist in preventing that trust from becoming blind faith or mere superficial inspiration, and directing it instead towards something that is least likely to be wrong (based on: concordance with the Suttas, what results people who practice this are actually getting, do they tell you “there is nothing to be attained, just stay in the present”, does it force you to scrap the way you exist entirely or is it rather like a hobby, does it emphasize self-honesty or self-oblivion, does it regard it as “allowable” to not be restrained just because you wear a shirt and jeans instead of a robe, etc.)

Once such a teaching is found, your trust must be made firm enough to stick to it and not change your mind before you have actually tested it far enough for oneself, or found compelling evidence that it’s wrong which isn’t based on your opinions or how it makes you *feel*. You employ that trust to refrain from fault-finding that relies only on your *beliefs* of what is right as opposed to universal principles (e.g. do become suspicious of someone who doesn’t keep the precepts, doesn’t live in seclusion, or is shady in their dealings, but not immediately of someone who merely doesn’t fit your preconceptions of how one should talk). Your reasoning then needs to keep reminding you behind the scenes that no matter how convincing this all is, you still cannot say for sure for as long as you lack the Right View, *without* overriding the trust you have.

This combination gives rise to a setup that does not allow you to find misguided, premature certainty and commit mainly based on your emotions (which is how you could end up “burnt”) nor to throw your hands up in the air and conclude that there is no way out and indulgence in the world is justified. And it forces you to *endure* the doubt and uncertainty of not-knowing and not cover them up, which is the prerequisite for arriving at where doubt and uncertainty cannot reach.

Comment by Bhikkhu_Anigha on 2023-10-05 00:18:53 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

Can it be “There is suffering, there *might* be a way out, and if there is a way out others probably attained it”? Because, to be honest, I don’t actually know.

It could start like that, but as one begins to recognize more profoundly the nature of dukkha, one would not be able to tolerate the possibility that there is no way out and still keep one’s sanity. You wouldn’t be 100% positive that there is a way out until you realize it, but at that point it would become unthinkable to just give up the search and go back to “normal life”. Most people’s recognition of dukkha, despite it *being there*, is not this strong, and that’s partially caused by having covered up the liability to suffering by

means of sensuality and comfort for too long.

“And what is the result of suffering? Here, someone overcome by suffering, with a mind obsessed by it, sorrows, languishes, and laments; he weeps beating his breast and falls into bewilderment. Or else, overcome by suffering, with a mind obsessed by it, he embarks upon a search outside, saying: ‘Who knows one or two teachings for putting an end to this suffering?’ Suffering, I say, results either in bewilderment or in search. This is called the result of suffering. —AN 6.63

Bhikkhus, here some clansman goes forth out of faith from the home life into homelessness, considering: ‘I am a *victim* of birth, ageing, and death, of sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and despair; I am a victim of suffering, a *prey* to suffering. Surely an ending of this whole mass of suffering can be known.’—MN 38 .

I thought TWIM was the thing because unlike everything else I’ve tried, it was actually based on the suttas. But with more knowledge, I realized it wasn’t. In total, this has been about 8 years of practice.

If it took you so long to put aside these teachings, it would be good to examine your motivations for taking up the practice to begin with, and to what extent you have seen the problem of dukkha. These practices you mention wouldn’t be perceived as sufficient for very long for someone who has authentically recognized that they are “prey to suffering” and feels the acute burden of that situation. It would quickly become clear to them that the burden they are carrying is not being permanently lessened, and that they’re merely being given various management strategies (based on ceasing to acknowledge the suffering, more often than not), with which one can only cross one’s fingers (or be full on deluded) that they’ll work at the time of severe loss, illness and death. The fact that they talk about the Suttas wouldn’t be enough to obscure that insufficiency.

So try to reflect more on what dukkha actually is, especially that “liability” and being “prey to it” aspect. The fact that things *could* happen to you at any time—loss, sickness, aging, death, disappointments or simply perpetual dissatisfaction—irrespective of how relatively free from immediate dukkha you may be at the time (and you are especially vulnerable when that present not-as-bad state depends on things and people that you could very well lose).

A recognition along the lines that “sensuality is unhappiness” is not quite enough, since the practices you mentioned technically provide an alternative to coarse sensuality that could seem sufficient for the ignorant mind, which inherently doesn’t see the full scope of what sensuality is.

When you feel that no matter what you do and where you hide, suffering *could* be about to pounce on you, you will have an accurate criterion to measure which teachings can potentially solve that situation, and you will instead lack the gumption to not practice.