

# Ven Anīgha Reddit Archive 2025

Ven Anīgha

2025



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# Ven Anigha Reddit Archive 2025

## Getting fed up

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-04-04 17:36:37

I am not very proud of it, but I indulged heavily in lots and lots of sugar and fast food, also pornography and a ton of videogames and so at some point I got fed up somehow and now I want to keep the precepts. I deleted videogames, but not to avoid playing them but because I cannot handle playing videogames, it's painful. Also porn just seems disgusting and there is less and less pleasure in it, sugar makes me feel sick and so my conclusion is that this method is valid and it works.

The only downside to getting fed up is if person uses heroin, because then they might die. Otherwise it works

So it is an easy path of less resistance, because I'm so fed up I can't even do it anymore. I woke up and started doing something "hard" with interest, because as soon as I think "maybe play videogame?" I feel "agh, please don't do it"

Also I feel the need to do something, but the options are suddenly much more limited, feels very dull and boring.

"I TOLD YOU SO!" yes

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-05 03:42:38**

Otherwise it works

Not for long.

## Practical implications of the fifth recollection

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** tejveer 2025-04-04 00:23:04

Of the five daily recollections, the fifth is the following:

I am the owner of my kamma, the heir of my kamma; I have kamma as my origin, kamma as my relative, kamma as my resort; I will be the heir of whatever

kamma, good or bad, that I do.  
Bhikkhu Bodhi

But I find it to be fairly abstract now; at least for me. In the past, my daily reflection of this would involve contemplating what “owner of kamma” meant and so for rest of the phrases, never really attending to the day-to-day implications of it.

What are the practical implications of the above recollection? What attitude should it induce?

My current “translation” of that in practical and tangible terms would be as follows:

My mind learns from my actions. I and I alone teach it what it values; whether it is good (not valuing what is unstable) or bad (valuing what is unstable) for it. I experience the results of what I have taught it, whether good or bad. If I have taught it to value what is unstable, then when that instability presents itself to the mind and infuriates it, I am subject to it. At any point in the day, my actions can be either good or bad and there is no one besides me preventing me from acting in what is good for it apart from myself.

The above almost instantly induces a sense of responsibility and vigilance for whatever I will be doing throughout the day. Could such a reflection be regarded as being along the right lines of what the Buddha expects us to reflect on for this recollection? If not, how can I improve it?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-04 06:27:20**

The implication is that nothing you do is inherently justified. Even if someone puts a gun to your head, coercing you to do something, the choice to comply can never be made for you. That doesn’t mean that compliance is automatically wrong, but rather that you cannot escape the fruits of the choice to comply (whether good or bad) just because a gun was pointed at your head.

In practice, this attitude is crucial because only with it will you be able to develop virtue. The natural tendency is that, when there is enough pressure towards doing something—i.e., when the gun is pointed at your head—you find some sort of justification or excuse for the action rather than taking responsibility and saying, “I did it because I acted out of the pressure, and I could have not done so.”

And the same goes for wholesome choices. If you don’t take responsibility for them and do them only when there is inspiration towards them or other people are doing them with you, then you will not see that you can continue to make them indefinitely and nothing can force you to stop.

## What defilement(s) are causing me to feel awkward in the staff break room at work?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** senserestrain 2025-04-02 02:55:48

Whenever I try to sit distraction-free during my breaks at work, it feels so awkward sitting there while everyone else is either on their phones or chatting idly. It is particularly difficult not to pull out my phone when someone sits in my line of sight. Would love to get to the point in my practice where I am completely at ease in these situations.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-03 03:00:29

Pulling out your phone is not necessarily a distraction in that particular context. There is nothing you can do in such a setting that would bring the same level of clarity and composure that you could have while alone (that's why seclusion is always a prerequisite for actual satipaṭṭhāna). It's arguably better to pull out your phone and even get some headphones in that setting, since that decreases the possibility of being spoken to, and with that, the capacity for self-awareness naturally increases.

In that situation I would just focus on avoiding unsuitable content (breaking the entertainment precept) and listen to a Dhamma talk, read Suttas, do some practical task on the phone, etc.

## What environment is actually necessary for liberation?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Solip123 2025-03-31 23:29:54

At this point I am not certain what is actually needed in terms of the environment and mindset one must have. I am reading Polak's book, "Nikaya Buddhism and Early Chan: a New Meditative Paradigm" - he suggests that radical renunciation (of even self-preservation instincts) may be necessary for liberation. The problem is, I am not sure how to integrate this into my own life. I live with my family and renouncing everything is not really tenable or even possible in this day and age. The conditions in 5th century BCE India differed considerably.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-02 02:09:42

It's not about "renouncing everything." That's the view the Buddha initially had and which he overcame when he found the middle way. It's about renouncing passion, aversion, distraction.

Giving up one's family is very helpful for that goal (and is the only way to achieve it completely), but if keeping the seven precepts, it can be done to a great degree even at home (non-return) as seen in the Suttas.

It's actually much easier to adopt a view that external austerity is automatically beneficial and keep pushing it on that external level instead of developing understanding of what craving actually is. External comfort isn't automatically rooted in craving—it is definitely so only when it violates a precept, especially celibacy.

Self-preservation mechanisms cannot be overcome through willpower and observances, and the Buddha even encouraged maintaining some of them for a trainee. What needs to be abandoned is specifically the prospect of breaking a precept, even if it means not being able to save your life. That's an example of the middle way, which *does* lean a lot more on the direction of asceticism than people often like to think. But not all the way to what you're describing, and with the right context (right view) behind it rather than sheer white-knuckling.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-02 05:20:36 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Yes, the former is optimal. But it still doesn't mean "renouncing everything" the way you seemed to be implying (by saying that it's not possible in this day and age). Even the lifestyle of the most austere monks was still quite comfortable and easy compared to what other ascetics with wrong views were doing, and not hard to follow today. They sometimes accused even the most austere monks of being "indulgent" because they didn't renounce enough in their eyes (still going on alms round daily and eating good food if offered instead of eating only a mouthful of leaves every few days).

When asked to make them compulsory, the Buddha declined and insisted in making even those comparatively very moderate austere practices optional, knowing that they are not automatically beneficial.

## **Confessing breaches of virtue- why and when?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** craveminerals 2025-03-29 19:10:24

Hi Dhamma friends,

In the pursuit of Dhamma, what would be the purpose of confession of bad deeds to another vs. admitting them to oneself, and resolving not to act unwholesomely again?

Considering that in the latter case, one does still take virtue and the training seriously, it doesn't seem like confessing every mistake is essential- except if it's a grave offense- am I wrong? Is this more important for an monastic environment perhaps?

My reasoning is that if it's a minor mistake, I'd be fueling excessive guilt by obsessing and making a big deal out of it. But if it's a big mistake, a breach of precepts for example, there may be a legitimate need and benefit to confessing it to somebody, and thereby helping you 'process' it- because if you don't it could dominate your mind and warp your perspective, and in turn endanger your spiritual practice.

•

Speaking for myself, lately I've occasionally been indulging in wrong speech fueled by ill will, in regards to talking about politics— worldly things, bad idea I know— as well as in a strange and difficult coworker situation a little while ago. Out of fear, weakness and defensiveness.

Nothing too extreme lately, although some past memories of especially shameful immoral behaviors have resurfaced. I'm currently letting them "weigh down on me" and basically just acknowledging, and enduring, the guilt. But since I'm not obsessing about them 24/7, and they don't seem to be warping my perspective, I'm thinking of sparing my local priest a visit by me.

I'd be interested to hear if you have any thoughts! Thank you!

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-30 09:56:18**

Considering that in the latter case, one does still take virtue and the training seriously, it doesn't seem like confessing every mistake is essential- except if it's a grave offense- am I wrong?

Confessing *everything* that you sense was a transgression, no matter how small, means that you won't be able to cover things up precisely in those scenarios where you are inclined to downplay the significance of them (which is usually a sign that it is very much a problem; denial is the primary recourse of an addict). The natural sense of shame that one would have for anything that was factually unwholesome will come to the surface, simply on account of having to reveal it to someone else. If the action truly didn't come out of any defilements, then there would be no reason to feel ashamed of revealing it.

Is this more important for an monastic environment perhaps?

As I wrote in the recent post, apart from arbitrary things like looking a certain way, the things the Vinaya enjoins a monastic to do are not accidental; they are meant to prevent them from straying from the path as much as possible. Confession might be somewhat more difficult for laypeople because many may not know people who share the value of restraint and would encourage them in their efforts towards pure conduct instead of trying to dissuade them. But it's still a net loss to one's practice if one doesn't find a way to do it. Years, even a whole lifetime, of progress can be lost simply because one never fully acknowledged something as a mistake, continued to do it, and repeatedly found excuses to cover up regret and doubt whenever they arose. All the while continuing to believe that one is "taking the training seriously."

My reasoning is that if it's a minor mistake, I'd be fueling excessive guilt by obsessing and making a big deal out of it. But if it's a big mistake, a breach of precepts for example, there may be a legitimate need and benefit to confessing it to somebody, and thereby helping you 'process' it- because if you don't it could dominate your mind and warp your perspective, and in turn endanger your spiritual practice.

When the mind really wants you to continue a certain bad habit, it will try to gaslight you into believing that seeing it as a fault constitutes “excessive guilt.” Guilt is an issue only when it gets to the point of self-hatred and self-contempt, since that won’t help you to prevent the mistake. It might even convince you to make it again because “who cares, I’m worthless anyway.”

The right sense of shame comes out of a sense of dignity and having high aspirations, and it’s not concerned with revolving around the past but with doing better starting right now. If there is a compulsion to turn the acknowledgement of a fault into self-hatred, that’s a time to practice the same not giving in to unbeneficial pressures as usual, without covering up that which is true and factual (that you made a mistake and better not repeat it). That would be an example of the middle way.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-01 12:22:42 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

But I suppose it’s preferable if it’s in person and maybe even someone who can hold you accountable?

Yes, but something is definitely better than nothing. Merely revealing things to someone with whom you’d feel a sense of shame regarding the transgression will show you the extent to which it’s possible to cover things up *from yourself*. Keeping it to yourself, you will likely not realize it, regardless of how sincere and heedful you think you are. Even though you might still acknowledge it as a fault, it can still be a rather abstract, arms-length recognition (and you can be sure of that if the fault happens again).

And how about on the days when I keep the 8 precepts, like on Uposatha day, if I for example eat more than needed and indulge in some form of entertainment, should I confess that to somebody as well?

If you’re clear that you ate past a certain point out of indulgence in tastes and not hunger, then yes. But in itself, there’s no fixed amount of food you should have on an Uposatha day as long as it’s within the allowable time. You stop as soon as you’re no longer physically hungry, enduring and seeing through whatever doubts might come up (in either direction: tempting you to eat more or to irrationally find fault with eating a perfectly reasonable amount just for dispelling hunger).

As for entertainment, yes, that’s worth confessing because it’s categorically breaking a precept you’ve undertaken even if only that one day (and, as I wrote, that heightened restraint should naturally bleed into your whole week if you did it rightly).

## **Private vs public precepts**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** tejveer 2025-03-29 15:13:49

I’ve been trying to keep the precepts in private for all this time, and never really declaring to others that I’m keeping what I’m keeping. I realized a few months ago, that my



justification for not announcing them publicly was fear and disapproval of others.

It was only a few weeks ago that I realized that my compulsive search for the ‘perfect proof’ for the validity of the Dhamma was a symptom of this fear of disapproval of others. In my mind, if I’d found a justification for the teachings which was as indubitable as mathematical proofs, then I could confront others about what I’m doing without having to fear any criticism. Or even if I were in fact criticized, the idea was that if I had a proof of such degree of indubitability regarding the efficacy of the path, then the criticism wouldn’t make a difference to me either way since they would be undoubtedly wrong in it. It was a sort of protective measure that I could fall back on to, that I hadn’t been explicitly realizing as such until just now.

Now that I’ve been restraining the compulsive tendency to seek justification for everything, the fact that I fear and shy away from disclosing my intentions is becoming more and more apparent.

I’m celibate and intend to remain celibate for the rest of my entire life, and have no issue in that. But, I haven’t disclosed this to my family even though we’re Indian and the idea of celibacy isn’t something they aren’t familiar with. In announcing my celibacy publicly to my family, I would implicitly be distancing myself from the religion I’m born into (Sikhism) because it’s doctrinally the opposite from everything taught in it. This isn’t too much of an issue for my closest relationships (mom, sister) since they’ve assimilated well into Western society where none of the religious doctrines are really relevant (but there are of course other concerns like my mom expecting me to have kids in the future). I’d personally abandoned the religion doctrinally many years ago, but it acts as a kind of social glue between my family and relatives. Announcing celibacy, and for example, not eating and socializing for the sake of pleasure, would most certainly boot me out of that cohesive social structure held together by the religious doctrines I’d be implicitly rejecting.

I don’t fear being booted out of the social group, but rather the disapproval that precedes it.

The same is the case for jobs. When I last had a job, during lunch times when I wouldn’t be able to go out for a walk alone, I would have to sit with others and they would inquire into my interests. At that time, I was still not keeping the entertainment precepts in the manner I am now, so I would talk to them about the music I liked and so on. But there were other subjects they would talk about like clothing, restaurants, relationships, etc., that I had no concern with, and I would get weird looks and jokes made of me since I was so ‘inexperienced’ in that area.

It’s very odd because in my entire life I’ve never really cared significantly about doing what the group did, or what was ‘trendy’, and was always, from others’ perspective, the oddball doing my own things. Nonetheless, in nearly all the social situations I’ve been in, I had quite a great reputation and a lot of friends, and I made sure it would stay that way.

But acting in line with the Dhamma is destroying any possible basis that could exist for maintaining such a reputation. I’m now at a point where I can officially say I have no friends, and I’m content with that. Previously, I would still have people I’d occasionally

talk to, but now as I've given up even music and the last bits of entertainment like youtube and so on, there's no basis for any relation with any people. The only thing I can imagine left connecting me to the world is my mind's enjoyment of my family's safety and comfort, but that too is something that I intend on reversing.

But now I imagine in social situations, my reputation will dampen even more as any social currency (other highly reputed friends, hobbies others would like, being inquisitive of others, etc.) I previously had is in the process of destruction. And it is very scary.

My question is, how do I train myself in regards to overcoming this fear of losing reputation? The fear of having to disclose my private intentions?

Currently, I don't go to university since the lecturers are subpar, so I'm home alone most of the time just studying or contemplating. Should I try to join social groups to expose myself to potential disapproval? I can stay alone like this all the time, but then I won't really be able to discern the mind's inclination towards reputation, and as such, not really have any opportunity to train amidst that.

I could also just 'expose' myself to my family by mentioning the fact that I'm keeping the precepts, but that would be such an immense pressure all of a sudden that I don't think I will be able to handle it. Is there an equivalent 'gradual' manner of working towards that point?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-30 05:06:58**

My question is, how do I train myself in regards to overcoming this fear of losing reputation? The fear of having to disclose my private intentions?

By first of all not acting out of the fear if and when it comes up.

Should I try to join social groups to expose myself to potential disapproval? I can stay alone like this all the time, but then I won't really be able to discern the mind's inclination towards reputation, and as such, not really have any opportunity to train amidst that.

This sounds precisely like your mind trying to bait you into acting out of the fear. Even if going out leads to learning how to successfully defend yourself against criticisms for the rest of your life, since that was an action rooted in the fear, you will remain emotionally invested in what people think about you, and the *liability* to the fear will remain unchanged.

You "prove" that you can handle it by seeing that fear and concern about reputation have already arisen *here and now*, before you've even met anyone, and not allowing them to be your motivation for doing anything. If that means that you will not be able to prepare yourself for people's future criticisms, so be it. That would not be a problem at all if not for the fear, which would eventually disappear if you stopped giving in to it.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-01 11:40:18 (in reply to a comment not included)**

This is a good example of why it's necessary to question one's intentions.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-02 02:33:35 (in reply to a comment not included)**

The character of the action is not determined by a combination of the intentions lying behind it but by which of those intentions you emphasize at the end of the day. So if you bought the books truly just because you wanted to access their contents, that would be fine, but it would mean relinquishing the possibility of deliberately revealing them—unless a different reason for making them known arrives that is unrelated to getting recognition.

Often times, the elation towards an action dissipates when you actually do it with a right intention and put aside all wrong ones. Just as a child might not be enthusiastic about the very same trip anymore after learning that there won't be a treat at any point.

**New Wiki Page: Virtue and the Seven Precepts**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu\_Anigha 2025-03-28 16:37:04

<https://www.reddit.com/r/HillsideHermitage/wiki/index/>

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-29 02:38:36**

For some reason, the Sutta quotes had been cut short. References (searchable on the page): T 54, MĀ 133, AN 10.62, SN 3.25, MN 78, AN 7.67, AN 9.41, MN 61, MN 9.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-29 04:29:55 (in reply to a comment not included)**

For incelibacy precept you say “Thinking sexual thoughts”, as I understand here it should be “delighting in...”

That was deliberate. Unlike the others, sexual thoughts in particular cannot be had without automatic delight.

- For some of the precepts you add “Deliberate” in front and others don't have this, maybe good to add this in front of all of them for consistency.

It was also deliberate for the ones that don't have it.

I've implemented the other suggestions. Thanks.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-29 07:01:21 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Surely you have practical things to take care of in daily life?

The point is not that you should try to keep yourself occupied. You should resolve to be without engaging activities some of the time (basically anything apart from walking and sitting) because that's when your internal states can become clearer. But unless you're pretty close to Arahantship, it will be hard to do nothing at all for more than a couple of hours a day without losing perspective and falling into wrong views/attitudes. It means you'll be forcing yourself to avoid neutral activities, thinking they must be rooted in craving somehow. By assuming you already see where craving is and that you just need to stick to that denial mechanically, you won't be looking for where it actually is.

Instead, look at the inclinations of mind enduring behind whatever you're doing and make that your guide. If an activity is unwholesome, you'll see that it's directly inclining the mind towards sensual desire, ill will, and eventually breaking precepts. It's pretty obvious when that's happening, but you look the other way and allow those pressures to gain momentum.

As I wrote, you will make mistakes and misjudge your intentions sometimes, but that's fine. That's the only way you will concretely learn the distinction between wholesome and unwholesome. It's not fine when the mistake entails breaking a precept, since that's full-blown carelessness that doesn't come out of a simple lack of clarity about your intentions.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-30 12:12:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Would occasionally delivering those products as a truck driver or working in a restaurant or supermarket that sells those products qualify?

It depends. When it comes to intoxicants, live animals, poisons, and weapons, being responsible for personally handing them to customers or directly or indirectly encouraging them to buy them (marketing) would in itself be an issue. Delivering or promoting the purchase of meat from animals slaughtered by the company you work for would also be problematic. If the meat comes from elsewhere and is not commissioned specifically for your employer, then it's fine.

Such livelihood would hinder your Dhamma practice—not because of external ethical considerations but because it implicates your intention. The Dhamma is concerned solely with the state of your own mind. You would be implicitly condoning the harmful actions of others, and that is bound to be rooted in delusion (not acknowledging what's factual) at the very least.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-04-01 18:15:36 (in reply to a comment not included)**

I wouldn't see it as an issue. You do want to be careful about what books you personally read if you want to tame your mind, but working at a library is on a different level than being a musician, actor, or someone in "showbiz" in general (as promoter, producer, director, etc.)

**Is this a correct way of practicing?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** No-Spirit5082 2025-03-28 14:04:23

Ever since i started living by the 8 precepts (not to the letter but mostly) and practicing abandoning the attitude of sensuality, i find that i very naturally, or with little effort can be mindful in this sort of way - when im walking in the forest, im aware of my body moving, aware of sounds around me, wind blowing on my face, i feel present and my mind is naturally quiet with little thought.

Should i intentionally cultivate this way of practice?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-29 03:25:19**

Sounds like precisely the wrong direction to go in. That quietude is probably based on the novelty of living a simpler life externally and will not last long. The pressure of the hindrances will become apparent again at some point (more likely than not, it's already there; it's just overlooked), and that's where the work lies.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-30 03:27:07 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Because it's not like you have a choice. The hindrances never go into limbo. If you just practice something because you find it calming or enjoyable, not examining what the attitude behind it is, you will be under the thumb of one hindrance or the other. That means nothing of fundamental value will be developed and right understanding will not arise (since the hindrances are what block it).

**I'm trying to reach the point of keeping 8 precepts all the time.**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** 4NTN8FP 2025-03-27 00:28:15

The precepts which I currently do not adhere to every day are the 6th and 7th. I've taken the approach of making small steps towards an eventual 100% adherence to these particular precepts. For example, I am intermittent fasting, but still eating after noon because

I can't / don't eat breakfast. I am working on cutting out snacking and only eating at two meal times/day.

As for the 7th precept, it's the entertainment part that I'm still not 100% untangled from. I've gotten to where I will not engage with entertainment during the work week, and I don't ever listen to music. Watching shows is now almost always something I do with family but not on my own.

Not to overthink or be too impatient, but part of me is wondering if this approach might lead to a perpetual state of making small allowances here and there to break some of the precepts. Am I better off just going all in and not working gradually at it?

Another thing, seeing that I am not a monastic, have a young child who enjoys watching movies and shows with me occasionally, and we eat dinner together... should I be more realistic and wait until her dependency on me is over and she is living out on her own before taking some of these renunciation precepts on more full time?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-28 04:34:33**

My advice would be to first of all cease to watch shows out of your own interest. In such cases it's worse, and there isn't even an excuse for it.

More broadly, it's important to have the right context towards the precepts. It's not about fulfilling an imposed duty but about abstaining from things that run counter to what you hope to develop. Thus, when it comes to the core of the training—not acting out of lust, ill will, or desire for distraction—your aspirations should not be guided by whether you're a monastic or not but by how high liberation is on your priority list. It's not about who you are now but about what you want to achieve.

So, work on developing a perception of danger in regard to breaking the precepts so that your reasons for keeping them become more accurate and solid. Aim to see for yourself *why* the very performance of those actions is *inescapably* unbeneficial\* for your own mind until that recognition is so concrete that it overshadows anything others might say or do. That's when you're established in the precepts (and that clarity can only be developed on the basis of already keeping them).

\* As discussed here, the food and sleep precepts are not on the same level as the others, but if all the others are in place then it's well worth adding them.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-28 04:45:31 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

True, but the often overlooked caveat is that both in the male and female\* cases, the lay disciples to emulate were anāgāmis.

So, in an attempt to emulate the conduct of those exemplary disciples, one would at the very least be celibate and abstinent from sensual pursuits in general.

\* There are no details on Khujjuttarā in the early texts, but since the other three disciples were all anāgāmis, she likely was too.

## Seven Grains of Sand (The Suffering of a Sotāpanna)

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu\_Anigha 2025-03-25 16:43:55

This is a translation of **SĀ 1178** and **SĀ-2:92**, two parallel discourses from the *Samyukta Āgama*—a collection of early Buddhist scriptures closely related to the Pali *Samyutta Nikāya*. Today, the *Samyukta Āgama* survives in three distinct Classical Chinese translations made by different groups at different times based on lost Indian originals. One (SĀ) is complete, while the other two (SĀ-2 and SĀ-3) are partial translations.

Their content serves to illustrate a point often made in our teachings that I’ve attempted to clarify a number of times here. Namely, that the suffering a *sotāpanna* is liable to is minuscule compared to the *puthujjana*.

In the same vein, further below I added a translation of SĀ 891, which unlike the Pali version SN 13.10, makes no mention of “at most seven [lives],” nor depicts the Buddha with “seven grains” on his hand, instead using a different comparison altogether. As we shall see below, this appears to be an addition to the Pali rather than an omission from the Chinese.

SN 15.10 is a Pali text that discusses stream-entry undeniably in the context of *saṃsāra*, and we can see that though the message might appear the same as SN 13.10 at first glance, there are subtle and important differences. Firstly, SN 15.10 (and its Chinese parallels) does not say anything about *suffering* proper; it focuses on the fact that, for a *puthujjana*, there is no end in sight to birth and death, while for a *sotāpanna* there is.

On the other hand, both SN 13.10 and SĀ 891 agree in explicitly speaking not only in terms of *dukkha* but also quantitatively, with SN 13.10 referring to “the mass of suffering that was exhausted and worn away”, and SĀ 891 mentioning “various vast and immeasurable sufferings cut off at their root, unable to arise again” (adding the simile of a palm tree with its head severed that appears in several Pali Suttas, emphasizing that it’s not merely an ability to overcome arisen suffering). Both compare this large quantity with a minuscule amount representing the suffering that remains for a *sotāpanna*.

We can thus see that the distinction between ordinary person and stream-enterer is being presented from two angles that are not strictly equivalent: although the amount of births explicitly mentioned in SN 15.10 will in practice likely correlate with more net suffering, in theory one being could suffer the same “amount” over very many lifetimes in a higher realm than another being over a single lifetime in a lower realm. If a *sotāpanna* continued to suffer as much—or sometimes even more than—a *puthujjana* but had only seven existences remaining, this would of course still be an extremely significant achievement worth striving for. But through the lens of SĀ 891, the *sotāpanna* is no longer liable to anywhere near the same amount of suffering *at any given time*, even when encountering unfortunate circumstances (and this aligns with the Arrow Sutta). This also would

by itself—without any fixed limit on future rebirths—be an extremely significant achievement worth striving for. In both cases, the deal presented in SN 56.35 seems perfectly sensible. In reality of course, *both* of these are defining characteristics of a stream-enterer, and they both originate from one and the same cause: having understood the four noble truths.

Given that the language in SN 13.10 more closely reflects the latter aspect of stream-entry than the former, it seems that its original focus was on liability to suffering—similar to its closest equivalent, SĀ 891. However, at some point, there appears to have been an effort to shoehorn in the theme of rebirth found in SN 15.10 and other canonical texts that emphasize the seven lives aspect. This likely occurred because, as later interpretations—chiefly those of the Pali commentaries, whose spirit and underlying assumptions shape virtually all modern Theravādin traditions—became the norm, it may have even been sincerely viewed as a textual error for the original SN 13.10 to suggest that a stream-enterer’s suffering had been reduced to *one* sesame seed compared to the Himalayas.

After all, the only reasons for thinking that SN 13.10 is about rebirth are **(1)** the phrase “that is to say, the fact of having seven lives at most (*yadidaṃ sattakkhattuparamatā*),” which appears at the very end of a passage that in itself does not refer to or hint at rebirth, meaning the phrase could easily be an insertion, and **(2)** the mention of specifically *seven* mustard-sized pebbles (*satta sāsapamattiyo pāsāṇasakkharā*) rather than *one*—like the *one* drop of water on the tip of a hair depicted in SĀ 891—which could also have been inserted later to align with the other mention of the number seven. If we remove these two arguably unnatural references to the number seven, the text becomes identical in essence to SĀ 891.

What’s more, since the comparison with the Himalayas was never substituted, SN 13.10 ends up containing a technical flaw uncharacteristic of the Pali canon: equating suffering with time in saṃsāra and then comparing the puthujjana’s suffering to the Himalāyas implies their time in saṃsāra, although very large, *has an eventual end*. But this is precisely not the case. In early Buddhism, for as long as beings are ignorant and fettered by craving, there will not be an end of suffering for them. The idea that all beings are inevitably destined for Nibbāna is a later development, made possible by very different notions of what Nibbāna and the path to it are.

This is one of a sizeable number of instances where the Chinese version of a text appears to be more authentic than the Pali version, and this might be because the Āgamas, translated into Chinese around the time of Buddhaghosa (4th-5th century), were never as widely engaged with—and thus modified, intentionally or otherwise—as the Pali texts, which have been used by a living tradition for two millenia. This is because Mahāyāna dominated China for most of its history, apparently already since the 5th century, and thus these texts were likely scorned and labeled “Hīnayāna,” yet they were still preserved.

It is also noteworthy that the bulk of the manuscripts used to compile the modern Pali canon apparently date back to no earlier than the 17th century. The congruency between the Chinese and Pali collections suggests that any changes made to the latter by the Theravāda tradition over the last millenium and a half were not so drastic so as to be glaringly



obvious. However, as this example illustrates, there can be subtle yet impactful differences in meaning between the two versions of a discourse created by the presence or absence of just a couple of words. # Saṃyukta Āgama 1178

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Buddha was residing in the Ambara Garden in the country of Mithilā.

There was a Brahmin woman named Vasitthi, who had lost six sons in succession. Grieving for her children, she lost her mind, wandering naked with disheveled hair along the roads, until she arrived at the Ambara Garden in Mithilā.

The World-Honored One was surrounded by a great assembly, delivering a discourse. When Vasitthi saw the Buddha from afar, she regained her senses, felt shame and embarrassment, and sat down modestly with her body drawn in.

The World-Honored One said to Venerable Ānanda, “Take your outer robe and give it to the Brahmin woman Vasitthi so she may wear it and listen to the Dharma.” Venerable Ānanda, following the Buddha’s instruction, took the robe and gave it to her to wear.

After the Brahmin woman put on the robe, she approached the Buddha, paid homage with her head at his feet, and sat to one side.

The World-Honored One taught her, showing, instructing, illuminating, and gladdening her. Following the Buddha’s usual method of teaching—progressing step by step—she developed pure faith, took the Three Refuges, and, hearing the Buddha’s words, rejoiced and expressed delight. She then paid homage and departed.

Later, when her seventh son suddenly passed away, the laywoman Vasitthi did not weep, grieve, or suffer in anguish. Her husband, the Brahmin, spoke a verse to her:

*When your earlier sons died,  
Grief for them brought you suffering;  
Day and night without food or drink,  
Even to the point of madness.  
Now, with the seventh son’s death,  
Why do you feel no sorrow?*

Vasitthi, the laywoman, replied with a verse to her husband:

*Children and grandchildren number in the thousands,  
Born from the union of causes and conditions;  
Through the long night of time, they pass away,  
And so it is with you and me.  
Descendants and kin are countless,*

Born in various places,  
 Where they devour one another in turn.  
 Knowing the nature of birth,  
 Why should one grieve?  
 I have understood liberation,  
 The nature of birth and death,  
 And no longer feel sorrow,  
 Thanks to entering the Buddha's true teaching.  
 Her husband, the Brahmin, praised her with a verse:  
 Never before have I heard such a teaching,  
 Yet now I hear it from you.  
 Where did you hear the Dharma,  
 That you no longer grieve for your son?  
 Vasitthi replied with a verse:  
 Today, the Perfectly Enlightened One  
 Resides in the country of Mithilā,  
 In the Ambara Garden,  
 Forever free from all suffering.  
 He expounds all suffering,  
 The cause of suffering, its cessation,  
 And the Noble Eightfold Path,  
 Leading peacefully to Nirvana!  
 He is my great teacher,  
 And I deeply rejoice in his true teaching.  
 Having understood the true Dharma,  
 which can dispel your sorrows.  
 Her husband, the Brahmin, responded with a verse:  
 I too shall go  
 To the Ambara Garden in Mithilā,  
 Where the World-Honored One

*Will dispel my grief for my son.*

The laywoman replied with a verse:

*Behold the Perfectly Enlightened One,*

*His body radiant like soft gold;*

*He tames the untamed,*

*Guiding countless beings across the sea of existence.*

The Brahmin prepared a horse-drawn chariot and set out for the Ambara Garden in Mithilā. Seeing the World-Honored One from afar, his faith and joy increased, and he approached the Great Teacher.

The Great Teacher spoke verses, opening his Dharma eye, revealing the Four Noble Truths—suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path—directing him toward Nirvana. He immediately saw the Dharma and attained the non-return state. Having understood the Dharma, he requested ordination.

The Brahmin was then ordained. He dwelt alone in seclusion, contemplating diligently, and eventually attained Arhantship. The World-Honored One declared: “On the third night, he attained the Three Knowledges.”

After attaining the Three Knowledges, the Buddha instructed him: “Send the charioteer back with the chariot to inform Vasitthi, the laywoman, to rejoice. Say to her: ‘The Brahmin went to see the World-Honored One, gained pure faith, and devoted himself to the Great Teacher. The Buddha taught him, opened his Dharma eye, revealed the Noble Truths of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the Noble Eightfold Path, leading to Nirvana, and he attained the non-return state. Having understood the Dharma, he sought ordination. The World-Honored One declared: “On the third night, he fully attained the Three Knowledges.”’”

The charioteer, following the instruction, returned swiftly. When Vasitthi, the laywoman, saw the charioteer returning with an empty chariot from afar, she called out and asked: “Did the Brahmin see the Buddha? Did the Buddha teach the Dharma, open his Dharma eye, and reveal the Noble Truths?”

The charioteer replied: “The Brahmin saw the World-Honored One, gained pure faith, and devoted himself to the Great Teacher. The Buddha opened his Dharma eye, taught the Four Noble Truths, and he attained the non-return state. Having understood the Dharma, he sought ordination and now contemplates diligently. The World-Honored One declared: ‘On the third night, he fully attained the Three Knowledges.’”

The laywoman rejoiced in her heart and said to the charioteer: “The chariot and horses are yours, and I grant you an additional thousand coins for delivering this good news: ‘The Brahmin has become a monk and attained the Three Knowledges,’ which brings me great joy.”

The charioteer replied: “What use do I have for chariots, horses, or money? Return the

chariot, horses, and money to the laywoman. I will now return to the Brahmin and follow him in ordination.”

The laywoman said: “If that is your intention, go quickly. Soon you too will attain what he has—the Three Knowledges—and follow him in ordination.”

The charioteer said: “So it shall be, laywoman! Just as he ordained, so shall I.”

The laywoman said: “Your father has ordained, and you will follow him. Soon I too will go after you. Like a great dragon soaring freely in the open sky, with other dragons, dragon sons, and dragon daughters following, so too will I, taking up the robe and bowl, living simply and easily satisfied.” The charioteer responded: “Laywoman! If it is so, your aspiration will surely be fulfilled. Soon I will see you with few desires, content, carrying robe and bowl, eating almsfood discarded by others, with shaven head and dyed robes, having cut off attachment to form, feeling, perception, and consciousness, free from greed and bondage, and extinguished all outflows.”

The Brahmin, his charioteer, Vasitthi the laywoman, and her granddaughter Sundarī, all ordained and reached the end of suffering.

# SĀ-2.92

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Buddha was staying in the Amrapālī Grove in the kingdom of Mithilā.

At that time, a Brahmin woman named Vāsithī had recently lost her sixth child. Overwhelmed by grief for her lost child, her mind became disordered, and she ran about naked and frantic, eventually arriving at the Amrapālī Grove in Mithilā.

At that moment, the Blessed One was surrounded by a vast assembly, teaching the Dharma.

Then, Vāsithī, the Brahmin woman, saw the Blessed One from a distance and regained her composure, squatting on the ground in shame.

The Buddha said to Ānanda:

“Give her a nun’s robe, and bring it here; I will teach her the Dharma.”

Ānanda received the command and provided the nun’s robe.

Vāsithī, the Brahmin woman, quickly put on the robe and approached the Buddha, bowing her head to his feet.

At that time, the Blessed One taught her various aspects of the Dharma, showing, instructing, and delighting her, as the Buddhas of old had done—speaking of generosity, morality, and the heavens, explaining that desire is the root of impurity, suffering, and affliction, while liberation is true joy.

Then, the Blessed One expounded the Dharma broadly, knowing her sincere wish to free herself from the fetters of hindrance, and taught her the Four Noble Truths: suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path.

This Vāsithī was intelligent and insightful, able to grasp the teachings upon hearing them, like a clean white cloth easily taking dye.

In that very moment, seated there, she perceived the Four Noble Truths, saw the Dharma, attained the Dharma, understood it, and crossed beyond doubt to the other shore. She realized the Dharma herself, no longer relying on others' teachings, her faith unshaken, fearless in the Buddha's doctrine. Rising from her seat, she joined her palms, bowed to the Buddha, and said:

“Blessed One! I have now crossed beyond the three evil realms. For the rest of my life, I take refuge in the Three Jewels as a lay follower, vowing never to kill, maintaining pure faith, refraining from theft, sexual misconduct, false speech, and intoxicants—such is my commitment.”

Then, having heard the Dharma, the woman rejoiced, bowed to the Buddha, and departed.

At a later time, Vāsithī lost her seventh child, yet she felt neither sorrow nor distress, nor did she dwell on it or run about naked and frantic as before.

At that time, her husband, the Brahmin Bharadvāja, spoke in verse, asking:

*“When you lost your children before,  
You mourned with unbearable anguish,  
Your heart entangled in sorrowful memories,  
For a long time you neither ate nor drank.  
Now, with your seventh child fallen ill and passed away,  
You, a devoted mother,  
Why do you not grieve or dwell on it?”*

Then Vāsithī replied to her husband in verse:

*“Through countless eons,  
I have taken bodies without end,  
Due to attachment and love,  
My children and descendants are beyond count.  
In every place I took birth,  
Losses were never few,  
In the vast wilderness of birth and death,  
I have endured endless suffering.  
I have understood birth and death,  
The destinations of coming and going,  
Thus, today,  
I harbor no grief or attachment.”*

Her Brahmin husband responded in verse:

*“What you have said,  
I have never heard before.*

*From whom did you gain this insight,  
that you are able to cast aside your sorrows?"*

Then Vāsithī answered in verse:

*"Brahmin, know this:  
In days past, the three Buddhas,  
In Mithilā, in the Amrapālī Grove,  
Taught the cessation of all suffering,  
And the path to end it,  
Cultivating the Eightfold Noble Path,  
Leading to peace and Nirvana."*

The Brahmin then spoke in verse:

*"I, too, now wish to go  
To the Amrapālī Grove,  
To ask the Blessed One  
To relieve my pain of longing for my child."*

Vāsithī replied in verse:

*"The Buddha's body shines like pure gold,  
His halo radiates a fathom around,  
He has forever severed all afflictions,  
Ferrying beings across the stream of birth and death.  
Such a great guide,  
Able to tame all,  
Transforms all sentient beings,  
Thus he is called the True Deliverer.  
You should hasten now  
To the presence of that Blessed One."*

Hearing his wife's words, the Brahmin rejoiced and leapt with joy. He immediately prepared his chariot and went to the grove. Seeing the Blessed One's majestic radiance from afar, his reverence doubled. Upon arriving, he bowed and sat to one side.

At that time, the Blessed One, with his mind-reading ability, observed the man's earnest heart and immediately taught him the Four Noble Truths—suffering, its origin, its cessation, and the path—along with the Eightfold Path and other teachings leading to Nirvana.

Hearing this Dharma, the Brahmin awakened to the Four Noble Truths, attained insight into the Dharma, and sought to become a monk. The Buddha permitted it.

After becoming a monk, he practiced diligently without negligence, and within three nights, he attained the three higher knowledges. The Buddha declared him an Arhat, thus renaming him "Well-Born."

Having attained the three knowledges, he instructed his charioteer, Bharati, saying:

“Take the jeweled chariot you drove and return home. Tell Vāsithī:  
‘You should rejoice for me. Why? Because the Buddha has taught me the Four Truths, allowed me to become a monk, and I have gained the three knowledges. Therefore, you should have pure faith in me.’”

The charioteer, Bharati, returned home with the chariot. Seeing it return, Vāsithī asked the charioteer:

“Did the Brahmin meet the Buddha?”

The charioteer replied:

“The Brahmin, while seated, perceived the Four Noble Truths. Having seen them, he sought to become a monk, and the Buddha allowed it. After becoming a monk, within three nights, he attained Arhatship.”

Then the woman said to the charioteer:

“You have brought this good news. I shall reward you with a horse and a thousand gold coins.”

The charioteer replied:

“I do not need a horse or gold coins. I wish to go to the Buddha and hear the wondrous Dharma.”

Vāsithī said:

“If that is so, it is truly excellent. If you become a monk, you will quickly attain the path to Arhatship.”

Vāsithī then spoke to her daughter:

“You should manage the household well and enjoy the five sense pleasures. I wish to become a nun.”

Her daughter, Sundarī, replied to her mother:

“My father has abandoned the five sense pleasures to seek the path as a monk. I, too, shall follow and become a nun, letting go of attachment to my brothers and kin. Just as a great elephant departs and the young elephant follows, so I will follow, becoming a nun, holding an alms bowl and begging for food. I can practice the easy-to-sustain way, not the difficult one.”

Vāsithī said:

“What you desire is truly good and auspicious. Your wish will surely be fulfilled. I see that soon you will exhaust all desires and be free from all fetters.”

Thus, the Brahmin Bharadvāja, Vāsithī, and Sundarī all followed one another, becoming monks and nuns together, each attaining the end of all suffering.

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Buddha was staying in Śrāvastī, in the Jeta Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍada's park.

At that time, the Blessed One said to the monks:

“Suppose there is a lake, vast and long, fifty yojanas wide and equally deep. If a man were to dip the tip of a single hair into that lake water, what do you think, monks? Is the water in the lake greater, or is the drop of water on the tip of the man's hair greater?”

The monks said to the Buddha:

“Blessed One! The drop on the tip of the man's hair is exceedingly small, while the lake water is immeasurable, thousands, millions, billions of times greater—there is no comparison.”

The Buddha said to the monks:

“For one who fully sees the truth, with perfect right view, the disciples of the Blessed One who realize the fruit of truth, with unwavering certainty, have at that moment already severed and understood, cutting off the root—like chopping off the head of a palm tree—so it will not grow again. The manifold sufferings they have severed are vast and immeasurable, like the water of that great lake, while the suffering that remains is like the drop of water on the tip of a hair.”

Having spoken this sutra, the monks, hearing what the Buddha taught, rejoiced and put it into practice.

Just as with the drop of water on the tip of a hair, so it is with the drop on the tip of a blade of grass or a twig.

Just as with the water of the lake, so it is with the Sarodattagā, the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Sarabhū, the Irāvati, the Mahī, and the great ocean—likewise it is said.

Having spoken this sutra, the monks, hearing what the Buddha taught, rejoiced and put it into practice.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-26 05:20:40 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Does this perhaps imply that number of 7 is more of an approximation, similar in the sense to how we say people in our current era are expected to live between 70-80 years (with of course some people dying prior or longer to this estimate)?

That's not unlikely. The number seven is everywhere in the Suttas, often in oddly specific ways. So in this context too, it could just be a way of saying “several.” And of course, it's



not that a sotāpanna *will* have seven existences. That's just if they are maximally negligent and probably of slow understanding too.

But if that perception of seeing the conditions for practice doesn't change, then wouldn't it be possible for a sotapanna to be stuck at their stage of ignorance through indefinite lifetimes until they finally make the decision to pursue the path?

No, because they would at times have to get weary of the little suffering they're still subject to (which compared to an Arahant or even anāgāmi is not insignificant). Especially in the human realm that weariness would arise rather frequently, and so they would do the work at least intermittently. So even if they're very heedless, it's not like it would be possible to put the Dhamma aside indefinitely. Otherwise, there would indeed be no reason for a guaranteed end.

On the other hand, with the mind inclining towards renunciation (the stream), it is said that they will be carried by it even if they want to resist at certain points. So I suppose this culminates into my other question: what would prevent the sotapanna from swimming indefinitely against the stream? Evidently they are not directionless (samsara), but at the same time, it seems possible that they could resist the idea of pursuing renunciation indefinitely. What would eventually make them "tire out" and stop trying to swim against the stream?

Only a puthujjana can deliberately reject Nibbāna, since that requires holding a wrong view.

If a sotāpanna is knowingly negligent, they simply lack the motivation to make further effort—they don't ever actually *want* to postpone Arahantship. You can lack the motivation to stop eating junk food even though you categorically don't want to be overweight and would shed all the fat immediately if you could.

And that's what would, even in the most negligent of all cases, prevent an indefinite stalling—right view. Being unable to hold the view that being overweight is fine (that craving and existence are worth maintaining), which the average puthujjana still has. A learned puthujjana can abandon that view, but without understanding for themselves what craving and existence are (which comes from seeing the signs of the mind), they won't be carried by the stream and are liable to ruin still—even to going back to the old view at some point.

## Question about the 8 Precepts & Hunger from Asthma Medication

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** SevereJury8 2025-03-25 03:04:45

Hello,

I've recently started practicing the 8 precepts, and I've run into a bit of a dilemma I was hoping to get some guidance on.

I have asthma and need to take a steroid medication regularly. One of the side effects is a noticeable amplification of hunger — it's not constant, but when it comes on, it feels quite sharp and intense. I've been doing my best to stick to the one-meal-a-day rule, but this side effect sometimes makes that challenging.

My question is: how should I work with this in a way that stays in line with the spirit of the precepts and sense restraint?

On one hand, it feels like I'm genuinely hungry at times, and eating a second small meal (late morning or early afternoon) seems like it would relieve a physical need rather than indulge a craving. On the other hand, I don't want to start bending the rules and convincing myself of exceptions every time something gets uncomfortable — especially if that discomfort is workable with patient endurance.

Is there a way to distinguish between eating to relieve a medication-induced hunger and eating out of desire? Can one eat twice a day without falling into craving, or is that considered a violation of the precept in formal practice regardless of the reason?

Appreciate any guidance or reflections on how to skillfully navigate this.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-25 04:26:35**

If the hunger is medication-induced, then it doesn't signify that your body actually requires calories, so you could just see it as harmless discomfort to learn how not to resist.

But I wouldn't try to be perfectly strict with this precept yet, especially if you don't see yourself being fully established in all the other, much more essential ones. There's also nothing about dawn and noon that directly relates to virtue; the time in between was most likely just the most easily recognizable, reasonably-sized period back when there were no clocks. And even for monastics, any amount of meals is technically allowable within that period.

On top of that, monks initially ate all throughout the day, and a higher percentage of them were Arahants compared to later times (which is precisely why rules had to be introduced). That doesn't mean you shouldn't strive to keep the food precept, but it just goes to show that there's nothing inherently unwholesome about eating at any time of the day. It's just more likely to lead to wholesome states to not do so.

## **Why ever eat sweets?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok-Addition-7759 2025-03-24 16:20:59

One ought to be eating for the sake of this body, not for pleasure, just to keep this lump of matter healthy and comfortable. The pleasant contacts only last so long.

Wouldn't choosing to eat sweets, desserts, unhealthy stuff while healthier options are present categorically be acting out of sensual desire? Do all the Hillside monks eat in this manner? Probably not. I wouldn't fault them for however they eat, though, because I'm probably just missing something. I cannot imagine one who is properly eating in moderation according to my understanding of the way the Buddha spelled it out and the way Hillside teaches it reaching for an unhealthy option over a healthy one. And moderation (in the usual sense) isn't the middle way, so that's not the answer here, right?

But then again, I've heard Ven. Nyanamoli disparage the practice of not eating sugar. Probably because it's done for the wrong reasons and means you don't have to think about your intentions. The good intentions to reach for the sugar seem very limited.

For all my issues with food I've come to the conclusion that one meal a day is best and I can get all the calories I need for my lifestyle. That being the case nothing more is needed, and to eat more than that one meal would almost always be craving. I want sweets more than anything else, and will restrain myself even with fruit if I think the mind is craving them too much. This craving towards sweetness is probably stronger in me than most people. I might just have to give up sweets altogether and maybe even fruit for some time to help things normalize. I know abstaining from certain foods for periods of time can permanently alter your cravings and relationship with them. As things stand, my mind is untrustworthy regarding eating sweet things and that needs to be fixed, and at this point I don't want to eat the stuff if there's any doubt at all. It's certainly not always acting out of craving to eat fruit, and the tonics, while unnecessary for most individuals, do have their place if you're sick or truly famished or do hard work.

I've struggled with the triad of caffeine, chocolate, and sugar for a long time. I could go without two at a time, but always needed one. When I tried to abstain from all three I always fell back. I'm beyond caffeine and chocolate cravings now, but sugar remains and is more complicated. This really does seem the point for me where if I abstain from all three I suffer properly, without it being adulterated by management.

No topping up the body with what the 21st century thinks is normal to consume, or in amounts it thinks is normal.

Edit: Eating them as part of the one meal is definitely the optimal way to go. Eating sweets as part of a meal is always better for your teeth too. Venerable Subhara brings up some legitimate points about the food situation in monasteries in Asia (although I don't think curd being available justifies adding jaggery to it). And having been able to previously fully give up sugar, I can say that there is a huge difference with the way "the animal" behaves if you're eating even a little sugar and your mind is able to expect it each day (and get "topped up") and not eating any. The mind expecting something sweet at the end of it all is the main problem with Samsara after all, but it's just suffering arising and ceasing. I will say that this has been a point of pride for me, not eating sugar—until I fell from that one day a few months ago and over-indulged and have been struggling with it like an addiction since then. It was a good point of learning at least, seeing that I basically didn't train the mind at all in regard to it before, I just kept it pinned down until it gave up. As a former drug addict, I can see that the mindset of looking or hoping for a high has remained and it's just shifted its object. A few times now when I've had shifts in my

attitudes towards food and its purpose, those nights I would dream about drugs.

Edit 2: My thoughts about healthy and unhealthy could use some recalibration. All these veggies are so unnecessary spiced anyway and I often genuinely go for sweeter things because they're generally easier to digest. It needs to be approached with discernment each time. I can also trust my gut when it doesn't want something. If my stomach is telling me a bad feeling when I look at and consider certain foods I shouldn't eat them because my stomach is always right and I will feel uncomfortable or get sick from them. It doesn't necessarily follow everything it says "yes" to is good for me to eat, though.

A temporary break is also probably a good idea.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-25 04:03:41**

If you feel that for you personally the mind cannot remain stable when eating sugary foods (or engage in any particular action that isn't against the precepts), then sure, avoid that *for the time being*. But that's not a justification to develop the view that those things have to be rooted in craving. By holding such views, you obstruct yourself from concretely understanding what craving is and realizing that, for example, craving for sweets can come and go and is not a fixed phenomenon. Seeing craving as something that will always be there in regard to certain things implies thinking about it in near complete abstraction, a common mistake that is the main underpinning of self-mortification, i.e., the same problem in a new costume.

Apart from the precepts, progress is not measured by how many things you never do but by how little your mind cares about doing anything in particular. That doesn't mean you will never do anything, but that whatever you do will never be rooted in obsession internally and *thus* always be moderate and dispassionate.

So consumption of sweets (or of anything) would be fine if and only if your mind is internally uninvested and not by externally having a "justification" like being sick or famished (obsession can still be there regardless of that justification, and one would then feel absolved from restraining it). And people make mistakes on both accounts: they assume their mind can remain internally uninvested *always* and thus stop actually inspecting whether that's the case on every occasion, or they assume that the external reasons are the measure, and equally stop inspecting their minds internally.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-26 03:39:16 (in reply to a comment not included)**

I've also heard the instruction from HH to avoid unsuitable food.

Never literally, as far as I recall. Surely it was in some figurative sense.

These aren't the signs of the mind, right?

Certainly not.

Is there a way to purify these images?

Yes, these two recent talks go into it (1) (2). In general, make sure you're not trying to forcefully make them go away, as they're clearly not your direct doing. All you have to do is let your attention rest everywhere else but *there* for as long as such images are forcing themselves on you. And it doesn't matter how much they're forcing themselves on you; what matters is that *you* don't welcome them (and thereby implicitly ask them to stay).

Would results like sexual or wet dreams from consuming those foods be grounds to consider them unsuitable, as I have in the past?

No, because food cannot ultimately be the issue. Whatever sexual desire those foods can "trigger" wouldn't be there if you sufficiently and comprehensively practice restraint in regard to unwholesome images. It's like a fire that needs to be kept alive in some way; otherwise it would already have gone out.

It's hard enough as it is trying not to interpret them, or to not think of them as relating to some sort underlying mental structure, like being the appearance of a "real and existing but outside of experience" subconscious thing.

Such directions would also count as "opening the door" for the images and thus need to be restrained as well.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-27 02:54:40 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

At some point you have to upgrade your notion of unwholesome images to anything that is coming from the pressure of a hindrance, not just things rooted in blatant lust or ill will. And in order to be right, the non-engagement would have to be directed towards the hindrance aspect and not just be a blanket preference for less activity, since that preference itself could well be rooted in a hindrance.

When you take it far enough, that's basically how you end up practicing absorption rather than overcoming the hindrances: valuing less activity in and of itself with little to no discernment of what the unwholesome activities are.

## **Different levels of understanding of the aggregates. Evolution of your understanding through time.**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Silatigi1 2025-03-23 15:20:50

Hello everyone,

I found this comments on another forum and would be interested to get your reaction to it, and your first person understanding of your own aggregates too, how this understanding has evolved throughout your years of practice, and how the teaching of Hillside Hermitage has changed your view on these and continue to do so. I'm especially interested in what

happens to your first person phenomenological experience once sense restraint has been established for years and years compared to before it was so established.

“Re: A Review of Ven. Ñāṇavīra’s”Notes on Dhamma”

Post by chownah » Wed Jun 10, 2015 3:19 am

The totally uninstructed one just assumes a self....does not see aggregates etc. The suttas address this ignorance.

The barely instructed one knows of the aggregates and so denies the self....but fabricates an “ongoing being” by assembling the aggregates into a cohesive uber-aggregate which persists through time and calls it a “being”. Basically the barely instructed fabricates another kind of self with the main constituent being the aggregates....still it is a “self”. The suttas address this ignorance.

The bit more than barely instructed one denies the self called “ongoing being” (and the “self” without recourse to the aggregates) and fabricates ideas of a bunch of “ongoing aggregates” which each persist individually and act together over time....basically a bunch of little selves working together. The suttas address this ignorance.....

And the bit more than a bit more than barely instructed one sees the fabricated and lacking of self quality of the foregoing things but fabricates the six sense bases and their objects as persisting through time and basically thinks of them as persisting through time and each being even smaller selves than aggregates and fabricates them as objects and thus as selves....and here it is often the intellect which is latched onto and when this happens it is not uncommon for the bit of more than a bit of barely instructed one to slip on that slippery slope and come to rest right where they started with the deluded “discovery” that the intellect is “me”....(note: when at the aggregate stage they often grasp onto consciousness and slide down the same slippery slope to arrive at “me”).

As I see it these are some of the perils of our fabricated existences and the suttas address all of them because there are different people at various places and they all need instruction so there is instruction there which will better fit those various people. The suttas we are discussing address the second delusion of my list.”

Chownah”

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-25 03:34:38 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

yes yes and yes. This is a great motivation to keep them. In a way my curiosity will be helpful to make me keep the precepts (seeing the danger in the slightest fault),

That’s not quite how it works. Maybe reflecting on things like sickness, aging, and death would “help” you keep the precepts better by giving you a sense of urgency, but reflecting on concepts that will at this stage inevitably remain abstract like the five aggregates and dependent origination will not. Hence the Buddha recommended everyone regardless

CAN SOMEONE PLEASE EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE OF SLEEPING ON THE FLOOR AND THE PURPOSE OF EA

of their status to practice the former kind of contemplation, while the latter he generally only taught to monastics.

## Can someone please explain the purpose of sleeping on the floor and the purpose of eating one meal a day?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** No-Spirit5082 2025-03-22 21:51:37

I have taken up eating once a day (in the afternoon/evening) and sleeping on a yoga mat on the floor, but i dont yet understand the purpose of this. Can someone please explain? Or refer to a video where this is explained?

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-23 07:40:10

The purpose of eating one meal a day is that it will concretely highlight the difference between eating for pleasure, which goes almost unnoticed when you allow yourself to eat whenever you want, and eating for the sake of staying alive and able to practice..

You can think about it abstractly as much as you wish, but as long as you're eating at leisure, it's much harder to see that difference. Also, more pragmatically, someone striving for the cessation of craving should have no problem with the very mild discomfort of not eating for a measly 24 hours; otherwise the effects of their practice are highly questionable to say the least. Many people would see they're not nearly as advanced as they think if they realized that progress in the practice entails *actually* not being affected by unpleasant feelings.

It also won't inherently lead to weight loss. It's only hard to eat enough the very first few days. Most monks are overweight.

As for sleeping on the floor, a comfortable mattress generally induces you to sleep more than is actually necessary, and takes the experience of sleeping more in a sensual direction than it needs to be.

None of this means you should avoid all comfort; that attitude quickly becomes self-mortification. But these two ways of relinquishing comfort are too mild to take one in that direction by themselves. They are thus generally in line with the middle way. Still, the other six precepts are vastly more important; eating one meal a day and sleeping on the floor while not keeping the others (including celibacy) would be like giving up vaping but not cigarettes.

## Question about attachment

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-03-20 14:36:56

In one of the talks Ajah mentions "can you suffer if you don't want anything and don't have anything?" naturally I imagine anyone would answer "no", that sounds like freedom. So I

thought “can I not want anything and not be attached to what I have?” since that’s what’s causing me pain. Acquire only what is necessary as means for something else that is necessary. Like working, buying food or transport to be able to survive and not to delight in acquisition.

I assume monks also have plenty of things in a monastery, but they don’t delight in those things, don’t think about acquiring more even if the level of engagement could be the same as a layman has in the world. Like for example a person could acquire books for the pleasure of acquisition or someone else could have what is strictly necessary to support their goal. The level of engagement is the same.

I feel like my post partially answers the question then it becomes why do anything?, why try to change anything? So far it worked without changing anything and just doing things and experiencing the results.

Why change anything externally if that is not where the freedom is?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-23 08:43:32**

Why change anything externally if that is not where the freedom is?

Because certain external conditions are not as conducive to achieving internal freedom, and at a certain point (anāgāmi) they would become a categorical obstacle.

Nevertheless, working and having possessions is not too big of an issue, and ordination is not strictly necessary to make significant progress on the path. What is necessary is not to engage in actions of lust, aversion, and distraction—*that* is now one’s internal non-freedom that they keep cultivating, and, indeed, the external circumstances do not intrinsically force you to not be free (i.e., do such things).

## **If we’re trying to remove the ownership of the sense of self, who or what is doing the removing ? What or who is owning the sense of self ? Is it the puggala/individual ?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2025-03-19 18:50:51

I’m a bit unclear on those... As I understand it the puggala is what remains when sakkaya ditthi has been removed. But it feels a bit circular since I feel **I’m** doing the decisions to practice sense restraint to remove **my** ownership of sense of self... So the sense of self is doing the undermining of the clinging to the sense of self ??

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-20 05:53:20**

So the sense of self is doing the undermining of the clinging to the sense of self ??



In a way yes. The Buddha even said that “conceit is to be abandoned through conceit.” A puthujjana can’t step outside of the self-view even for an instant, nor abstractly imagine what it would be like to not have it. All they can do is make the right choices that will weaken that assumption *from within* (such as sense restraint). Thus, it’s not a matter of “choosing the right term.” Only by actually not having self-view anymore can you begin to make sense of the distinction between “individual” and “self.”

For a puthujjana, any term or description whatsoever that they might use to refer to “this here” will for them still tacitly imply the same assumption of self that they haven’t understood and abandoned. For a sekha or Arahant, that assumption cannot arise even with the word “attā,” hence the Buddha saw no issue with telling monks that they should hold “themselves” as island and refuge (*attadīpa attasaraṇa*), and he and other Arahants would often say “I” and “mine,” even when referring to past lives.

## Consciousness = point of view?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** fe\_feron 2025-03-15 07:44:21

Practically, in general terms, would you say that consciousness means the presence of a point of view?

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-15 17:15:56

No; for one thing, that would mean you have 6 points of view all at once.

Whichever such “point of view” you find, no matter how seemingly fundamental or “deep” in its content, will be something already cognized/manifested to the very extent you’re aware of it, and thus there is no “inner side/point” behind the rest of experience that is not itself another cognized experience. Everything without exception is “on quicksand” (impermanent) for that very reason, and that’s why Sāti’s view in the above Sutta was so wrong.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-17 05:25:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I think I understand that you’re saying that there isn’t a point of view behind manifested experience which would be the center to which things arise. Basically there isn’t an independent consciousness to which things manifest. Is that correct?

Yes, there is nothing that can rightly be regarded as being outside the domain of ordinary appearances. And it’s important to know that this assumption has essentially infinite ways of manifesting; it doesn’t have to explicitly sound like an assertion of “my self is X” in order to be a form of self-view.

For example, thinking you're developing views in line with the Dhamma, you could easily start to have ideas about the "structure" of experience that underlies the rest of experience (the physical matter of the body that itself is not a perception, the point of view that is not itself viewed, the nature of things which is not itself a thing, etc.), not realizing that you're thereby falling into one of the 20 forms of attavāda (form as self, self as possessing form, etc.).

And whenever someone asserts the existence of something outside the aggregates, they are also asserting a view of self through that. By believing that something *could* be outside, you automatically maintain the view that the self is outside. Just by holding the view, for example, that there is a more fundamental "purpose" to life that lies outside of our individual experiences and must guide them (or also that there is a more fundamental *lack* of purpose and meaninglessness) means holding the view that self is within, say, intention or perception. Not seeing purpose or lack of it as an arisen intention or perception within this experience, one gives it gratuitous primacy over all other intentions or perceptions.

And these views are undone not by intensive philosophizing, but by abandoning the five hindrances. They are what cause one, out of passion, to put certain phenomena on a pedestal.

## Discerning unwholesome intentions behind seemingly wholesome thoughts

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** meshinthesky 2025-03-13 16:49:15

The context of the post is within the stage of developing virtue and the specifics of sieving thoughts according to whether they spring from a mind with wholesome or unwholesome intention.

There are thoughts which their contents are wholesome in themselves. Yet, they are clearly rooted in a mind wanting some change regarding the current experience. They are refined ways for the mind to complain: I want this, I do not want that - sometimes even dressed in dhamma language. When such apparent wholesome thoughts are rooted in a mind with greed or aversion, such unwholesome intentions seem discernible to me.

On the other hand, it is not clear to me when some wholesome-content thoughts may be rooted in delusion or not: when the intention of the mind is wanting to distract itself for avoiding enduring the present situation. I am not referring to such thoughts that call for a coarse action to be started changing fully the context (i.e.: let's go and read some teachings), but those whose purpose seems to be avoiding or coping with boredom... merely for the sake of filling the void and chaining further thoughts.

At the mentioned stage, are those delusional intentions coarser enough to be dealt with (specially when one's trying to abide in non activity) or are they subtle enough to be seen as a finer peg that removes a coarser one (i.e.: thoughts with unwholesome content, or born from greed and aversion)? If it is the former, how to approach and learn to tell apart

delusional intentions from wholesome intentions of the mind.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-15 07:10:58**

On the other hand, it is not clear to me when some wholesome-content thoughts may be rooted in delusion or not: when the intention of the mind is wanting to distract itself for avoiding enduring the present situation.

I would not even go as far as saying that there is such a thing as “wholesome-content thoughts.” What there certainly is is content that is always unwholesome, such as content about the five cords of sensuality (i.e., lustful things, not just things perceived through the five senses in general), and thoughts of ill will (not just aversion or resistance, which can be much subtler and is not an immediate concern). But no thought-content is automatically wholesome.

You need to start looking at the current state of mind behind a certain thought in order to see when it’s rooted in delusion/distraction, and not assume that thoughts about the past or about the future, or about things that are elsewhere instead of “here,” can be delusional in themselves. Those can never be anything but present thoughts in the present situation, and are to an extent inevitable.

So don’t worry about the content of the thoughts, and instead worry about whether a thought about anything becomes so captivating and absorbing that you lose the peripheral awareness that “this is a present thought in the present situation.” Such a thought is a delusional thought (because the state of mind is clearly one of obsession with it, i.e., one or another hindrance, and thus clarity is automatically obstructed and there is a loss of perspective).

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-17 07:12:43 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It seems like you’re overthinking it and trying to systematize different teachings that use different paradigms (to explain the same thing).

The first thing to do would be not to take for granted the pressure to figure out what you need to do, since what you need to do is not act out of pressure. Remind yourself of the danger and suffering in acting out of a hindrance (in this case doubt), and don’t continue attending to the thoughts that it pressures you towards.

Then you let the mind off the hook while still staying watchful. You have to let it go because, for now, there is no problem. It doesn’t make sense to forcefully pin down an animal when it’s not misbehaving at the moment.

At some unknown point in time later—it doesn’t matter how long; it could be a few minutes, or more, or less—you will realize that you fell under the grip of a hindrance again. Maybe the same one, maybe another; what matters is that the same background pressure

is back, not the content of the thoughts. Then you remind yourself of the danger and suffering in acting out of a hindrance again, and put aside those thoughts (even though their content was not the problem, they were rooted in the pressure).

As you keep doing that, that pressure will begin to return less and less, until eventually there is not even a possibility for pressure or suffering underlying your thinking, regardless of what you think about. Not because you're being careful. And that's when the hindrances are gone for the time being. And then "peripheral awareness" will be effortless, and whatever context or phenomenon you try to discern will be seen rightly without distortion or abstract theorizing.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-20 03:58:32 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Twice a month, I review my practice, reexamine the teachings, and question myself trying to be honest. Then, I actively engage with the underlying doubts about the practice, including "to figure out what you need to do".

That sounds like a good strategy.

## **Nibbana Is The Ultimate Uncertainty**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** No\_Squirrel4617 2025-03-13 00:06:37

I am a bit unclear about how exactly the practice progresses. For example, I am accomplished in virtue, and because of that, I have learned what it truly means to restrain the senses and what samadhi is about. Two questions arise for me now: Should I just continue pushing my sense restraint with the idea that its significance will somehow become more apparent, or should I also introduce practices like noticing and acknowledging that my life and everything I hold dear depend on the breath?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-15 06:47:29**

should I also introduce practices like noticing and acknowledging that my life and everything I hold dear depend on the breath?

Such contemplations would only be fruitful to the extent that you've overcome the five hindrances. So if indeed your virtue and sense restraint are as cemented as you say, purifying the mind from hindrances (for which you will need to learn to see the signs of the mind more clearly, for which you will in turn need stricter seclusion) would be the next step.

This talk, and this newer one too, might help.

When trying to spot the hindrances, don't just assume that specific thoughts are a problem (apart from the obvious unwholesome ones with lustful or hateful content). Instead, look

in the direction of *why* (emotionally) you're thinking whatever it is that you're thinking, and you are more likely to find a hindrance there (i.e., the signs of the mind). If there's a compulsion behind that thinking, it's a hindrance. If not—if the mind is pursuing certain thoughts without being obsessive about them—everything is fine for now, but you still remain watchful.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-17 05:41:22 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I think this is the right direction.

It might be. The catch is that you will have to remain watchful of whether your attempt not to let things take center stage is not the thing that you've put in the center stage, which would mean still acting out of a hindrance. That can easily end up happening if you develop a “rinse and repeat” sort of attitude towards the practice, as you'd begin to overlook your own intentions.

There needs to be a balanced degree of effort. If you let your mind think freely without any prodding, it's too loose. If you're prodding it constantly, it's very likely too tight unless you were about to physically do something unwholesome.

The way to achieve that balance is to keep an eye on why you're engaging in a certain line of thinking/effort, never assuming that it's admissible in and of itself. And that would also prevent things from taking center stage; they can do so only if you become oblivious of your motivation for paying attention to them.

## **HH stand on meditation**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-03-11 10:59:08

I have watched many talks on HH channel, many times but can only remember one about meditation and many about the misconceptions about meditation.

The talk I mean is where Ajahn Nyanamoli describes how to recognize “am I breathing?” and that's it

And all the countless videos about how intention behind it matters, how it will not make me enlightened, etc.

So it makes me wonder how important is it to meditate?

I personally don't like meditating and prefer upping the precepts and learning the dhamma. Being mindful of the body is the closest to meditation I ever get, so I wonder is it necessary? Is samadhi in “sila, samadhi, panna” meditation or is it composure?

I imagine that in a monastery there isn't that much to do and monks generally are supposed to meditate countless hours, no?

Adding to this, if the practice is simply “don’t act on craving” why is there such a big emphasis on meditation?

<https://youtu.be/GgoRGxbR6y8?si=X3DmnsT2n2x21LrP> - this talk answers the question, I missed it among all others. Makes a lot of sense connecting it all together

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-12 15:24:14**

Probably around half of the videos on the HH channel describe what you would do when you sit down to purify your mind from hindrances and unwholesome states and develop clarity—once you’ve accomplished the precepts, virtue, sense restraint, etc. It’s not a different practice at all; it’s the same thing you were already supposed to be doing but in a more precise way.

We see “meditation” in the way taught in modern Buddhism as useless for the development of *sīla*, *samādhi*, or *paññā*. The kind of “*samādhi*” you get from that is of a kind that suppresses the domain where understanding takes place, leaving you only with visions and sense objects. The mind is not actually “unified” (*ekaggatā*); the senses are just mostly shut down in favor of a particular experience, and the two are not the same.

As for *sīla*, contemporary meditation rarely takes people beyond the five precepts they’ve been keeping from the very start, even after decades of practice. In our view, the only things such practices lead to are mundane calm and stress reduction (which you could also get without any practice by addressing the root of the mundane problem and changing your job, life situation, etc.), sensual euphoria without a need for people or external things, and transient revelations unrelated to the four noble truths.

Right *samādhi* and calming of the mind are developed by abandoning the five hindrances, which is impossible to achieve by focusing on physical sensations or visualizing things. One does these things either for sensual reasons or out of other hindrances, but that’s overlooked because the contemporary, watered-down, widespread notion (illustrated quite well here) is that a hindrance is simply a distracting thought that takes you away from the meditation object. That would lead to the conclusion that an Arahant can never emerge from meditation again.

Adding to this, if the practice is simply “don’t act on craving” why is there such a big emphasis on meditation?

Because it’s a quick fix that reduces suffering and provides pleasure, which is plenty for most people. Contemporary Buddhism is mostly an echo chamber that caters to the majority, who often only want quick fixes (or at least fixes that don’t require changing their habits too significantly).

I imagine that in a monastery there isn’t that much to do and monks generally are supposed to meditate countless hours, no?

One is supposed to be alone in seclusion most of the day because that’s where the five hindrances can be recognized clearly and abandoned, whether while walking or sitting.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-13 04:34:31 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

wouldn't focusing on something help to not give into habitual unwholesome thinking patterns that would then have no choice but to die out?

Not by itself.

Unwholesome thoughts wear away for the long term only when the mind wants to go in a direction and you don't let it, but you also make the effort to understand the harmfulness of that direction rather than blindfolding the mind so that it forgets about the whole thing. That's not training it at all.

People who meditate in the modern sense and whose unwholesome thinking patterns have truly been reduced didn't achieve that result because of the time they spent successfully focusing—which they would usually consider a “good meditation” but which is no more beneficial for the training than sleep. The reduction came from adopting the value of restraint across the board, not just during their focusing sessions. Try restraining the unwholesome thinking patterns *only* during meditation, and you'll see that it won't work at all.

But that small benefit is overshadowed by a greater problem: they didn't stop at recognizing thoughts of sensuality, ill will, etc., as unwholesome. They instead went to the other extreme and developed the view that focusing itself is wholesome and is the state free from hindrances. That's a seriously wrong view that their own past experiences would disprove if they took the time to consider them carefully.

(And then, of course, there's the inevitable expectation that insight is something that will just pop up while you're focusing, which flies in the face of what insight really is.)

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-14 04:01:24 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

The Therāgatha might contain later additions according to scholars. This is a good example.

There are no Suttas in the four Nikāyas where fixating one's attention on an external object is presented as a viable way to develop samādhi. That absurd concept certainly came later and is taken seriously only in commentarial texts like the Visuddhimagga (which advises staring at clay disks, candle flames, etc.)

**Advice on how to deal with a persistent trigger for unwholesome behavior**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Akalika\_Username 2025-03-11 00:06:01

For more than a year, I have been trying to patiently endure the pressure to act out of a persistently triggering situation in my daily life. The hostile and cruel thoughts that arise when the trigger is present are intense. I try not to give them the center of my attention when they inevitably arise throughout the day.

I have attempted to tailor my environment to reduce the frequency and intensity of my exposure, though there is only so much I can realistically do. There is also no reason to believe the situation will become less challenging in the foreseeable future.

Until this last weekend, I have been pleased with my verbal and physical restraint regarding the situation, including with subtler, indirect actions. Now I have begun following the pressure to engage in things that could eventually lead to verbal and physical behavior of a hostile nature. I am also afraid that the presence of the trigger will become more prominent in the coming months, as it had this last weekend. My fears are likely to be accurate, if I'm being honest.

It seems that I presently have three options for dealing with the increased likelihood that I might act verbally or physically in response to the situation: 1. more aggressively tailor my environment; 2. redouble my efforts at restraint when inevitably exposed; and, of course, 3. do both.

My impression from what I've read from HH and in the Suttas is that the third option is the safest bet given that acting physically could be seriously detrimental for my welfare and the welfare of others. But the prominence of the trigger could easily become so significant that the effort to reduce exposure might ultimately exacerbate rather than reduce the pressure to act unskillfully. I wonder if there isn't some justification for maintaining or even slightly increasing exposure in a situation like this, where avoidance is unrealistic and could make the problem a greater source of resentment.

Does anyone have any advice on a scenario of this kind? [Edit: the type of hindrance doesn't matter, just the persistence of the pressure in relation to something unavoidable that is a potential obstacle to progressing in virtue and restraint.] I'm particularly interested to learn if anyone has had past success with similar difficulties.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-12 04:51:16 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I have locked this comment as it does not comply with rule #3. Without outlining the discrepancy, it casually gives advice based on widespread underlying assumptions about the practice of meditation that contradict fundamental HH teachings.

## Upakkilesa Sutta MN 128

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Formal\_Breath\_2025 2025-03-09 16:36:07

I have a few questions about this sutta. The whole section on samādhi seems to be referring to the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Jhānas, but the Buddha mentions *obhāsa* (light, shine,



splendour, effulgence?) and *dassanam rūpām* (vision of forms), which I have not seen before in the usual Jhāna formula. Is this relevant to Jhāna in general or is the Buddha talking more specifically about something like developing the Divine Eye?

The other thing in this sutta I haven't seen before is that the Buddha mentions developing both samādhi with vitakka and vicāra but also *without* vitakka and *with* vicāra. Bhante Ñānamoli tends to talk about vitakka and vicāra in the context of 1st Jhāna as near-similes, so I'm not quite sure what this indicates. If vicāra is a more passive kind of thinking, I suppose it could suggest that he's stopped active thought but there are still dhammas appearing?

The Buddha also talks about “perception of diversity” and “excessive meditation on forms” as hindrances, but the formula makes it unclear if this is relevant to all the forms of samādhi the Buddha developed, or just some of them. It sounds more relevant to formless attainments but I could be wrong.

Thanks.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-10 15:34:49**

MN 128 is about developing the divine eye. The Pāli is ambiguous, but the Chinese parallel (pg. 20 here) says that the light and vision of forms disappeared because “the eye ceased.” Also supported by how Anuruddha eventually became foremost in the divine eye.

Jhāna is not about light and visions but about intentionally cultivating the pleasure that arises from renunciation, and it's a form of recollectedness of the body specifically. That shows how there are different directions of samādhi you can take, all of which depend on abandoning the five hindrances. Whereas the commentarial (and often contemporary) belief is that because jhāna is “absorption”, samādhi and jhāna are basically synonymous except for the supposed “momentary” and “access” concentration.

As for vitakka and vicāra, etc., AN 8.63 shows that those permutations would occur within various forms of samādhi. The case of “without vitakka and with vicāra” occurs there too.

If vicāra is a more passive kind of thinking, I suppose it could suggest that he's stopped active thought but there are still dhammas appearing?

There can't be a state where dhammas do not appear except Parinibbāna. If there is consciousness, there *has* to be some form of activity or “movement” (*saṅkhāra*) underlying it. With samādhi, what you do is shed coarser activities in favor of subtler ones, and at no point in the nine progressive stages does the mind become completely still and “frozen,” as many might genuinely believe due to not seeing the signs of their minds and only objects instead.

Both vitakka and vicāra are activities (*saṅkhāra*) and are thus pacifiable, though vicāra is subtler, i.e., less active than vitakka, not quicker and harder to “catch” momentarily. But they are both simultaneous aspects of the same thing. They are structurally and not sequentially bound together.

For example, you can have an overall Dhamma of “being seated in a cold room looking through the window feeling joyful,” and vitakka would be the more active mental movements within that: “picking up” the specific things you are joyful about (the absence of sensual and unwholesome inclinations). If there is still vitakka, vicāra would be the overall “being seated in a cold room looking through the window feeling joyful” that endures as a background to the specific thoughts throughout.

If vitakka has subsided, you would see that the dhamma of “being seated in a cold room looking through the window feeling joyful” can be made even less active, and by establishing the mind in that you would be left with *purely* “being seated in a cold room looking through the window feeling joyful,” without the activity of vicāra, which was still a subtle movement on top of that (and this is second jhāna).

But you can’t even abstractly imagine how to calm vicāra or what the absence of it is like until vitakka is gone—until then the “passive” thing is vicāra. You can’t turn milk straight into butter. And you certainly can’t discern any of this until you have freed yourself from hindrances through the gradual training.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-12 14:11:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Yes, I see what you’re saying, but the thing is that when MN 44 says *vitakkavicāra* is *vacīsaṅkhāra* or “verbal activity,” that doesn’t mean *vitakkavicāra* can only ever be verbal. If it were, every person would often have instants without at least vitakka when they briefly do something like focus on a sight or physical sensation. This is how a lot of people truly believe they can “stop thinking” by attending to their breath and similar; they believe thinking begins and ends at the verbalization part. The contemporary “jhānas” are *vitakkavicāra* (mainly vitakka due to the emphasis on focus and observation), with hindrances (which have their root at the level of vicāra) and with pleasure/peace and some unusual perceptions within it. Sights, sounds, etc., and even physical actions all manifest through vitakka. Thus, even vitakka is far broader than specific verbal formulations.

So you could say that once *vitakkavicāra* is purified from hindrances and understood rightly, it is no longer *vacīsaṅkhāra*, i.e., it no longer *implies* the possibility of speech. Whether it involves specific words is then totally secondary, since those are also just perceptions that are wrongly assumed to be more than that whenever they imply the possibility of speaking. In other words, even if you didn’t have a mouth and couldn’t even conceive of speaking yourself, you would still be able to play words in your mind, but they wouldn’t imply *you* speaking and would thus not be *vacīsaṅkhāra*.

Practically, you need to approach the whole thing as a totality, i.e., being fully enclosed within *vitakkavicāra* from top to bottom. This means any phenomenon you can possibly experience will up until the second jhāna be at most a form of vicāra.

People who are virtuous, well restrained, don’t delight in company, etc., can start to rightly grasp the hints of vicāra; otherwise everything will be vitakka for them. Some vicāra

is always inevitably there, but for the unrestrained person, vicāra (e.g. their underlying attitude for vitakka-of-something) can change completely and become sensual or aversive, and they will not have a clue. This is one way of describing the ignorance of the signs of the mind.

Edit: I remembered there's this Sutta where the *leader* of the Jains is absolutely convinced that the cessation of vitakkavicāra is impossible. That goes to show how the range of vitakkavicāra is a lot broader (and its genuine surmounting lot more subtle) than generally assumed.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-13 07:31:41 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

i did not “do” questioning thinking it was vicara; but the function of questioning in the context of what i was doing seemed to be quite aligned with what i was understanding as the function of vitakka-vicara – and i continued with the assumption that this questioning movement of the mind is vicara, and looked at the suttas. there is a lot of questioning there – very similar to the questioning attitude i was cultivating, inspired, at that time, both by Toni Packer and by HH.

I would put it this way: in the experience of questioning yourself in this way (which can indeed be beneficial), there is a deliberate placement of attention in a certain thought/perception, with or without verbalization involved. *At the same time*, regardless of whether you realize it or not, there is a broader image there of “I am questioning myself” (never explicitly expressed in words though), and within that overall image or phenomenon, things like the way you're feeling, why you're questioning yourself, the state of your physical form, what you expect to come out of the questioning, etc., are *implicit*. That is the level of vicāra, and those are things you are inevitably *\*conscious of\** (i.e., they are *\*manifest\** in experience) even if you're not aware of them (which would correspond to *\*sampajañña\**).

But the catch is that if you now try to *place the mind into* that overall image or phenomenon in the background, it becomes another vitakka, and there is now *another* background image of “I am trying to figure out what vicāra is” with its own implications, and all of that is now unseen. So one has to recognize the extent of vitakka clearly and, at the same time, without making another vitakka, *know* vicāra where it already is. This is all precisely what I was referring to here recently, and it's the principle of “peripheral awareness”, yoniso manasikāra, etc.

You can think of it as two identical sheets of glass stuck together perfectly. Vitakka inevitably carries vicāra, which you will be able to discern only by seeing *through* vitakka. And yes, you start by intentionally directing vitakka in certain ways, as described in MN 19, because if the content of vitakka is already unwholesome, there is no way vicāra can be discerned. Once vitakka was sufficiently pure and well directed (which indirectly purifies vicāra to some extent) the Buddha realized that he could simply stay with the recognition

that “these dhammas are there” and not try to have any specific content in vitakka nor in vicāra.

The kind of questioning you describe could serve to *reveal* vicāra if one already knows where to look for it (e.g. questioning your motivation behind something but letting that question *point to* the background, already-arisen motivation in your present experience rather than jumping into vitakka-answers and vitakka-explanations). But the questioning in and of itself would still be vitakka (again, even if it’s just a “movement” of looking at something within experience without any verbalization).

There are absolutely no constraints as to the *contents* of the thought/image that attention can be placed onto with vitakka (hence the Sutta I quoted saying that the entire world functions through vitakka). It can be the most ordinary thought about what you’re going to do in 5 minutes or the most extraordinary spiritual experience. The fact that you *place the mind (mano) into it*\*—or, even more coarsely, *focus*\* on it—with or without any mental chatter, is what makes it vitakka.

\*The translation of vitakka as “placing the mind” is in theory quite accurate, but in practice, with the way those translations are explained and interpreted, the range of vitakka is severely underestimated.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-13 17:57:18 (in reply to a comment not included)**

To be clear, I am fully certain that we don’t merely disagree about terminology. In what I’ve been attempting to convey, there is at best some overlap between manasikāra and saññā, and vitakka and vicāra. They can by no means be equated, for the simple reason that vitakka and vicāra would be completely gone in the second jhāna, whereas saññā and manasikāra (and cittasaṅkhāra) would continue in all the further jhānas and even immaterial attainments.

if vitakka-vicāra do not correspond to the verbal thinking and questioning described explicitly in the suttas, the presence of verbal thinking and questioning and their role in the training remains in the air / unaccounted for somehow

I don’t quite see why. I didn’t deny the usefulness of such thinking and questioning; in fact, I made sure to point out its necessity when citing MN 19 above. But following the narrative of that same Sutta, there comes a point where one needs to realize that active thinking and questioning are no longer necessary. This is done by recognizing the full range of vitakkavicāra, which *contains but is not limited to* the questioning you describe. Without that shift of emphasis, it will be impossible to “compose the mind internally,” and one will remain in active cultivation of skillful thoughts indefinitely, which still leaves one liable to subtle hindrances.

You brought up AN 8.30 a few times, and there’s actually a big hint there about precisely what I’m describing. The Buddha told Anuruddha that he would be able to enter the jhānas at will if he cultivated the seven thoughts he came up with *plus* the eighth that he added

and that Anuruddha did not initially consider. The eighth is about “non-proliferation,” and there’s a very good reason why, without that “final touch,” Anuruddha wouldn’t have entered the jhānas. It’s the very same principle as MN 19: first you direct the mind towards wholesome themes, but there comes a point where you actually need to “step back” further and start looking at the whole picture more broadly (“these phenomena are there”), which is how *papañca* is overcome. In other words, one needs to shift the emphasis away from vitakka:

Eye-consciousness arises dependent on the eye and forms. The meeting of the three is pressure. With pressure as basis, feeling. What one feels, one perceives. **What one perceives, one thinks (vitakka) about. What one thinks about, one proliferates.** What one proliferates is the cause for perceptions and considerations born of proliferation besetting one in regard to sights cognizable by the eye pertaining to the past, present, and future.

—MN 18

This doesn’t mean vitakka *disappears*; it of course remains a defining factor of the first jhāna. But because it no longer sits alone in the limelight, it is unable to proliferate as much without any need whatsoever to actively hold it back by emphasizing wholesome vitakkas. That is the only way that one can be truly “separated” from *all* unwholesome states. There is a (effortlessly) limited “depth” of engagement that the mind can have with any given direction of vitakka because it has become established in the full picture of vitakka and vicāra occurring simultaneously, and it is because of this that speech (and sensual perception, which is proliferation of what the Suttas call “the sign of beauty”) can no longer occur even if there is still mental chatter. Speech necessitates not seeing the (in itself non-verbal) choice to take up of the physical mouth as just another thought, i.e., overlooking the extent of vitakkavicāra.

Which brings me to your point about vacīsaṅkhāra: there is no contradiction between this and the MN 44 description of “having vitakka-ed and vicāra-ed, one breaks into speech.” If this statement were asserting that vitakka or vicāra were intrinsically verbal, it would imply we must first play out in our minds the specific words we intend to say before physically uttering them, and that’s quite clearly not the actual dynamic. As we speak, our minds internally “move about” various non-verbal thoughts and images, and that “moving about” is vitakka (with vicāra as the broader background as I’ve described).

And, again, vicāra is also *active* and pacifiable very early on, *long* before saññā, but its activeness is not discernible until the coarser and more active vitakka subsides.

and words with an obvious everyday meaning become increasingly technical  
/ divorced from their direct meaning.

All this is why I disagree with the conclusion that “verbal thinking and questioning” can be fully equated with vitakkavicāra. It doesn’t automatically follow from anything in the Suttas.

Furthermore, given that anyone can simply stop speaking at any moment, how would the interpretation you propose account for the fact that speech is what ceases in the first

jhāna? It does seem to leave that crucial point unaccounted for.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-21 11:47:36 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

No, because consciousness has also ceased for an Arahant in this very life.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-23 07:20:25 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Does this answer the question?

## **A question on the background of experience/peripheral awareness**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** ActualBrazilian 2025-03-06 05:58:04

I have kept the 5 precepts for about two months and have just started efforts in keeping the 8, I can sustain what I believe is remembrance of the body and of the breath as I attend to activities. For some activities it is harder to sustain both. The body and posture are too subtle for me to sustain while working as a programmer, but I can manage the breath, though even of the breath I'll still lose occasionally (I'd say I can keep it about 60-70% of the day). I try to catch any pressure towards distraction (as someone with ADHD I'd say aversion to focusing on studying and working are my most severe hindrances) and analyze the justifications and reasons the mind comes up with for them, finding that they are just about every time ad hoc.

From Bhikkhu Analayo's *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realization*, I have taken the view that my goal should be to sustain remembrance of the breath and to exert myself to expanding it to the whole body and the other 3 foundations of mindfulness as I maintain analyzing pressures in that way (which is what I currently understand 'doing away with the unwholesome' to be).

Is this a productive path of practice, how grossly am I missing the mark on these views and 'methods'?

Edit: To add some context I have been using remembrance of the breath mostly as an aid to noticing arisen pressures before I act out of them and for enduring them. When I keep this remembrance and noticing-and-endurance well, I do also feel a cooling sensation in my head physically, mostly the top of the head and the forehead, which I did attend to sometimes but have started trying not to.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-07 06:38:03**

It's not like one should never make any effort to think about how to practice satipaṭṭhāna, but it should not be one's main practice up until the Right View. The reason is that nothing you do can "do away with the unwholesome" by itself without you understanding exactly what the unwholesome actually is, because the unwholesome is in your very *intention* (e.g., with which you would be practicing satipaṭṭhāna the whole time) and not in the particular mental objects that you can replace by attending to something else.

Instead, apart from strengthening your virtue—there is almost always going to be plenty of room for improvement there as a layperson—the main practice should be discerning the intention behind *whatever* you do, not taking for granted that, for example, practicing satipaṭṭhāna is in and of itself a wholesome thing to do. Nothing is ever automatically wholesome; it depends on why you're doing it at the time.

That's how you would become skilled in recognizing your own mind, which is necessary for satipaṭṭhāna to be done rightly. Unless you see that, you don't actually know what pressure is, so no amount of satipaṭṭhāna practice will allow you to "catch" it.

Lastly, discerning your intentions does not mean psychologizing the logical reasons why you do something; it means seeing whether there is greed, aversion, or delusion driving the action you want to do or are already doing. Nothing more elaborate than that. You need to learn to recognize a vague, ambiguous mind of greed *as such* without resorting to secondary explanations of any kind.

**jhana and jhana or jhana**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-03-06 04:16:13

I thought I should ask this question, even though it may seem provocative. I was wondering "how can I confirm this?" and realised it's impossible, but maybe someone has a clearer understanding and view and so on

Basically the "lay jhana teacher" said that he experiences the eight jhanas while having a wife and he just "returns" to the world when needed. Naturally I started contemplating this for a while, because this contradicts what ajahn here said, why not have both jhana and a partner too without making it the goal of my life?

Ajahn Nyanamoli said that whoever teaches jhana different from Buddhist jhana just couldn't get the Buddhist one, which sounds a bit like an assumption to be fair considering we don't know all the people who didn't become monks and their motives, but what is that "buddhist jhana"? Are there different types of jhanas beyond the eight jhanas, like eight Buddhist jhanas and eight lay jhanas?

I realise there is some level of justifying staying in the world here, but the topic is valid anyway, I think

**For people who just read, downvote and move on I want to say that every question is valid if approached correctly, it's not me who should to stay silent, its you who should**

**keep your hands and judgements to yourself****Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-07 07:18:53**

but what is that “buddhist jhana”?

As defined in the Suttas (from which the term “jhāna” originates to begin with), it’s the pleasure of renunciation, the ease of being free from any trace of sensual and unwhole-some urges that comes from not engaging with those urges long enough, and understanding them rightly as perilous. To people who enjoy sensuality, renouncing their sensual urges by definition won’t be pleasurable at all.

Hence, whatever “jhāna” people who still enjoy sensuality can obtain is not what was originally meant with the word “jhāna.” Jhāna was not widely taught to householders in the Buddha’s time precisely for that reason.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-07 17:16:38 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

That’s not a problem as long as you don’t forget that that isn’t what the Buddha taught as jhāna, nor does it lead to what jhāna is supposed to when made much of (not returning to sensual pleasures again, and disinterest in the world in general).

And even if it’s difficult to fully follow, you can still see value in the *direction* of renunciation and try to gradually go towards it more. You would then partake in at least a bit of Buddhist peace, and maybe you would one day notice the difference for yourself and decide to pursue that direction further.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-07 18:10:21 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

the jhanas taught in contemporary Buddhism lead to unbinding and nibanna.

Same as with jhāna, these are just buzzwords that people nowadays ascribe their own meanings to, which usually are not what the Buddha meant.

For one thing, full Nibbāna in the Buddha’s outlook would make you unable to seek or relish sensuality and even platonic relationships. All of that is ultimately dukkha, but is not seen as such when the mind is clouded by passion and ignorance, i.e., not in Nibbāna.

So if that’s not the end result (on top of coming from a very different kind of practice), it’s not the Buddhist Nibbāna. “Nibbāna” was not supposed to mean any peaceful state whatsoever, but specifically the extinguishment of craving, which has a very specific (and incomparable) kind of peace as its *byproduct*.

Now, people are totally free to regard the Buddhist unbinding as undesirable and not pursue it. But instead of doing that, they often instead redefine what the Buddhist unbinding



is. Probably because it looks and feels much better when you can assimilate the weight and authority that Buddhism has accumulated, and also because few people read the early texts widely or with enough openness to reconsider their established beliefs about the practice and the goal.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-08 06:34:21 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Stream-enteres glimpse nibanna

Yes, a stream-enter has an accurate glimpse of how craving is suffering and the destruction of craving is the ultimate and only worthwhile peace. Therefore, that's exactly what his practice would be aimed at, and that's how he eventually achieves full Nibbāna. "Glimpsing Nibbāna" and working towards it means something very different in their redefinition.

What's the difference between true nibanna and the redefinition of nibanna that you claim they're making?

True Nibbāna comes if you work on severing your attachments and wearing away your liability to craving by first of all not acting out of it. It can't come from a meditative experience, which would be like an alcoholic who, instead of focusing on giving up alcohol to reach sobriety, looks for something so extraordinary that it captivates and enthralls him to the point where the urge to drink fades (if even that). While this might work for a time, the novelty will inevitably wear off, and the underlying addictions that were never truly addressed will resurface.

And that's why more often than not there is little to no talk about permanent and final Arahantship (unless it's been redefined not to signify complete renunciation and destruction of craving), since it's about perpetually chasing after greater and deeper experiences and insights, hoping for the ultimate thing that will fill the ever-lingering void perfectly instead of destroying the void itself once and for all.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-09 03:36:57 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Not quite. According to the the Suttas, insight arose because he reflected on the four noble truths on the basis of the fourth jhāna. That description is extremely common and is agreed to be the "standard" path to awakening in the early texts.

That's not a "meditative experience," but something that you could contemplate at any time, and that indeed many people managed to do to a degree just from talking to the Buddha and without jhāna, which is how they entered the stream. Doing it with the mind of the fourth jhāna—which arises from giving up sensuality and then taking the same principle further, not from a meditation technique—simply makes the contemplation much more powerful and penetrative.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-09 20:34:31 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Well, when we talk about “bad kamma,” it’s important to remember that it’s not some sort of judgment cast upon you by an external force. It’s about what you’re doing to your own mind, in this case through something that’s very harmful to others too.

If someone knowingly misrepresents the Dhamma with fully conscious, malicious intention for the sake of gain, renown, and the like, then that’s on another level where one is breaking the fourth precept in the worst possible way. But I’m optimistic that this is very uncommon, and misrepresentation is generally not deliberate.

Still, unintentional misrepresentation it’s still quite bad because both in oneself and others, one reinforces wrong views and makes them even harder to remove later on. It’s worse if a teacher confidently tries to give the impression that what they teach is the same as what’s in the Suttas without having sincerely investigated whether that’s the case (most would start noticing glaring discrepancies if they did). The only reason one would do such a thing is valuing gain and renown over the truth.

Even worse than the misguided emphases you listed is actively discouraging students from taking on faith anything they don’t yet see for themselves, feeling ashamed and regretful (*hiriottappā*) of their unwholesome actions, studying the Suttas, and tenaciously going against the grain of their defilements even if it’s unpleasant (not to mention forms of *sati* and *paññā* that would be much closer to the right ones). The rejection of at least some of these basic wholesome qualities is very common in Western Buddhism.

It’s an unwholesome principle already to baselessly display certainty about anything, and the fact that it’s about Dhamma and one is profoundly influencing people’s lives and choices, sometimes actively taking them away from what’s actually the Buddhist path while making them believe the opposite, makes it a lot worse.

## **Knowing Background Phenomena**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** still\_tracks 2025-03-01 17:49:24

I was wondering why we *feel* feelings but know/discern/see other peripheral phenomena and what these verbs even refer to. When I actively try to feel a feeling, all I find is that I want to make the feeling palpable by searching for sensations in my chest or head. However, even before such a search, I already know that I am feeling well or bad, and this knowledge clearly refers to something in my experience. Now, isn’t the same true for the overall mood? I can’t find the mood when I search for it, and I don’t even have to do it because it is simply something I know. This knowing is not based on some fantasy, but a bad mood is easily recognizable in one’s experience, even for the most unrestrained person in the world. The same goes for intentions. It isn’t too hard to be aware of the most obvious pressures/pulls to do, say, or think about various things throughout the day, while withstanding a pull is, of course, a different matter. I also tend to associate these pulls

with sensations in my chest, but these association attempts can only occur because the pull has already appeared as a background phenomenon.

So, is this the basic principle for every kind of peripheral phenomenon? That there is knowledge of something which is clearly or even vaguely there in experience, and every attempt to catch it by sensing it in the body (another example would be weak legs when feeling anxious) or trying to find it as a mental image or thought is futile and unnecessary. When I am angry, I know it; I can only know it because it is present; I don't act out based on it and that's enough.

Hence, the reason we say that we are *feeling* feelings or even emotions is just because these are very obvious background phenomena, and we have a word for it in society, while phenomena like the internal body are on a more subtle layer in experience. However, as the same principles apply to all background phenomena, feeling a feeling and knowing/discerning/seeing the internal body is basically the same kind of "act," just pointing toward different things in experience.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-02 14:50:09**

So, is this the basic principle for every kind of peripheral phenomenon?

Yes, that's how you discern all of the aggregates, in fact. They are all "peripheral."

there is knowledge of something which is clearly or even vaguely there in experience, and every attempt to catch it by sensing it in the body (another example would be weak legs when feeling anxious) or trying to find it as a mental image or thought is futile and unnecessary.

Indeed, and you get to recognize the aggregates clearer the more you contain those habitual attempts to make phenomena "more palpable" by pinning them down into specifics. That automatically distracts you from their actual manifestation, which is always general and non-specific by nature.

You also start to see the very concrete and inseparable relationship between restraint and understanding. Lack of restraint, sensuality, etc., is that "coarsing up" of things that would've otherwise remained as non-specific phenomena (that are nevertheless *real as such*). That then makes it even harder to recognize and stay with the actual manifestation of things (which is always peripheral to any particular details). Then even when you try to practice and see the Dhamma, you end up watching sensations and things of that nature, to the point of imagining that you can "observe" your five aggregates coming and going like things popping in and out of a screen.

It's not at all an exaggeration to say that modern Buddhist tradition and practices move in the complete opposite of the right direction—towards *concealing* phenomena rather than revealing them—often invoking the buzzword "phenomenology" without understanding what it means. It's also not an accident that virtue has become an afterthought at best.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-20 05:30:56 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It seems there are always countless perceptions in the background—for instance, the sound of chirping birds as I write this or the sensations of my body touching various surfaces.

Such things are not in “the background” at all; at least not the one we refer to when we use that term. You could say they’re just an inconspicuous part of the foreground.

For me, it seems like the foreground cannot be anything other than a perception—whether it’s one of sight, sound, smell, taste, touch, or imagination. Whenever I try to make one of the other aggregates the focus of my attention, I inevitably end up with a perception, usually in the form of a thought like, “there is pleasant feeling.” This perception then acts as a stand-in for something that is elusive and enables me to think about it in meaningful ways.

This is accurate in a sense. But the fact that anything in the foreground tends to be a perception does not mean that all perception is in the foreground.

I would say that, while my thought about a current feeling isn’t the feeling itself, that the “real” feeling is nevertheless experienced—there is no doubt that I am feeling fine at this moment.

For example, here the overall recognition of there being no doubt that you are feeling fine at this moment is also a perception. What you refer to as “my thought about a current feeling” is just an extremely coarse kind of perception (i.e., very much at the foreground) that’s unnecessary to know how you’re feeling.

On the other hand, since rūpa cannot be intended, felt, or perceived, I can never be as certain about it as I am about a perception, feeling, or intention. The necessary existence of rūpa seems to be something I only can infer; for me it isn’t an undoubtable phenomenon like a feeling and the perception which stands for it (which in turn comes with its own feeling and determinations) is everything I am able to know.

This is a common misunderstanding that leaves room for personality-view, as I explained here.

Rūpa is not any more “concealed” or fundamental than feelings or perceptions. If anything, rūpa is *less* fundamental (hence the formless states).

The right way to see it is that whatever you *refer to* or *designate* as rūpa is necessarily a perception-of-rūpa. But that’s in no way different from any of the other four aggregates, including perception itself.

If we only regard perception as foreground sense input that we can “observe” and “focus on” (e.g., sensations of touch), then yes, rūpa is certainly “behind” that kind of perception (the kind most people emphasize but is quite irrelevant). But perception seen on

the right level—as [the knowing of] the characteristics of a thing of any subtlety at all—is more fundamental than rūpa, which is why it ceases much later in the series of samādhī attainments.

Self-view is gone when you’ve become unable to doubt whether there can be things apart from the perception of those things. Any notion of a “more real” rūpa (or any other phenomenon, including a soul or self) supposedly beyond your perception of it is itself just another perception. The alleged “more real” phenomenon is knowable to the very extent that its characteristics (such as its ambiguity and inaccessibility) are perceived, just as, on a coarse level, a blue towel is perceived as a blue towel. But one starts with a way too narrow preconceived notion of what “perceiving” is.

And this doesn’t mean everything we experience is some sort of secondary fabricated reality, and the ultimate reality beyond perception is hidden from us. “The reality beyond perception (or other aggregates),” which many might think is Nibbāna, is perceived. *Structurally*, it cannot be otherwise, and not seeing that means not knowing Nibbāna, because there is ignorance and misconceiving of the aggregates.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-21 10:45:33 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Certainly not. Rather, whatever is *described* and *recognized* as the aggregate of rūpa is a perception of the aggregate of rūpa.

It may sound the same, but it very much isn’t. Stating “rūpa is *perceived by* perception” involves a phenomenological contradiction: experientially, you thereby tacitly and vaguely imagine (*perceive*) a “pure” aggregate of rūpa that is supposedly not yet perceived.

Of course, you wouldn’t have perceptions without rūpa (e.g., your physical eyes there in the world structurally preceding the visual perceptions on account of them). But any recognition, image, description, characterization, concept, notion, idea, belief, impression, etc., of that rūpa because of which there is perception will be a perception.

The result of recognizing this is full dispassion towards form *and* perception. Not recognizing the extent of perception means leaving an unoccupied space outside of both form and perception (or perception and any other aggregate), and that space is where the self is.

“Beings perceive the describable  
and are established upon the describable.  
Not comprehending the describable,  
they fall under the yoke of Death.

But having comprehended the describable,  
he does not conceive one who describes,  
for he has nothing by which one could define him.”

—SN 1.20

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-23 07:15:18 (in reply to a comment not included)**

The thing is that the aggregates that you have now are *in themselves* the opposite of Nibbāna (the five aggregates of assumption or *pañcupādānakkhandā*), so any effort to figure out how Nibbāna might “fit” within the aggregates you have now would be based on a wrong premise.

As you said, the whole world is within the aggregates (of upādāna for puthujjana), so even the most careful and precise thoughts about anything, including Nibbāna and Arahantship, are also within them. So it is by purifying thoughts and mental images regardless of their content (past, present, or future, coarse or subtle, mundane or about Dhamma, etc.), from craving and assumption that you would achieve Nibbāna. Hence it all boils down to freeing this very mind from the five hindrances through the gradual training, not to figuring things out in abstraction. That’s genuinely the only way that these things can be grasped *even intellectually*.

Only if you abandoned the five hindrances to a good extent would you have a basis to see for yourself what the difference is between the presence and absence of upādāna, and thus what the way to fully abandoning it is. That’s why it’s a prerequisite for any noble attainment.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-26 03:11:41 (in reply to a comment not included)**

What if hindrances are abandoned only for short periods? Return back because the mind have strong habit to seek the satisfaction or safety outwardly. Distraction is more interesting than calmness for an animal - how to train it, what to show it?

To the extent you abandoned the hindrances, the mind should be more pliable and obedient. So even though desire for distraction arises, you would be able to easily direct the mind away from it. But it might take time until you can reach such a degree of pliability, so for the time being, what you’re describing is natural. The initial sense of urgency and diligence is driven by the amount of suffering there is, so when the hindrances diminish, that diminishes too.

What you want to ensure for now is that the “returning back” never gets to the point of unwholesome activities, i.e., things that are blatantly rooted in greed, ill will, or sensual distraction. Then you’ll never stray too far into the hindrances and will be able to continue more or less where you left off.

Without the necessary training in seeing the signs of your mind, if you tried to force it to stay put in seclusion then practically speaking you would likely end up acting out of a hindrance of restlessness and falling away from the calm you reached anyway.

## Looking for a practical model.

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** tejveeer 2025-02-27 02:08:58

I've been having some sobering reflections for the past few weeks asking myself the following repeatedly: what have I got to show for all my study of HH and the suttas for around 3 years?

The answer is mostly complete silence with respect to what actually matters: uprooting the liability to suffering. I can justify it by stating that in the process of familiarizing myself with HH content, I've picked up subsidiary insights about the "structure" of experience, technicalities of various phenomena (desire, the peripheral body, namarupa-vinnana), etc. But that justification is ultimately redundant since what fundamentally matters is again, the uprooting of the liability, which has remained unaffected.

So I asked myself: why is that? Is that in whom I am learning from, or myself?

And the answer is almost entirely myself. When HH said 8 precepts and sense restraint are a prerequisite for understanding the Dhamma, the first thing that came to my mind was attempting to rationalize it: why is that, what is their grounds for claiming that?

I've just now noticed, a few weeks ago, that I've had this idea that I must have a *perfectly clear* model of all the components related to the practice, how they relate to the other components, and why it is that those components must exist in the context of the practice: "What *precisely* is the citta? How does it operate? What is the relationship between yoniso manasikara and the citta's inclination towards this or that? How can I know *for sure* that this is the only way of taming it? What is my justification for this being the "only" way?" And it goes on.

Noticing this, I came to the realization that that view that my intellectual model of the practice must *first* be perfect for me to begin the *actual* practice is itself completely unjustified.

The only reason it has been justified thus far has been in part because of my like for complete systematization, as well as a need to justify to others, in case I'm asked about my practice, what I'm doing and why I'm doing that, and ensure that I have a perfectly defensible answer in which no fault can be found.

I've also come to realize that on the one hand, there's an individual who puts no effort into a rational re-evaluation of their currently existing model, and the other, an individual who neurotically puts effort into rational re-evaluation of their currently existing model. I most certainly fall into the latter category.

In one of the recent videos, Ajahn said along the following lines: the Dhamma is not irrational; you just need precepts and sense restraint because otherwise the field of phenomena that it is concerned with will not be present, and no amount of reason will be applicable (recalled from memory; very likely not verbatim).

And so it seems the assumption that a perfectly existing model is possible *prior* to being

well-established in the precepts and sense restraint is already a contradiction; an impossibility. Thus, I've given up that assumption.

My concern now is in simply anchoring myself in a practical model that is able to provide a value for the precepts and sense restraint, which I can hold on to till I gain mastery in them. Then, once the "field of phenomena" that the Dhamma is concerned with becomes apparent, and reason is applicable, I can let go of that initial model in favor for a more accurate model, which can then be updated and refined, until eventually the most accurate model is obtained: that of a sotapanna.

I would like to know what such a practical model would look like.

The most practical model I'm able to come up with which justifies the precepts and sense restraint is the following:

Incline the mind towards the enjoyment of only that which is worth enjoying; not what is not worth enjoying. What is not worth enjoying? The world. What is worth enjoying? That which is not based on the world.

Why is the world not worth enjoying? Because it is subject to change, and the mind does not understand that; if it were to, *it* would not want to go there (proof via personal experience). Why should I want the mind to not enjoy the world? Because the mind which enjoys the world desires; and desire is not wanted; desire being not wanted, there is all my engagement with the world *which never solves the problem of the mind enjoying the world*. Teaching the mind *to not* enjoy what is *not* worth enjoying: this will actually solve the problem that giving into desire is meant to solve.

How should I teach the mind to not enjoy what is not worth enjoying? I establish myself in the precepts first, which are coarse forms of enjoying the world. Then, when I've gained a "distance" from the senses as a result of establishing the mind within the precepts, I *see* directly thus: "these choices will lead to the mind enjoying this, whereas these choices will lead the mind to *not* enjoying this". Seeing this, I choose the choices which will *not* lead to it enjoying that.

When I've dwelled sufficiently thus, and see the mind largely inclining towards keeping the precepts, I go further and see more subtler phenomena still pertaining to the world that it values and practice similarly.

For an example of how I train my mind consider the following:

I establish myself in the non-enjoying of women; the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch and thought of them. Why is that? Because all form is subject to change, and that which is subject to change is not worth enjoying; and the form that my mind enjoys the most is that of a woman. When I've "kept" up this motivation sufficiently enough, I start to *see* actions and their relation to the mind enjoying women; I *see* that at this moment, if I do this, the mind will incline here. So I don't do that. I then reflect continually and try to "review" the mind even further: is there any hints that the mind will still incline towards that? If so, on account of what actions is it that it still has the possibility of valuing that? Reflecting on this, those subtler actions become apparent, and I sufficiently *not* do those



until any hints of it valuing that has been completely cleared, without a doubt.

Reflecting on this current model I have gives me confidence. Is it decent?

Perhaps me asking “is it decent” is itself a sign that there’s still residue of that overtly rationalization-seeking behavior that I’d just initially pointed out. But in any case, I will leave it out in case anything of use can come out of it.

### EDIT:

I’ve been seeing some misconceptions in the comments so I thought I’d clarify. It seems people do not understand what I mean by a model/system; by that, I simply mean something which is able to explain what I have to do (in this particular case, keep precepts and sense restraint), why I have to do it, and why it works (practically speaking).

Reason I say this is because in some comments I see the mention that gradual training is a model; which, the manner in which I’m using the word here, it is not; it is rather a set of trainings as the compound implies. And there also seems to be the common perception that I’m trying to rationalize away “sexual attraction” and “dispel the discomfort of not making any progress”; I’m not trying to do that. The purpose of the example above regarding women was to show my current idea of how I should be practicing; I’m unsure how it’s being seen as some manner of justification for anything.

I also see the assertion that I’m currently trying to systematize knowledge again; however, I should mention, I do not see a problem in systematization, and that is precisely what I had come to look here for: a practical system/model. What I had an issue was with the kind of neurotic intellectual reconstruction of my present system/model of the Dhamma in hopes that I could get a perfect picture *prior* to being thoroughly sense restrained.

Again, what I find a problem here with is the (now previous) **neurotic** intellectual reconstruction and re-evaluation of the system. I still greatly value a clear system, of which, I’m able to see the relevance of every component and relationship, and justify it rationally. Except, I’m not able to do that to the best degree possible unless I’m first thoroughly restrained.

Now, I should perhaps also give further context for where I currently am in the gradual training. I keep the five precepts and am celibate; I do not listen to music (the inclination towards that has been largely dropped), I do not engage in coarse entertainment (shows, movies, shopping, etc.) and only have subtle entertainment left (getting derailed while on the internet trying to study). I do not eat for the sake of pleasure, however, I haven’t put a maximum on how many times I can eat yet because I currently need to eat to gain more physical strength; I do not have adequate enough physical strength to do a lot of things. Once I’ve stabilized my weight to where I have enough energy to do the day-to-day things, I will start fasting on Saturday/Sundays by eating once a day and hopefully, from there, expand if the body allows. I do not sleep on the floor yet, but I intend on doing that once I have enough strength.

I do not have a lot of friends now because I’m fairly content being by myself and don’t need to look for others.

I'm fairly well-established in what I've mentioned above.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-28 05:47:18

My concern now is in simply anchoring myself in a practical model that is able to provide a value for the precepts and sense restraint, which I can hold on to till I gain mastery in them.

The problem here is the assumption that you have a say in what practical model will provide a value for the precepts and sense restraint. You don't. Different "models" will inspire the mind to do the work at different times and for different people. The Suttas are full of such "models," and you can take up whichever feels more relatable and clear at the time.

If there's resistance towards that lack of control, that's a remnant of the same neuroticism you described and ultimately an expression of the view of self (assuming control over your experience from the outside). So you would need to include *that* as something to give up and not act out of within whichever model you're using at the time.

## Renouncing the renunciation, question for HH and a possible critique

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-02-26 21:16:00

Since I for long have conflicting views about the path and didn't realise that "stilling of all activities, relinquishment of acquisitions" is rather self-explanatory and I feel like at this moment in time I prefer to stay a layman and put value in certain things that a monk would not be able to value I wonder where will my path lead me if I practice a certain degree of incremental restraint, watchfulness of my intentions, trying to maintain the right perspective and so on, while clearly not giving up everything . What Ajahn Nyanamoli said in his recent talks makes sense to me, yet I am not exactly "not doing it" and waiting for results to happen. I am doing certain things and see certain results, but am very confused in regard to what my expectations should be as a layman. Some inserts from the suttas:

1. **Anathapindika:** The Buddha's chief male lay disciple and a stream-enterer, was a wealthy householder with a family. The texts mention his role as a father and a husband, suggesting he likely maintained a typical lay life.
2. **Visakha:** One of the foremost female lay disciples and a stream-enterer, was married with many children and grandchildren. Her family life implies that sexual relations were part of her lay experience.
3. **Citta the Householder:** He was a sotapanna who remained a layperson, continued his household duties, and engaged in business. There is no mention of him practicing celibacy.

4. In the Anana Sutta (AN 4.62), the Buddha explains that a sotapanna may still enjoy sensual pleasures but will not break the five precepts, including avoiding sexual misconduct. However, this does not imply total abstinence from sex, only adherence to ethical behaviour regarding it.
5. In the **Sigalovada Sutta** (DN 31), which addresses householders, the Buddha provides guidance on how to conduct relationships ethically, indicating that sexual conduct within a marriage is considered acceptable for laypeople.

So this gives me a picture that “yes I can still be a sotapanna and it doesn’t matter what anyone says”, but if on the other hand I am wrong and don’t see it I’d rather know

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-27 13:22:47**

Thinking in terms of how many precepts to follow depending on what type of person you are externally means remaining bound to silabbataparamasa, rather than your actions being guided by direct insight of kusala and akusala, which is what defines a sotapanna.

The fact that the Suttas mention the five precepts for laypeople doesn’t mean that they went about their lives doing whatever they wanted except those five things, while somehow practicing the Dhamma nevertheless. It means that was the lowest common denominator that they would not go below even in their most heedless moments. When they made efforts in the practice, they would have to have developed the exact same right intention (of renunciation, non-aversion, and non-cruelty) as monks.

It’s one thing to not be able to fulfill renunciation all at once, and entirely another to redefine what the goal is so that renunciation becomes optional. Even if you then call it “Dhamma” and “noble eightfold path,” it’s something else now.

I’ve seen lay disciples who have learned the Dhamma. Though saying, “Sensuality is impermanent”, they’re infatuated with gems and jewelry, concerned for their partners and children.

They indeed don’t know the purpose of this Dhamma. Even though they say “Sensuality is impermanent”, They don’t have the power to cut passion, so they’re bound to children, spouses, and wealth.

—Theragāthā 2.34

Furthermore, what if, hypothetically, all those stories of householders attaining sotapatti were actually made up to make Buddhism more appealing to the common layperson? You can’t know for sure.

But you can see for yourself here and now (if you’re authentic) that liberation and sensuality are two opposite directions. So if you want to take the safe route and not just conform to a pre-defined role in the Buddhist community that may or may not lead to what you hope it will, you need to put that discernment first. And most likely, that’s exactly what those laypeople who did become sotapannas did. Their remaining household ties were not because they thought those things were “fine” in light of their lofty aim; they were

seen as fetters they were still too weak to cut.

(Edit: Note also that the lay disciples the Buddha established as role models were anāgamis, i.e. had abandoned sensuality).

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-28 05:26:21 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

setting people up for failure because the only goal must be nibbana, even though its not the only goal a person can have, while some degree of awakening is good for everyone and benefits the world and reduces suffering

The true “failure” is to develop wrong views about the Dhamma, such as that renunciation is optional and the Dhamma can be practiced apart from it. Right intention in the eight-fold path includes renunciation. It’s far better to fail at the right thing than to succeed at the wrong thing.

It means exactly that they went about their lives doing whatever they wanted within the 5 precepts

My point is, they *could* and may often have done so. But that does not mean that they were *making progress* on that account (towards non-return, which would be their aim).

That’s exactly why the Uposatha observance exists. It was a regular opportunity for a layperson to re-align themselves with the behavior of an Arahant. And the more someone wanted to be an Arahant, the more they would try to maintain that all the time, not just slip back to five precepts mindlessly as soon as the Uposatha is finished. And the Uposatha used to be weekly, not bi-weekly as it often is today.

Attachment and non-attachment are two opposite directions, but people define what is what differently and this is the crucial point.

Yes, and some definitions will be adequate, others not.

It’s like saying, “people define what is an addiction differently.” Sure, but does the person still consume the drug at all? If the answer is yes, then compared to someone who is completely free from that, they are still addicted, no matter what mental gymnastics they engage in to convince themselves otherwise.

There’s no shame in admitting that actually giving up craving is difficult and you don’t feel like doing it. Almost nobody does. But twisting the Dhamma so that you can reconcile sensuality with it is not a good move, and there’s no justification for it. Nobody’s forcing you to practice the Dhamma.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-04 07:08:49 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Sure, it's not like every monastic was an Arahant or even an ariya. Even the Suttas don't claim otherwise. And the reason would have been the same as for laypeople who failed to attain anything despite hearing the Dhamma many times: a mind still obstructed by passion.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-04 13:12:48 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

The point is everywhere in the Suttas, not just there. The stock description of people seeing the Dhamma always involves their minds turning away from sensuality first, upon recognizing its peril.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-05 06:06:50 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

would you please explain why you made this statement that appears, to me, to not be in accordance with the two characteristics of the buddha's dhamma that i've included below?

The two characteristics you mention apply to the Dhamma as an experiential principle, not to historical knowledge—such as whether laypeople mentioned in the Suttas as having attained stream entry truly did so. And as I think I made clear, the statement was mainly rhetorical.

if so, how do you reconcile that view with the following characteristic of the buddha's dhamma that i've included below?

The Dhamma itself is independent of time, but the *realization* of the Dhamma is gradual and requires time.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-05 10:00:20 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Why make this rhetorical statement if that's indeed what you were doing? I really want to understand where you're coming from

The original post references Suttas that in an attempt to support the view that renunciation is not necessary for attaining stream entry. I presented a hypothetical to highlight that the safe bet is to prioritize one's own honest recognition that sensuality and liberation are two opposing directions (something that one can eventually know beyond all doubt) rather than conclusions reached from a liberal interpretation of stories whose accuracy will always be subject to doubt.

I guess what I'm getting at is I fail to see where the six characteristics of Buddha-Dhamma aren't applicable...

*ehipassiko*, etc., doesn't mean one will know whether a certain account of something that took place 2500 years ago is fully accurate or not. What one "comes and sees", is presently evident, etc., is the four noble truths.

Does this historical knowledge bring immediate results with regards to dissatisfaction and the end of dissatisfaction?

No, and I never claimed otherwise. I do agree that the end of dissatisfaction comes from a fundamentally different kind of knowledge, and that knowledge and the path to attaining it are the subject of many of the discussions on this forum. On the other hand, I strongly disagree that the "immediate result" produced by the practice you propose is the true ending of dissatisfaction. That said, you seem quite convinced—so to each their own.

## **How should we interpret AN 5:161, “The Subduing of Hatred”, which recommends developing goodwill for someone if you’ve given birth to hatred for them?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** AlexCoventry 2025-02-26 02:57:51

# The Subduing of Hatred (1): Āghatāvinaya Sutta (AN 5:161)

“There are these five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely. Which five?

“When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should develop goodwill for that individual. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should develop compassion for that individual. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should develop equanimity toward that individual. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should pay him no mind & pay him no attention. Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“When you give birth to hatred for an individual, you should direct your thoughts to the fact of his being the product of his actions: ‘This venerable one is the doer of his actions, heir of his actions, born of his actions, related by his actions, and has his actions as his arbitrator. Whatever action he does, for good or for evil, to that will he fall heir.’ Thus the hatred for that individual should be subdued.

“These are five ways of subduing hatred by which, when hatred arises in a monk, he should wipe it out completely.”

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-27 09:25:39**

There’s no problem with the idea of “dispelling” or “wiping out” hatred or any other unwholesome state thorough these cultivations.

The problem is that for most people, because of not being developed in regard to the pressure of their their minds on account of lack of virtue and so on, their recognition of the mind state of hatred is limited to the superficial negative thoughts that are a byproduct of it, and thus they believe merely replacing those with good thoughts is enough.

But one has to recognize that the state of anger is something much more fundamental than those thoughts. It’s more along the lines of the “mood” you’re in, and you can’t get rid of your mood instantaneously. Thus, you need to *first* come to terms with that fact (AKA “endure” the arisen mood, which means not giving in to the thoughts it proposes, nor distracting yourself from it).

On the basis of that, without at any point getting impatient and trying to fight with the mind directly (thereby acting out of the same aversion), you can develop these five themes. As a result, you eventually “wipe out” the actual liability to angry thoughts altogether (the angry mood) rather than merely managing it and sweeping it under the rug with contrived positive thoughts. And then the mind would incline towards good will and so on by itself, without you “doing” it.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-28 05:37:29 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

cultivating metta in order to provoke the processes of clinging to that hostile mood, for the sake of better understanding those processes?

I’m not sure what you mean by “provoking the processes of clinging.”

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-28 15:40:29 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Cultivating mettā cannot trigger resistance. This sounds like what I referred to above: an attempt to replace the bad thoughts arising from an angry mind with good thoughts, overlooking the angry mind or leaving it to somehow sort itself out. That attempt might trigger a secondary resistance whose disappearance can be confused with successful cultivation of mettā (especially when the root resistance already feels normal due to an insufficiently restrained lifestyle; *brahmavihāra* and *brahmacariya* go together).

That’s the popular approach, but it’s just a way of covering up the resistant mind, which still lingers to some extent. And that’s why the full-blown resistance sooner or later returns, whereas proper cultivation of mettā would uproot any tendency to ill will, even without actively practicing mettā ever again.

To be able to cultivate mettā, you first need to familiarize yourself with what a hateful

or resistant mind actually is: an ambiguous “cloud” that looms overhead despite whatever you might do. That’s the third satipaṭṭhāna, and it’s not the same as allowing hateful *thoughts* to persist (which should not be done, as the Buddha said). You’ll only be able to see that hateful mind for what it is if you don’t jump into action in response to it, which includes what you seem to be describing as “cultivating mettā.”

Mettā is about completely dispelling that cloud on the basis of seeing it clearly, not just maneuvering around it or compensating for it on a superficial level.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-03-02 13:47:53 (in reply to a comment not included)**

And then you try to get rid of the mood, by replacing it with another mood, which requires thinking thoughts of goodwill?

No, that’s the point. Thinking thoughts of goodwill won’t lead you to a mind of mettā, because the mind (citta) and thoughts constitute two separate domains without a direct connection. The stock brahmavihāra description quite clearly says that one pervades the whole world with a *mind* (citta) of mettā, karuṇa, etc.

Practically, the distinction is that with a mind of mettā, you wouldn’t wish harm on another even if they were to harm or kill you and everyone close to you, while being fully aware of what that person did. Someone whose practice consists of thinking thoughts of goodwill must cover up and ignore the negative while focusing on the positive. That only works up to a certain point and is doomed to fail long before it comes to such extreme scenarios.

But also “seeing it clearly” what does that mean?

It means you’ve been keeping the precepts consistently, not engaging or delighting in sensuality, and not delighting in company, and the phenomenon of the mind has become apparent as a result. You’re able to see pressure *as such*, and you see that you have a clear choice in following that pressure (including by thought) or not. Whereas before your only two options were acting out of the pressure or ignoring it through distraction.

You can’t develop mettā or any other form of mental cultivation unless you go through that training that reveals the mind, since all you will see and be able to work with is your thoughts and the secondary feelings that they arouse, i.e., distractions that leave the underlying aversion unchanged.

How do you ensure you aren’t just ignoring angry thoughts out of aversion? Is it possible to try to get rid of the angry mood for aversive reasons?

Such mistakes can only happen if you haven’t fulfilled the necessary training and therefore don’t see the mind clearly. Otherwise, you would be aware of the aversion as such.



## 7 'Existences' vs. 7 'Lifetimes' - for a Sotāpanna

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** upasakatraine 2025-02-25 07:53:34

Hello Bhante,

In common usage, it is often said that a Sotāpanna will make and end to Saṃsāra within 7 lifetimes. This is usually taken to mean 7 more rebirths at most.

However, is it to be understood differently as 7 'existences' (bhava) instead, which need not correspond specifically to 7 'rebirths'?

In DN18, we see that King Bimbisāra appears to the Buddha as a Yakkha, and mentions that he is indeed Bimbisāra, who recollects his 14 rebirths to the Buddha. And he mentions that he has for long known himself to be a Sotāpanna, and now aspires to become a Sakadāgāmi.

Could you shed some light on how this is to be understood?

Thank you!

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-27 05:40:31

AN 3.80 says:

Udāyī, if Ānanda were to die without being free of lust, then because of his confidence he would exercise celestial kingship among the devas seven times and great kingship in this Jambudīpa seven times. However, in this very life Ānanda will attain final nibbāna.

...which adds up to 14 births (note that the translation on SuttaCentral deviates from the Pāli in order to preserve the traditional view. The above is Bhikkhu Bodhi's rendering).

AN 9.12 has:

*sattakkhattuparamaṃ deve ca manusse ca saṃdhāvitvā saṃsaritvā* moves between gods and humans seven times.

*sattakkhattuparamaṃ* has been traditionally (perhaps due to the Commentaries) interpreted as 7 births, but it is never actually specified as such in the Suttas.

And if the passage in DN 18 is accurate, it also means 7 existences is not automatically 14 births.

## Introducing new rules to r/HillsideHermitage

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Bhikkhu\_Anigha 2025-02-24 07:28:55

So far, this subreddit has operated smoothly with no active moderation or rules. However, it is now approaching 1,000 subscribers—more than four times the number from a

year and a half ago when I joined. In recent months, the quality and usefulness of posts have noticeably declined compared to a year ago, an inevitable consequence of increased traffic. While the situation could be much worse—reflecting the generally good character of users here compared to most subreddits—it will not improve or stabilize on its own.

In response, I drafted a list of guidelines and reviewed them with the other mods to ensure this continues to be a reliable, high-quality resource for learning about and discussing HH teachings, which was and should remain its intended purpose.

The guidelines should now be visible in the sidebar. I will leave this thread open for a week to make room for clarification and discussion of the new rules.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-24 09:57:13 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Thanks for the feedback. I edited the rules, and now they should be visible on old Reddit as well.

## **Seeking Guidance: Stay Close to Family or Embrace Solitude in a Monastery?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Global\_Ad\_7891 2025-02-22 16:51:29

Hey everyone,

I'm a 25-year-old currently grappling with lung problems, so the reality of my mortality is always on my mind. I've been practicing sense restraint for a few weeks now—my days mostly consist of going to work, reading suttas and browsing Reddit, and spending quiet hours in my room just staring at the wall. Surprisingly, doing nothing isn't too difficult for me.

I have some financial flexibility and could move to a secluded place, but I'm torn. On one hand, living in solitude or even joining a monastery (like the Bhavana Society in West Virginia, which is the closest option) has its appeal for deepening my practice. On the other hand, given my health condition, staying close to family—specifically, living with my mom who can take care of me if things take a turn—seems like the safer bet.

Here are my main questions:

- Should I quit my job and continue living with my mom to be near support, focusing on achieving sotapanna while staying as secluded as possible? We have a pretty relaxed lifestyle with not much social interaction.
- Would it be better to move and live alone in a secluded area despite the distance from my family?
- Or is joining a monastery the right path, even though it might not be the ideal environment if my health worsens?

I'm relatively new to the practice, so any advice or shared experiences would be incredibly valuable. Thanks for reading, and I look forward to your thoughts!

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-24 06:43:34

I would advise making sure you are already fully committed to the practice (keeping the eight precepts, being withdrawn from and not delighting in sensuality and worldly pleasures) before you commit to ordaining. Being committed to that unconditionally is what matters; "staring at the wall" is not necessarily useful.

If you can't do that, it would show that you're not taking enough responsibility for your practice and are expecting the monastery environment to motivate you to do it. The monastery is not supposed to make you do what you otherwise wouldn't do; it's supposed to support you in doing what you would be doing anyway.

## Navigating the Balance Between Practice and Health Risks

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** SacredStomach 2025-02-22 03:53:33

I'm about to visit Southeast Asia to ordain and I've been trying to figure out what my best move is. Here are the things I'm considering:

1. Southeast Asia appears to have the best monasteries for practice and ordination (and visa stuff, as a foreigner)
2. Soil Transmitted Helminths are really common in these places (hookworms, roundworms that can enter your bloodstream through your (bare) feet and wind up in your intestines)
3. I'm actually not grossed out by this, my main concern is that there can be serious health consequences, including premature death
4. **Basically, I'm trying to figure out how important it is to go to a place that I think is better for practice but where I may be more likely to die sooner (hard to really know), or whether I should go to a less ideal monastery that appears safer (but where I could still definitely die) and try to achieve right view there first?**
5. Is there a chance that being in an environment that really reveals the unownability of the body in this way might expedite the process of getting right view?
6. How much can I emotionally relinquish the body while still taking measures to protect it?

If anyone has any thoughts on this, I would appreciate hearing them. Also, if anyone who has been in SEA (especially as a monastic) has any suggestions on **how to prevent or treat helminth infections that don't break the precepts or monastic rules**, please let me know.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-24 05:51:12**

It's common for people who take for granted their very safe urban environment to have such concerns, but it's not as big of a deal as it initially appears. The mind is just irrationally afraid of the unknown because it's so used to its current level of apparent safety.

You're close to 100 times more likely to die from a car accident, and yet you're probably not too worried about it. On top of this, living in a city makes you more likely to be in a bad mental state at the time of death when it comes.

It's also not like you'll never get proper medical care again after you ordain. You would have to either be very obtuse and ignore the symptoms, or refuse to be taken to the hospital in order to die or suffer any major complications from a worm infection even in Asia.

Is there a chance that being in an environment that really reveals the unownability of the body in this way might expedite the process of getting right view?

It's only revealing of that unownability when compared to the rather exorbitant Western standard. You'd probably have to look hard to find a place that exposes that unownability to an extent that takes more just a few weeks to get used to even as a Westerner. And that's usually not the type of place that would ordain you. Even forest monks in Asia often live in better conditions and with more luxuries than people in the nearby villages, and probably most of the world as well. But yes, it would still be easier to contemplate and recognize those things compared to wherever you probably are now.

How much can I emotionally relinquish the body while still taking measures to protect it?

By making sure that the measures you take are not rooted in emotional attachment but in buying yourself time to practice. If that's your context, it will automatically keep in check potential irrational obsessions with preventing as many threats to your health as you can, blowing the risks out of proportion. That still doesn't mean you will have emotionally relinquished the body, as that comes through wisdom. But at least you won't be actively strengthening your sense of ownership of it.

Haven't been in SEA myself, but in Sri Lanka I never had any issues with worms despite eating alms from poor village homes daily. I imagine monks there will have tried and true methods to deal with worms if they indeed tend to cause significant issues. You can be sure that they're not equanimously putting up with illness or death left and right.

## **Wakefulness, and the watches of the night**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** meshinthesky 2025-02-19 08:01:50

In MN39

What more is there to do? You should train yourselves like this: 'We will be dedicated to wakefulness. When practicing walking and sitting meditation by

day, we will purify our mind from obstacles. In the first watch of the night, we will continue to practice walking and sitting meditation. In the middle watch, we will lie down in the lion's posture—on the right side, placing one foot on top of the other—mindful and aware, and focused on the time of getting up. In the last watch, we will get up and continue to practice walking and sitting meditation, purifying our mind from obstacles.'

In dhammapada

If a man really regards himself as dear, let him well and truly protect himself. During one or another of the three watches the spiritually mature person should keep wide awake.

Thus, Buddha is saying that at least in one of the three watches one should keep awake practicing accordingly.

- 1) I assume the day is equally divided into morning, noon, and night... is that right?
- 2) I assume the night is equally divided into three watches... is that right?
- 3) when one is said to be accomplished in being wakeful? (in the calculations I've done, it seems one needs to be wakeful sleeping around 5 hours)
- 4) the lion's posture is something repeated again and again. Yet, I have not seen almost any discussion on it. I assume the goal is to keep protecting our own body posture and to not get loose even in sleep.

Is this proper lion's posture? <https://www.vineobstacleszen.com/content/images/2023/07/EPSON582-2.jpg>

Is this what a perfect lion's posture looks like? <https://scdd.sfo2.cdn.digitaloceanspaces.com/uploads/original/3X/6/0/606de3046905bea12aca968eeacc02a2127185b7.jpeg>

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-19 18:05:40**

Apart from what u/no\_thingness replied, it's also useful to remember that being fully established in the precepts with the right attitude, and being able to recognize—in regard to oneself, not in abstraction—which things are beneficial and which are not already constitutes stream entry.

The “right attitude” means any sense of duty in regard to the precepts has completely disappeared, and yet one does not break them no matter what, because there is a direct and absolutely immovable discernment of those actions being *in themselves* categorically harmful the instant one intends to perform them, irrespective of any subsequent consequences and effects on other people.

A simple question to ask oneself is: “if I were to receive an indisputable guarantee that I can attain Nibbāna without keeping any precepts at all and doing whatever I want, would I feel even the slightest elation at that prospect, and would I stop keeping *any* of them?” Until one can answer “no” to that question with perfect confidence, one's main task is

to perfect not only one's external virtue (which anyone can do while remaining equally ignorant) but also the attitude and views behind it. Any practices the Buddha gave subsequent to the aggregate of noble virtue should not be taken on in a fixed manner until then, because one is very likely to undertake them wrongly (i.e., still with a sense of duty behind it rather than direct recognition of wholesome and unwholesome).

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-20 09:48:37 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

There is a noticeable pattern: the more I sleep; the more I dream; the more the mind creates its dream movies, the more the mind, as a sense, gets loose, and pasture in unwholesome fields. So, I kinda think that starting with the next step "dedicate to wakefulness" right now would help me with the "restraining the sense doors"...

This is a good example of what I meant. This is not the right motivation for trying to limit your sleep, and the fact that you think sleep causes a tendency towards unwholesome thoughts means you have not sufficiently understood what unwholesome thoughts are and how they actually come about. Sleep cannot create unwholesome thoughts on its own; it's through you not being sufficiently clear enough about where the "gateway" lies in regard to your own intentions that your mind proliferates in unwholesome directions (assuming that is what's actually happening, and you're not overreaching by seeing thinking itself as unwholesome).

So if you were to commit to the practice of restricting your sleep, you would do so on the basis of that already wrong assumption about where the problem lies, and that would make that practice wrong even if you were practicing the external form of wakefulness perfectly. You wouldn't actually be wakeful even if you never slept, because as the description goes, it's about clearing the mind from obstructive states, which means one needs to be very clear about what those states are already. Not just stick to an external prescription. Notice that the instruction regarding the watches of the night and so on *follows* the instruction to clear one's mind of obstructive states. In other words, those specific habits are the *result* of the right attitude. And you can't arrive at the right attitude without understanding it, merely emulating the external form instead.

Since Buddha laid down a specific and physical set of instructions on how to sleep and how much to sleep, why a trainee should not do his best to follow them?

He didn't lay that down in a categorical manner for everyone. It's even absent from the list of 5 things new monks should train in. It is quite clearly stated that it is undertaken after the practice of sense restraint has been completed, and as I noted before, if you had the right understanding of what virtue is, let alone sense restraint, you would already be at least a sotāpanna. So the task is to keep going back to that understanding, revising it and upgrading it for as long as it takes, and not to start building a structure of more advanced practices on a still shaky foundation.

Sleeping is also not a sensual enjoyment in itself, and the way you are expressing your perspective sounds to me like you might be drifting in the direction of self-mortification, because it would then follow that only by never sleeping would you be free from sensuality. Māra even tried to convince the Buddha that his sleeping was indulgent, and he failed.

Just like eating, sleeping is sensual enjoyment *when* it is done with sensual motivations, and that's not intrinsically connected even with how long you sleep. One person could theoretically sleep 9 hours one day without any craving, another one not sleep at all but with a mind affected with craving and ignorance top to bottom, all the while thinking themselves to be pure because of how little they sleep.

So I would put it this way: disregarding sleep duration altogether, if you catch yourself sleeping in when you're not really tired at all, and it's clear that it's rooted in laziness and nothing else, that's something you should try to restrain. But it would be a problem because of acting out of craving there and then, not because it would later create unwholesome tendencies through some unknown mechanism. Beyond refraining from that, which you could consider to be on the level of virtue, I wouldn't advise trying to pre-determine a sleep schedule/procedure yet because it simply won't be coming from the right place, and it would mean acting as if you already completed the much more foundational work when you in fact did not.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-20 15:47:52 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

... or that I should go back to focus on external virtue until that habit gets strong enough to bring a chance for itself?

Virtue is not external. Otherwise, a newborn baby would be virtuous already because they don't break the precepts. "Virtue" refers to acting with a mind free from greed, aversion, and delusion (see MN 78). Hence, as I mentioned, only a sotāpanna has developed virtue properly speaking; that's when one is trained enough to see the defilements clearly.

Even in the case when one is focused purely in virtue: one should do effort in restraining the delusional habits of the mind and senses, right?

It depends on what you mean by "delusional habits." If you mean thoughts of unwholesome nature—of sensual desire and irritation; thoughts and fantasies of breaking the precepts—then yes, that needs to stop because that would fall within virtue. But if what you are referring to as "delusional habits" is mental chatter about this or that, then no, and trying to stop that would be overstepping the mark and falling into the same wrong view that underlies meditation techniques.

If the latter is the perspective you've been working with, I'd recommend even stopping what you have so far been considering as sense restraint altogether, and going back to simply training in virtue without trying to curb your mind any further than that.

See this recent discussion for an idea of what that would look like.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-21 10:01:46 (in reply to a comment not included)**

- (a) one is virtuous when one acts, speaks, and thinks virtuously in a natural and effortless way - the senses, including the mind, may want this or avoid that, but one does not need to fight with them to keep the virtue in body, speech, and thought.

Yes, and practically speaking, that also means being free from doubt about the nature wholesome and unwholesome in the most general sense, because it's not about externals, but about seeing one's own mind and intentions clearly. And it's essential to be able to make the distinction between something being wanted (a pressure arising), and you acting even by thought in regard to it. Those are two separate things, but people tend to overshoot and try to get rid of the mental pressure as well, not just the intentional "picking up" of images *on account of* the pressure, which is what they are directly responsible for.

- (b) one is sense restrained when on their own accord the senses do not anymore want this or avoid that - thus they are said to be pacified.

Not necessarily. The senses being "pacified" (i.e., still perfectly functional and aware of the same objects but free from defiled intentions towards them) means being in samādhi. Practicing sense restraint properly simply means not attending to things out of greed, aversion, and delusion, even if those pressures are still there.

But it's important to remember the presence of defilements or craving is determined by the mental state at the time, *not* by the specific objects. So at one point, *because* you're in an angry mood, thinking about someone's faults or about something you dislike can be unwholesome because it will make that state worse. On another occasion, if the mind is more neutral or even content, and you're able to keep it so, those same thoughts would not be a problem at all. Hence what matters is the the state of mind, as you quoted. And if you adhered to that principle, you would be unable to break any of the fundamental precepts, since that would have to come out of a defiled mind. That's how the early Saṅgha lived without any rules for a good while.

**If one stops practicing sense restraint does dukkha return or is some dukkha permanently removed given enough time?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** NibannaGhost 2025-02-17 15:33:12

If a monk practicing correctly disrobed would they be less liable to suffering permanently even when engaging with sensuality? What does a layperson's life look like if they're practicing correctly?



**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-17 17:50:34**

It's impossible for a monk practicing rightly to disrobe (in the sense of actually returning to a lay lifestyle), let alone to engage in sensuality, precisely *because* he would be free from suffering. Engaging in sensuality is rooted in suffering, and the Suttas always refer to disrobing as “returning to what is inferior” (*hīnāya-āvattati*).

What does a layperson's life look like if they're practicing correctly?

Being free from virtually all suffering and experiencing near perfect peace (*anāgāmi*), and therefore not engaging nor even being interested in sensuality, relationships, or worldly pleasures of any kind, even if they still have a job and practical affairs to take care of. But there would have to be a good reason for them not to give everything up and go forth, such as supporting aging parents or children that were born before they freed themselves, for they would have no personal interest in anything that lay life has to offer beyond fulfilling a lingering sense of duty towards family, rooted in the five higher fetters they would still have.

See AN 8.21, MN 81, and SN 55.6 for examples.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-18 07:09:28 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Monk is a profession/vocation.

Nowadays and most of the time, yes, because of the deterioration of the practice at large and the introduction of arbitrary rituals and responsibilities akin to what priests in other religions do, which were not part of the original lifestyle of monks, and which need to be put aside in order to actually meet the standard of a bhikkhu. So it's disingenuous to suggest that that's what a monk is *supposed* to be. A monk is someone whose sole focus in life is to practice and realize the Dhamma. Not being a monk (or a recluse/renunciate, more accurately speaking) means having other priorities that subtract from that.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-18 09:01:26 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Sramana is not a social role or position. It doesn't require social recognition, a uniform, or a membership of a group. Sramana is a state of mind.

Of course, that's exactly what I mean. That's why I clarified with “recluse/renunciate” to distinguish from the external situation of formal ordination, which in itself means next to nothing.

But being a samana definitionally does also involve not wasting any effort and time with things that have nothing to do with the Dhamma and even act as a distraction from it, such as all lay affairs. All attachments are ultimately “evil.”

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-18 15:46:25 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It does take dedication towards developing the mental skills necessary to study ‘attachment’ rather than be obsessed with presence or absence of apples, or jobs, or money ... etc

It seems you’re making a strawman here. Nobody’s saying that the absence of any amount of external things amounts to successful practice in itself.

An extremely smart sramana engages and disengages with apples in order to study the attachment to apples in both conditions juxtaposed against each other.

The example of apples is moot and blurs the lines between things that can be done without attachment and those that can’t. If you were to deepen your understanding of what attachment is, you would see that certain things, namely the things that define household life, cannot be partaken in without it.

Besides, pausing engagement for x amount of time and committing oneself to not engaging **ever** again are earth and sky. You see that even with drug addicts; they can go for a good while without actually consuming their substance if they know they’ll be going back to it eventually and they still have it available just in case.

So someone who thinks they are “engaging without attachment” should test themselves by giving up the engagements completely and forever. Even just half a decade might suffice for a real test. For extra challenge, add living alone in a remote forest like an “external” samana, exposed to the elements constantly, and with nothing but their mental skills to rely on for comfort and happiness.

If they are truly free from craving, there will not be the slightest dissatisfaction arising at any point. And they will gain tons of extra time and energy to do whatever their practice is, continuously experiencing even deeper states of peace as a result.

As with anything that’s difficult to do, feeling like they would be fine in that scenario while sitting comfortably at home does not count.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-18 16:49:29 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I have not downvoted you.

## **Rise and Fall of the Five Aggregates**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Omaree9 2025-02-16 13:56:45

I think there is a common misunderstanding when it comes to this statement of the Buddha. What current practitioners think the Buddha meant is to see the inconstant nature of

the Aggregates, how they are always changing. What I think the Buddha meant was to see how they arise and fall based on Dependent Origination. How they come to be through the causal process, which is independent of the idea of I. It is an impersonal process that works independent of an autonomous entity. So seeing the rise and fall of the aggregates would be understanding how form comes to be: through birth, through craving, through rebirth, through eating of food, all the things that cause form, ie this body, to exist and persist and all the things that cause it to disappear, to no longer exist.

Does this make sense?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-17 05:59:33**

What I think the Buddha meant was to see how they arise and fall based on Dependent Origination. How they come to be through the causal process, which is independent of the idea of I. It is an impersonal process that works independent of an autonomous entity.

This too is a common misunderstanding of modern practitioners. Aside from Arahants, there isn't even one "process" in anyone's experience that is actually "impersonal," because all experience, no matter how refined, consists of the five assumed aggregates or one among them (with upādāna varying in degrees). And the five assumed aggregates are precisely what personality (sakkāya) is.

Dependent origination in particular is the very opposite of an impersonal process; it is *the* origination of personality. The destruction of the entire thing is the goal, rather than seeing it as an "impersonal process" in some sort of psychoanalysis. When one is no longer ignorant and actually understands paticcasamuppāda, i.e., avijjā is gone, none of the other "factors" come to be either, and there is no dependent origination to analyze anymore.

Both of the notions you describe are popular, or at least follow the very same spirit as those that are. They conflate the Dhamma—which nobody starts out being able to see, and needs to be "realized by the wise for themselves" through practice and gradual training—with pleasing psychologizations that anyone who's learnt some Buddhist jargon can understand and "agree" with, and even formulate themselves.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-23 07:05:13 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Didn't the Buddha advise his disciples to view the aggregates as not me, myself, or my own?

Yes, but those were teachings for monks, who would've been established in the practice and lifestyle that makes all of those teachings not be abstract anymore. If you're someone who is properly "exposed" to the aggregates as they are by never acting out of greed, aversion, and delusion and living in solitude, you just can't fall into this type of elaborate

theoretical explanation because it's clear that it just doesn't apply, and you're overlooking the actual aggregates by engaging in it.

And yes, the Buddha talked about viewing the aggregates as *anattā*, but there's a good reason why there's no mention of things like "impersonal process that works independent of an autonomous entity." When you see the aggregates for what they are, you realize that such elaborate notions inevitably distract you from the direct seeing of them as simply "not mine", because they're not in your direct control, that's it. And that's all the Buddha said in his second discourse; he didn't forget to mention elaborate details of some larger theoretical framework.

## Question about the Heart of the Trap (upadana and gratification)

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Silatigi1 2025-02-16 13:23:49

Hello everyone,

from 40min until 45min of "Why did the Buddha say" *Sensuality* "to be an Assumption? | Hillside Hermitage"

I got intrigued by the appearant power of sensuality to divert, to cover up the actual pressure. We know it doesn't always work (+we know that from past experiences for which we had all the "green lights" of sensuality ON how quickly sense pleasure gets saturated and "doesn't work anymore", sometimes for days so called "rest of the warrior") but still I have an inkling that the trap would be easier to see if it never worked (not giving us the insidious idea of control see Bihhku Anigha : "*the ignorant mind continues to put an emphasis on the little control that it has and overlooks the more fundamental non-control. The enlightened mind does the opposite.*"), but then maybe this existence is all based on that trap, or rather this existence of us in this kamma loka IS the trap ? That without the trap this existence would not ("need" to) be ?

My question is very very basic : why is that that by engaging in sense pleasure we (are somewhat able to) stop resisting the pressure that the unpleasant feeling exerted on ourselves ? Is there a way to continuously feel the feeling while engaging ? Or rather the idea would be to see the danger in engaging (NN calls it the danger of wanting change, when change was the thing that caused the pressure in the first place in another discussion), and so stop engaging. Also in general curious about how a feeling feels without upadana ? What is that experience like phenonenologically ? Like seeing the feeling as feeling not affected by upadanna ? How was it before your development on the path and how is it now in comparison ?

Thank you for any pointer and help in understanding these.

Sil

# Why did the Buddha say "*Sensuality*" to be an Assumption? | Hillside Hermitage

[https://youtu.be/WNotZXYWV-0?si=\\_3EOAVfxep3JpIuy&t=2437](https://youtu.be/WNotZXYWV-0?si=_3EOAVfxep3JpIuy&t=2437)

Ven Nyanamoli :

Because that whole assumption that “I have a desire, then engage and like satisfy the desire then the desire runs away?” No! You just you, you get tied basically from running away from the pain, then you accept it, and it cease to hurt.

So what if you were to accept the pain right away, and removing the middleman of sensual pursuits that cannot possibly even pertain to the domain of pain? Then you realize you will be above the pain even before the pain.

You can't satisfy your desires. But nobody denies **that after a degree of engagement**, with your sensuality projected goals of your desires, **you don't feel painful anymore. Why is that?**

So this sense object remain unchanged, in a way, like you haven't truly consumed it and destroyed it. It's still there things you've been touching even the food in a way it's still there just now in the stomach as opposed to the table.

So nothing has come out of the material domain into your gut consumed by the all powerful sense of self. Yet there is no pain now. Why is that?

Ven. Akincano : We just covered it over?

NN : How can you cover it over ?

AkO : By... By...

How can it cover the order in the domain of census cannot possibly pertain to the domain of feelings? , what has changed?

Bhikku : You stop pursuing,

NN : you're not perceiving the pain anyway. You're feeling it. What has changed?

Bku + AkO: pursuing

NN : Yeah, but you stopped pursuing it, because it doesn't hurt anymore. The pressure is gone. **Why is that?** Why is it that it doesn't hurt anymore ? Why did he hurt in the first place?

AkO :Because you were just subjected to painful feeling?

NN : No, that's not suffering. Painful feeling is not Dukkha. Craving to be free from painful feelings, what Dukka is. So that's the only thing that changed. **After a certain amount of engagement** with sensual object pursuit of it, in particular, **you stopped resisting the unpleasant feeling in itself**. And that's why you don't suffer.

NN : But pursuit of sense object had nothing to do with you stop resisting it. It was basically a diversion. And that's why exactly, sometimes **if you keep engaging** with the pursuit of the sense objects, it becomes apparent that **it cannot do anything to the pain you're**

**feeling.** So what you do then ? You double down! you triple down! And that's how perception of sensuality proliferate. Because it has nothing to do with the domain that you're actually acting from.

NN : And then yeah, you go to the extremes. Just to hoping that **some of it will allow your mind to take it as a successful project of diversion**, basically. So you don't know how to stop craving the feeling, you're just doing these random things, **hoping that it will result in you at least temporarily forgetting about resisting the pain.**

NN: And that's why you have to stop engaging, etc. has to be first, even if you're completely ignorant, you have to start practicing sense restraint first. Because it's basically it's on the level of a magical belief or diversion, that you know, deep down.....

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-17 07:48:28**

The resistance does not stop *because* of engaging in sense pleasure. Rather, when resistance stops, it is because one has given up hope that the unpleasant pressure exerted by the senses will go away. The key point of the discussion is that one must learn to abandon that resistance directly, without resorting to sensual pleasures at all, which is like chanting a prayer hoping it will make you stop doing an activity that you yourself are actively performing.

Moreover, the situation is not static: the more one indulges in sensuality, the less effective it becomes, even in it's already very limited and superficial effectiveness. Eventually, it reaches a point where no amount of engagement can suppress the resistance, leading to burnout, where nothing can satisfy the mind anymore. At that point, the only remaining options are either to dwell with aversion and apathy, or to seek escape through sleep, intoxication, or other forms of distraction. And this happens both on a "micro" and "macro" level, with the latter type of burnout often becoming clinical depression.

As for whether one can "continuously feeling while engaging in sensuality"—not the feeling that matters. Thus, there is no benefit or justification for indulging. Sensual engagement is always rooted in ignoring the unpleasant feeling that drives it, and in avoiding responsibility for one's own suffering. It's inherently a failure to recognize that dukkha arises not from lacking the desired object, but from one's own internal craving. Engagement can thus only be rooted in ignorance of the four noble truths, and it will only grow and perpetuate that ignorance further.

It is also crucial to understand that one cannot wait for the dangers of sensuality to become clear in order to abandon engagement in it. The danger only becomes evident, and the mind only realizes the escape, **after** one has already refrained from engagement and one's conduct has been purified for a long time. The very act of indulging in sensuality prevents one from seeing its danger, so it's a vicious cycle that can only be broken by renouncing it first—regardless of how unpleasant that may feel initially.

*IF JHANA IS A NATURAL CONSEQUENCE OF SILA, HOW COME ARAHANTS ARE NOT ALWAYS IN JHANA?*

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-18 07:33:02 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Do you think someone who went as far with sensuality as experiencing what you described in that quote hasn't gone too far, isn't too broken to see the Dhamma?

They might be. But that's not something you can know in advance because the practice is bound to appear quite daunting for everyone initially.

Yes, someone who has experienced severe dukkha from their own indulgence could be less likely to fall for the false promise of meditation methods, but it all depends on their authenticity and faculties. They could also just feel so overwhelmed that they are not willing to do anything but look for a quick fix. But either way, yes, their practice would certainly be unpleasant, as the determining factor for that is how much greed, aversion and delusion one has accumulated, not the "approach" of practice that one chooses.

So ultimately, it's not the fact of having indulged too much that would increase the chances of success. It's authenticity and diligence, even without having experienced any adverse circumstances of any kind.

## **If jhana is a natural consequence of sila, how come arahants are not always in jhana?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** aaimnr 2025-02-15 14:17:14

Despite initial resistance I'm finding the interpretation of jhana as a natural stage of gradual training more and more beautiful, appealing, consistent with Buddha's words and to an extent corroborated by my experience (at least regarding some initial levels of samadhi).

There's one thing though that doesn't compute for me however, which is - if jhana is developed by understanding the danger of sensuality (as discussed eg in Samatha vs Vipassana video), and likewise second jhana is developed by seeing a "problem" in the preceding stage, how could Arahant remain in the First Jhana at all (and not in higher ones)? Moreover, how could they 'enter' jhana at will (which was mentioned in the suttas), how could they NOT be in the jhanas?

One potential explanation could be that the gradual training is a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for jhana, meaning that there IS a distinct 'samatha' step in somehow triggering the jhana as a specific state of mind. Which leads to a question of what is that additional/separate step or a dimension, because I don't remember it being discussed.

Thank you!

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-16 06:13:46

and likewise second jhana is developed by seeing a “problem” in the preceding stage, how could Arahant remain in the First Jhana at all (and not in higher ones)?

Seeing the danger and escape in regard to the five aggregates as a whole is what characterizes the Arahant. That is a much broader and fundamental knowledge than knowing a further (still conditioned) escape from each jhana, and it does not automatically translate to the latter. But of course they would have no issue developing it and mastering all the jhanas if they wanted to.

Moreover, how could they ‘enter’ jhana at will (which was mentioned in the suttas), how could they NOT be in the jhanas?

They would not be in any of the jhanas if they lost their seclusion and aloofness from the world for whatever practical reason. First jhāna is the cessation of speech, so merely having to talk already categorically prevents it during that time. Talking doesn’t prevent being free from hindrances though.

The conditions for the first jhana are (1) physical seclusion and lack of activity (2) a mind free from hindrances, which an Arahant always has anyway and (3) very clearly seeing the danger in sensuality, since that’s precisely the “theme” of the first jhāna, the theme that is reflected upon (the literal meaning of jhāna). And an Arahant of course has that clarity perpetually accessible.

So that’s the “trigger”: bringing up and making explicit the knowledge of the danger in sensuality. But it’s not a “samatha step”; if anything it’s a vipassanā one. The samatha step, if anything, would be the virtue, sense restraint, etc. that were already developed long beforehand, and which free the mind from hindrances. And you can’t do any of that mindlessly and without insight. Even for basic virtue, you need to have insight into wholesome and unwholesome, when there is craving and when there isn’t, etc. It’s not just keeping precepts like a robot. Hence vipassanā is needed for samatha. Conversely, you won’t see the danger in sensuality clearly and enter jhāna before the mind has lost its blinding infatuation with it, so samatha is needed for vipassanā.

Thus, the neat separation falls apart: even though you can outline them as distinct aspects, there is no samatha without vipassanā, and no vipassanā without samatha.

## yoniso manasikara

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** BakeFinancial4087 2025-02-15 03:08:51

How does having knowledge about the ‘origin’ prevent one from further acting out towards sensuality? Assuming that’s what yoniso manasikara is. Or if I keep this knowledge long enough, will it automatically prevent me from acting out? I just don’t understand the relation between the two. As I have understood from Ajahn Nyanmol’s teachings it will help me not act out, or as he says knowledge of yoniso manasikara will make you unable



to make unwholesome choices, now of course i understnad i have to put in the work, but i just wanted to clarify exactly what it means and how proper yoniso mansikara will help.

I have been keeping the 8 precepts strictly, however there is still mental unwholsomness, which obviously i try not acting out of, but sometimes its hard to discern the middle way. I think I have the 'prerequisites' for discerning the origin.

thanks

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-15 07:05:03**

Or if i keep this knowledge long enough, will it automatically prevent me from acting out?

No, it's the other way around. In order for the right knowledge to even be accessible, you need to have completely stopped acting out already. Developing knowledge only serves to make you dispassionate on top of merely being restrained, which basically means there's no need for restraint anymore. The mind simply does not want to go there because non-craving is *recognized* and seen as perfect safety, and craving as danger.

So yes, it will make you unable to make unwholesome choices. But you need to have completely stopped actually making those choices long beforehand.

When it comes to the mental unwholesomeness that can remain even within the 8 precepts, you just have to follow the same principle. You don't have to supress your every thought; just restrain any thoughts that partake *in the direction* of breaking precepts. Thoughts rooted in lust or longing, hatred or resentment, and so on. That doesn't mean you destroy the *pressure* to think those thoughts, which is not your responsibility. It just means you don't think those specific thoughts on account of it, and thus you won't be further feeding it as a result.

Just as you wouldn't need to destroy a bottle of wine no matter how forcefully it's offered to you in order to keep the 5th precept. You just wouldn't go and drink it. Eventually whoever is offering it to you would forever stop trying. And then you'll be truly relieved from the problem at its root, instead of ignoring the fact that the bottle is still being offered to you and sending your mind elsewhere for a superficial and temporary relief, which is what meditation is most often about for people.

And this is all *yoniso manasikāra* as practically as one can describe it. It's not about trying to figure out various technicalities of your attention, the "peripheral," etc., but about giving up greed, aversion, and delusion right here and now.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-15 09:27:26 (in reply to a comment not included)**

even if i dont specifically go along with it it keeps pressuring me and i dont know what needs to be done. Its like a recorder being played and im there just watching it.

“Not knowing what needs to be done” is something that is pressuring you too, and if you don’t restrain yourself in regard to that pressure as well and feel justified in acting out of it, you will be feeding the same craving that makes you liable to sensuality to begin with.

So don’t indulge in the sensual pressures by body or by speech, no exceptions. Mentally, don’t intentionally listen and tune in to the “recording” even if it’s playing in the background—because that can’t happen by accident. But *also*, don’t indulge in the urge to get rid of those pressures, and see that too as a recording playing in the background.

That’s basically the middle way, and if you understand it and sustain it long enough, not just particular instances but the overall liability to any type of pressure will diminish and ultimately be destroyed.

but other days its just a lot of pressure and longing and is hard to keep steady  
when this happens

You need to start recognizing why it is that this happens, because it’s not an accident. If the mind gets wild, it can only be because you’ve been giving attention to things you shouldn’t have, often because in the moment it doesn’t feel like a big deal, and the danger is not immediately obvious. Only afterward when you’re already drowning in pressure you realize you made a mistake, but then it’s too late.

However I have only just come to the monastery in the last 10 days so I assume  
I should be a lot more patient....

Yes, that’s for sure.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-16 13:44:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

This explanation seems a bit limited when exceptional circumstances occur (mostly connected to loss, sickness and death). If, for example, my child dies suddenly and I’m devastated because of it, it doesn’t seem realistic to attribute the wildness of my mind to what I did in the past days.

Why not? How could the death of your child trigger craving in your mind if craving hadn’t been kept alive by your own actions that are rooted in it? Craving subsists and grows based on fuel that is not provided to it by accident. Hence you’re responsible for every bit of it that you have, subtle or coarse.

What is “exceptional” and what isn’t is also quite circumstantial. There have been (and probably still are) places and periods where children dying was not unusual. Craving is the one and only root of suffering; tragic and unexpected events have nothing to do with it.

**Being free from craving doesn’t make me feel relief or bliss**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** senserestraint 2025-02-14 15:35:27

For example, I used to be addicted to facebook but deleted it three years ago. When I think about how I now have zero craving for facebook, its just an ‘um, ok’ neutral feeling. No relief or bliss from no longer being bound to something I was once bound too. Am I missing something?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-15 06:38:49**

You have most likely not freed yourself from many other cravings. Giving up craving as a whole is what leads to peace automatically. And that requires understanding the nature of craving (the right view); it can’t just “happen” the way people naturally lose interest and get bored of this or that specific thing (nor the way things just stop coming up as a result of a focusing practice). Otherwise every 90 year old would be an anāgāmi at the very least.

## **Understanding Craving: Personal Reflections**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** still\_tracks 2025-02-14 14:34:30

I would like to share my current understanding of craving in the hope that someone may relate or identify any issues and be generous enough to point them out. This will be a lengthy post with mainly personal reflections.

For me, it seems that there are different “shades” of craving that manifest in experience in different ways. Firstly, there appears to be a type of craving that Ajahn Nyanamoli usually refers to as “wanting the wanting.” For me, this means that there is something in the experience that actively wants to go along with the pressure of the senses, mainly via justifying it. It also seems that this wanting of the wanting has its own force and just waits for the moment when the wholesome context (e.g., the danger of sensuality, non-ill-will) becomes weaker (by actions I have taken contradicting it). For example, if I am irritated by a person, initially I can know that the person isn’t the problem. However, there isn’t just a pull to get back at the person but also a pull to justify going along with the pull — something that wants to override the context of “others are not the problem” into “others are the problem.” If the context of “others are not the problem” is already weak, the justification of the pull easily succeeds and results in me being pulled into unwholesome engagement, especially on the mental level. The “me” that has tried to withstand that pull has transformed into a “me” that is now relishing thoughts of ill-will. This can happen within seconds, which is quite astounding. Once the relishing part has started, the craving isn’t occupied with wanting the wanting anymore (because it has succeeded); instead, it is occupied with keeping the relishing going. Attempts to withdraw oneself from that mental absorption will be met with very high pressure to dive back in. This whole dynamic and how it “feels” is also the phenomenon that comes closest to what I understand as dukkha. Being absorbed in the unwholesome and fighting with the pull really “sucks”, while being properly established in a wholesome context and not questioning this context feels quite peaceful, even amidst unpleasant pressures.

There also seems to be craving in the sense of “never being satisfied with the current ex-

perience.” Even when the mind is calm and not occupied with coarse hindrances, there seems to be some dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs. When I am feeling a pleasant feeling, there is subtle nervousness to “never lose it again.” When there is displeasure, there is a subtle attitude of “when will this go away?” One can, of course, be theoretically aware that feelings come and go by themselves, but even these thoughts seem to be aimed at getting rid of the current not-sufficiently-pleasant feeling. For me, it seems most important to be aware of the non-ownability of feelings when pleasant feelings are present because, in the face of unpleasant feelings, it seems hard to contemplate it authentically. Hence, in general experience, there seems to be a continuous pressure “to do *something* about this situation.” However, in contrast to a pull based on coarse hindrances, it doesn’t really have a clear direction. The pull seems to be superfluous and blind, nonetheless, it seems quite unimaginable how there could be experience without it. In some moments, it seems that I can “see through” it and been free from it for a moment. But in the same moment, it seems to be there again (or still?).

I am not saying that these examples represent what actual craving is for someone who truly understands craving (i.e., to be free from being overpowered by it). Still, this understanding gives me a direction for practice, which doesn’t seem too far off. Foremost is to protect the proper context, i.e., to not forget the value of not wanting the wanting (i.e. seeing the danger in it, seeing the benefit of harmlessness) and to unabsorb oneself from being occupied with agreeable thoughts and images, without denying them. The agreeable doesn’t have to be something “beautiful” (like women, success in career, having insights into dhamma, getting positive feedback for this post, etc.). It can also refer to the “perverse” agreeability of dwelling on the faults of others and imagining how one would get back at them (i.e., ill-will and cruelty).

Any feedback is very appreciated.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-15 09:41:40**

Are you already established in unbroken precepts and withdrawal from sensual engagements? If not, you are probably overthinking things. Up until that point, craving is nothing more complicated than the fact that you break the precepts or give in to sensuality even occasionally, and trying to see anything more subtle than that will distract you from the actual and rather obvious problem—the actions you still engage in. Even if you were to then develop perfectly accurate ideas about the practice, all you will be doing with them is managing the byproducts of that root problem that is still welcomed and tolerated.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-16 06:56:53 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Until recently, my “meditation” practice mainly consisted of “sitting in a room doing nothing”, often for hours, resisting the pull to distract myself from boredom. Outside of these “meditation sessions”, it can still happen that I give in to distraction and subtle entertainment (like reading an interesting article on

Wikipedia, scrolling through Buddhist subreddits), though it never escalates to completely losing perspective and starting to watch a movie or something like that. As it now feels normal to spend my weekends and after-work hours this way, I felt it would

I would advise focusing more on learning to discern when something is internally rooted in distraction and avoiding it only then, instead of rejecting everything and trying to sit in perfect quietude (an activity which might very well become your distraction from what's actually happening internally when you still don't see your mind clearly). Full non-activity comes later in the training, and it will almost certainly be done wrongly before that.

Reading Wikipedia articles or Buddhist subreddits is not a distraction in itself; it doesn't *need* to destroy your self-awareness like watching a movie would. It will do so when the motivation *at that time* is some sort of craving or pressure already, and your reading is *at that time* your way of acting in accordance with that craving. Then you're making it worse, and trying yourself to dukkha tighter and tighter by virtue of doing that action. It's like how you don't let a brat have do he wants *because* he's throwing a tantrum about it. If there's no tantrum and he doesn't care if you say no, it's fine. But you still keep an eye on him because he could start getting overly engaged and emotionally invested, and then he'd angrily refuse to stop when you tell him to.

So learn to discern your motivations more clearly, and then you'll be able to know beyond doubt when something is fine and when it isn't. If you just stick to a blanket avoidance like you're describing, you might well be depriving yourself of the opportunity to develop understanding of your own mind, which is what defines wholesome and unwholesome.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-16 12:52:11 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Would it be more conducive to wisdom to read the article, observe if I could stop in the middle of it and continue if no pressure (on the level of throwing a tantrum) is felt?

With this sort of thing, yes. You basically have to allow yourself some room for trial and error in regard to everything that isn't against the precepts in order to come to discern what actually makes something wholesome or unwholesome (your own mental state in relation to that activity at the time). It's not the activity itself; it's the craving behind it.

If you just "stay on the safe side" by default, you can end up giving up everything without coming any closer to seeing where the problem actually was, and the willpower for that blanket restraint will *have* to run out eventually. And then you'll be right back where you started because you never learned where the "bait" really is. Like the second herd of deer in MN 25.

But even within that trial and error, what is never up for debate is that you must not break the precepts. That cannot be conducive in any shape or form. If you never do that, you will never stray too far off.

You might one day spend a whole afternoon obsessively researching flowers, and some pressure will build up as a result. But if that's *really* all you did, and you never went on TikTok or something (thereby actually breaking a precept), it's not going to leave you with a mind infected with lust for days on end and lead you to do something coarsely unwholesome. You might also learn something about how craving works because obviously the flowers were not the problem. Consuming actual entertainment is a very different story, and there can't ever be a good reason for doing it. Nor will going that far ever teach you any relevant lessons that you didn't already know.

I am quite aware that there are things that utterly destroy self-awareness (like listening to very emotional music)

*All* music, actually. Some types are even worse than others, but all of them are unwholesome. That's why abstaining from music of any kind is part of the eight precepts.

However, it still feels safer to even avoid these things when I experience even a tiny push towards them and if they are not really necessary for my well-being. That's how "doing nothing," going for walks, hiking, and reading the Dhamma have basically become my only hobbies left.

"A tiny push" is also the only thing that can get you to go for a walk or read Dhamma, and you could also say that most of the time neither are strictly necessary for your well-being. So from that point of view, it doesn't make sense to think that *those* tiny pushes are fine and the others aren't. If you took this view to its culmination, then the only truly pure coarse of action would be to stop breathing and wither away, since breathing too is rooted in a tiny push that goes unnoticed.

The things that have to be categorically avoided are not the "tiny pushes." They are the big pushes that usurp your perspective, and preventing that is what the precepts are for (even some "hobbies" are not a problem if they don't contradict the precepts and are done in solitude). So learn to stay within the tiny pushes and to recognize when a push starts to grow past a certain point. And you'll need to learn for yourself what that "point" is through repeated practice; it's not something you can recognize through mere reasoning.

And the principle never really changes. What constitutes a big push just becomes subtler as you progress, and as the old big pushes fall away and become impossible. Thus, at no point will it feel like you have to avoid everything if you're practicing rightly.

This is how you achieve automatic and natural moderation in all matters. Not by preemptively defining how long you should do each individual thing.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-17 17:36:03 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I guess the same is true for mental actions at my current practice stage? Instead of worrying about being unmindful, wondering "where the craving exactly is" and trying to jump to conclusions, it would be better to observe which

mental engagement ends in my mind being wild (like dwelling on the annoying behavior of a person) and which engagement doesn't effect me very much (like daydreaming about the household work i have planned for the day). So reestablishing the context is important when one has been lost in his thoughts and daydreams

You need to worry about the "daydreaming" and thinking that is clearly driven by longing and hatred, because that's the one that destroys your perspective. And it's not about some ultra subtle "reading between the lines" of your thoughts; it's a very obvious, feverish attitude where the mind refuses to let go of those thoughts and memories even though you don't want them and you see that they're painful. Hence all the similes in the talks about the "wild animal" that disobeys your commands.

The view that daydreaming and thining are inherently a problem is deeply embedded in a lot of people's minds today because of the popular focusing techniques with which almost everybody starts, but in the Suttas you don't find that idea. The natural function of the mind (mano) is to go past the immediacy the five senses, and that's not a problem in itself. It becomes a problem when there is passion behind the thinking, which again is what makes you lose perspective and mindfulness.

but being mindful and not becoming absorbed into mental images 24/7 isn't a concern

Yes, and right there is the reason for the sequential nature of the training. If you try to skip ahead, inevitably you'll be trying to uproot defilements that you can't even see yet. Because the problem is as of yet too unclear and ambiguous, it feels like you have to stab in every direction "just to be safe," since it could be anywhere as far as you can tell.

## Can I deal with craving this way?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2025-02-13 19:42:07

For context I'm still actively tightening my virtue within the boundaries of the 8 precepts, and can still lapse on the level of body or speech on a weekly basis. But still I see that my mind already got tamed to a degree because of it since before the practice.

Within this basis, and particularly in regard to upset, I get some insights of what is happening "behind the scene" of these actions, and I would appreciate opinions on whether I should continue in this way or not.

It happens that I recognize that trouble arose because of a perception/feeling, I don't see citta-pressure as such but I'm aware that this specific perception is forced into the center stage of attention, and if I investigate what's happening there I find a mental activity of resistance towards a certain aspect of this perception; the term "proliferation" takes on its full meaning because it is as if it automatically started happening and would just continue on and on.

I know that this mental action is of my doing as Bhante Anigha repeated many times, but

I'm inclined to think it seems like it automatically started happening on its own because that's the natural way I've been inclining until now in dealing with these pressures. Mind goes one way, I follow wholeheartedly instantly.

So there's this perception/feeling forced into the center stage of attention and this mental activity of resistance towards aspects of it; at this point, having recognized this mental activity I'm sometimes able to just stop it "Why am I resisting this, causing all this tension? Why don't I just not do that?" and so I do. (I cannot help but think about MN 20: 'Why am I walking quickly? Why don't I slow down? ...')

It's particularly easy with upset because calm comes back very quickly on account of the thoughts subsiding [I may be wrong here, it doesn't always subside without remainder]. With the other hindrances it can demand more might to abandon it without remainder, it's usually rather a state of "non-crystallized possibility" [at best, sometimes] that I should not give in, but doesn't subside altogether.

All of this to ask:

Is this a right form of renunciation, and should I continue to do that whenever trouble arises? Or is this management?

If this is right, does that mean I'm more developed towards irritation than the other hindrances, and the others will eventually come to subside as quickly?

And please, let me know if something is off in what I'm describing, in regard to the Dhamma that is.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-15 05:51:52**

You only need to worry about never going beyond the "non-crystallized possibilities." Contemplate the danger if the mind starts to move in those directions again, just to get back to the possibilities and enduring them at that level. If you were to "stay" there long enough, a subtler engagement with the possibilities *as such*—prior to any particular giving in and proliferating—will become apparent, and with that you automatically realize that you can stop that engagement too. And only then can you truly go beyond the hindrances, not just keep them in check.

Don't fall into the trap of expecting the hindrances to disappear quickly even if they sometimes do. Your responsibility is only to stop engaging with them, not to destroy them. They are destroyed only when the fuel for them has completely drained away on account of your heedfulness in not crystallizing them regardless of their pressure. And that's important because when trying to "manually" destroy a hindrance, you will be acting upon another hindrance inevitably (thus maintaining craving as a whole). As long as you maintain craving as a whole, you maintain the possibility for every hindrance, so even the one you want to get rid of the most will be ready to come back when you get tired of pushing it away.

Also, ill will is the quickest one to fade and the easiest one to overcome. It's not a coinci-



dence that almost all traditions unanimously praise the giving up of ill will (or rather the last-minute management of it), but it's much rarer to find someone who encourages, let alone attempts, to give up sensuality equally and *across the board*, even through superficial management. But you need to be just as apprehensive of it because it will keep you liable to ill will no matter how quickly you can get rid of the latter. The true safety from ill will is in destroying the liability permanently, not in a perfect management of particular instances. And for that sensuality needs to completely go as well.

Lastly, it's always worth emphasizing that one cannot even begin to give up the hindrances unless one is fully restrained on a physical and verbal level. Acting out by body and speech "crystallizes" the hindrances to the greatest possible degree. And it's not enough to abstain from unwholesome things most of the time: even the most undeveloped person already doesn't engage in sensuality and hatred most of the time. In order to be actually virtuous, you need to have knowingly rejected any *possibility* of acting unwholesomely from the very beginning. You might then still fail from time to time, but out of carelessness and being overwhelmed by pressure. Not because you had allowed yourself that possibility in advance, i.e., never actually took on the precepts.

## **mindfulness of external situations.**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** PrestigiousStreet930 2025-02-10 22:48:18

I am friends with a monk who tends to include mindfulness as being related with situational awareness. For example if someone is clumsy that means they are not being mindful, if someone doesn't see something in there external environment like a stump on the ground or something and trips on it that means they are not being mindful. Are there any suttas that support this way of thinking about mindfulness, because for me mindfulness and things of that nature that i just listed are completely different.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-11 06:53:59**

Not being aware of what's actually going on around you would be a symptom of unmindfulness, a sign that became overly preoccupied with something specific and lost sight of your overall situation. So in a way yes, "situational awareness" would be an accurate description of mindfulness as long as we qualify that you don't develop that by trying to focus and become hyperaware of the stumps on the ground, the movements of your feet, sensations in your body, and so on, which is the direction people tend to go when trying to develop mindfulness. That's just becoming unmindful on the basis of a different sense door. You would thereby start ignoring a whole range of things, including your intention behind engaging in that practice in the first place.

So indeed, one should not be immersed in mental proliferation and daydreaming, but being immersed in physical sensations is not an improvement at all. Right mindfulness is when the mind is unfocused and unabsorbed in regard to everything, no exceptions.

That's the only way to be aware of your entire situation instead of prioritizing some specific aspect of it gratuitously.

## **Dhamma as Inspiration (or Management?)**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** still\_tracks 2025-02-07 14:33:38

I would like to ask when one should stop seeking inspiration from reading Suttas and listening to Dhamma talks. I've noticed that reading inspiring Dhamma material can quickly set up the proper context, such as the certainty of death and the danger of sensuality. For instance, yesterday I read a transcript of Ajahn Nanamoli's talk titled Appointment with Death and the slight unease of being liable to death stayed with me for the entire day. This led to me being mentally very restrained at work. Often, I find myself in situations with already proliferated stress, but on that day, I was able to see my mind moving in that direction before becoming totally absorbed in it. When meditating on Dhamma topics "on my own" for relatively short periods (like in the morning before a working day), the context usually isn't established as firmly.

On the one hand, it seems to me that seeking inspiration from Dhamma material can help establish the proper context. It can lead to long periods of awareness and clarity. On the other hand, I don't like the idea of being dependent on this ritual. I understand that I'm using it as a form of management because, with a firm context, daily pressures feel less intense and don't overpower me as easily.

Am I correct in thinking it might be better to read Dhamma material only when not "preparing" for a day of work and potential challenging situations, and instead face such a day with a "shakier" context? I am relatively restrained in my bodily and verbal behavior with the "shaky" context (keeping 7 precepts, though with occasional laps on the verbal level), but mentally it is much more challenging to keep the Dhamma as the most important thing without this kind of inspiration.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-08 09:48:08**

What you're describing is something that is mentioned in the Suttas several times, and it's not bad in and of itself. The problem arises when you expect inspiration to carry your practice, especially because the mind will only get inspired from hearing the Dhamma if it is already not too immersed in hindrances due to careless conduct.

The inspiration comes from understanding the meaning of what is said, and a mind clouded by hindrances won't gain such perspective no matter how much you want it to—until you bring it back in line. Hence, even the inspiration depends on you having already been diligent to a degree beforehand.

Even if you are outwardly virtuous, if your listening is rooted in an irrational craving for content rather than a genuine wish for clarification, that very hindrance will prevent the meaning from becoming clear. The mind will not gain inspiration. So you must also be

watchful of what exactly is internally driving you to seek Dhamma talks (which doesn't mean you should avoid them altogether). As with everything that isn't covered by the precepts, it's about discerning the right and wrong time.

Furthermore, it won't turn into a "ritual" or "management" if you ensure that you actually *use* that inspiration to give up and restrain things that you now see as unwholesome through newfound clarity—no matter how justified you feel they are or how integral to your life they have become. Even if it's not a fully fledged focusing technique or similar, virtually anything you practice will be a form of management and distraction when your fundamental intention is to try to have your cake and eat it too: when you want to sidestep the suffering bit, while at the same time being unwilling to evict all the habits and behaviors based on craving that you still have, and which create the fertile ground for suffering to arise in the first place.

On the other hand, if you do have that kind of resolve, then even if something uplifts your mind, it's not necessarily a problem because you made sure to remove everything unwholesome beforehand, and you have nothing to deceive yourself about.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-09 11:50:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Do you mean adopting an attitude where you only stick to the practice when feeling inspired and neglect it when inspiration runs out?

The intention to keep the precepts and not act upon sense desire or aversion has to be rooted deeper than the inspiration so that it stays even when inspiration goes.

Here, "understanding the meaning" would refer to relating the ideas one is reading about to one's own experience — not just liking the idea of impermanence, but actually trying to see the things one likes as impermanent? So a mind under full sway of the hindrances would only like the ideas on an intellectual level, while the hindrances can't be in full control if one is able to relate to the meaning on a personal level

Yes. A tangible recognition that the things that you personally take pleasure in and rely on are impermanent, and that this delight thus makes you *liable* to suffering at any moment—regardless of whether the things themselves are good or bad—will naturally inspire you to give them up. But you have to then actually go through with abandoning them and not just remain with the inspiration to do so. Inspiration also won't fully nor permanently remove the pain of withdrawal from the addictions, and at some point you will have to simply put up with it, with or without inspiration. Just like when giving up a physiological addiction.

So would it be a genuine wish if the aim is to expose oneself to ideas that one already knows intellectually but covers up in day-to-day life? Is this what is meant in Ud 4.1:

You can tell if the wish is genuine by what you do after you get the clarification. Do you

keep living as before, or do you align all your subsequent actions with the context that was rekindled? It's well and good if an addict is reminded of why he should stop taking his drug, but his search for such reminders is not genuine if he continues giving in as usual.

I guess an attendant of the Buddha already knows about the benefits of ethics, seclusion, etc. but still needs talks and exposure to those ideas to not cover that information up again?

“Covering up” does not happen accidentally, but only when you go and act against your better judgment, and someone who's diligent wouldn't do that. So it's more like being exposed to those ideas would help them recognize more refined ways that they might still be giving in to craving, where it's not anymore due to heedlessness but due to a lack of clarity.

## How to get over this attitude towards sensuality

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** 4NTN8FP 2025-02-07 13:14:56

I've been noticing that I have a long standing attitude that sensuality is a reward. So when I've had a long or challenging day, or am tired from doing a lot of activity/work I search for some type of reward in sensuality so I can relax and settle into a dull state for a while. Then when that gets old I'm motivated to practice again, and usually with some regret for recently not abstaining from sensuality. Clearly this is a cycle I'm in, but I don't quite know how to break it so that it stops happening altogether. Any advice?

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-08 10:28:43

You need to realize that it's not like the moment you get back from work your mind suddenly shifts into a sensual mode. It would have to have been in that state for a while prior, probably the whole day. It's just that this is when it becomes obvious to you. And at that point, you can only rely on mere willpower, which will inevitably fail you sooner or later.

So the only real solution, and what wisdom and mindfulness are really about, is that from the very beginning of the day you are careful to see the danger even in the *slightest* fault, i.e., not just in breaking the precepts outright, but even in the slightest action rooted in sensual craving or aversion, no matter how weak the pressure is. When the pressure is still weak, it's easy to say no, so you don't need nearly as much willpower. On the other hand, it's also very easy to say “yes” because it feels like it's not a big deal. But every wildfire starts out small, so it's foolish to see a small fire and not put it out right away.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-09 13:49:41 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

I've been contemplating giving up my smart phone because it's the only device I have that can give me endless hours of internet use. The other option is to put

a time limit on it and have someone else set the pin so I can't change the time. Do you think this is avoiding the problem or a skillful means to get myself out of this habit for a while?

Both of those are certainly viable options. Try them out and see what happens.

It's impossible for the mind to suddenly shift from a wholesome mode into a sensual and careless one on account of a single thought (and vice versa), so that's not the level where you need to deal with things. The mind inclines towards the general directions you've been cultivating (sensuality, aversion, and carelessness), even if the things you end up doing within said directions are not always the same. Hence what I wrote about needing to be equally diligent in avoiding the unwholesome at all times, not just at the last moment when the mind is out of control.

In the afternoon it may not feel like a coarse feverish state of mind relative to your usual baseline, but if as you say you just can't help yourself, it's already in a frenzy, and that cannot happen by accident.

## What is Sense Restraint?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Devotedlyindeed 2025-02-07 00:27:26

And how does it differ from sīla (which is, as I understand it, always choosing to follow wholesome and not follow unwholesome intentions)? My understanding of sense restraint is missing something important. Thank you in advance.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-07 07:18:53

Sense restraint doesn't actually "differ" from virtue in the sense of being something separate. Sense restraint is just an evolved version of virtue as you rightly defined it (not following unwholesome intentions and following wholesome ones, rather than mechanical keeping of rules). In turn, virtue is a less refined form of sense restraint. The same can be said for any of the further "stages" of the Gradual Training, including jhāna. They are all increasingly farther milestones along the exact same path.

Thus, ultimately, it's not even that virtue (and sense restraint, etc.) are a "support" or "aid" for jhāna, which still implies that they are different things. By developing further the same principle by which virtue is established, you inevitably arrive at (actual) jhāna, without needing to add anything else at all ("meditation" in the modern sense) into the mix.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-08 06:37:37 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

That sounds accurate. Though it's worth clarifying what the right "sweetness" is derived from because of the many widespread misunderstandings. As the Suttas say, wholesome

joy comes from recognizing that one is no longer liable to unwholesome states, and that's on account of cultivating renunciation in every facet of one's conduct—abandoning engagement with the five hindrances not just in body and speech, but down to the level of the most personal thoughts, those no one else would be privy to (that doesn't mean one needs to deny every thought; a thought is a hindrance only to the degree that there is emotional pressure and impulsivity behind it). And not for an hour or two, but as an uninterrupted lifestyle.

What arises from that is, as you put it, a state which isn't just the suppression of particular emotions, but where the *condition* for the arising of those emotions is no longer there. Hence, there is an ease born from internal safety, a kind of effortless “immunity”—though that immunity is of course temporary and conditional, as explained below. It's also not black and white; there can be an only partial immunity, which would not quite constitute *jhāna* yet. Hence the Suttas speak of experiencing “blameless ease” already at the stage of virtue, even though the hindrances haven't been fully overcome.

And that's precisely why it is truly peaceful, unlike the type of meditation commonly taught today. Such meditation revolves around a special practice or activity that must be constantly maintained. A stressful situation that is generally not recognized as such because of its superficial pleasure, much like sensuality.

Having cultivated renunciation rightly, even you actively try to usher the hindrances back in, they remain “distant” (hence the “separation” from unwholesome states). This is because the hindrances have nothing whatsoever to do with the content of your thoughts, but with the attitude of the mind (*citta*) towards that content (hence efforts to focus the mind on specific objects are heavily misguided). Just as you couldn't immediately control your mind to stop delighting in sensuality, you won't be able to immediately destroy the joy of renunciation even if you want to either. What the mind inclines toward is the delayed result of what has been previously cultivated; that inclination—whether toward sensuality or renunciation—is something you “build up” over time.

Hence, even though the mind may currently have no interest in sensuality, it can return to it and lose its “immunity” and its safe ground eventually if you start cultivating sensual thoughts (or simply due to too much engagement with people and worldly matters). But that will take time—hours or even days—depending on how firmly the mind was established in renunciation. Conversely, it takes time (though usually much more) to establish the mind in the joy of renunciation, depending on how deeply entrenched it was in sensuality.

## What about tears from sadness or joy ?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2025-02-04 07:22:36

The right attitude towards instances of aversion or craving as enduring the pressure without either giving in or managing it and with no hope for it to disappear seems pretty straightforward. Still, concerning tearing up out of joy or grief or just because a fleeting

moment of sadness swells up unexpectedly I wonder what would be the right attitude.

Indeed, I can't really pinpoint where the resistance is and so not resisting more or less ends up meaning letting it out and letting the tears flow. Also, a corner of my mind won't let go of the common knowledge that at least in the grief process, tearing up is in fact considered part of a healing process. It is often cathartic for people who repressed it and finally let it out and end up feeling a weight has been lifted from them. FYI, I'm not grieving at the moment.

What do you think would be the right attitude ?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-04 10:06:44**

The right attitude towards instances of aversion or craving as enduring the pressure without either giving in or managing it and with no hope for it to disappear seems pretty straightforward.

One needs to do this when the mind is still calm, long before intense feelings arise. Otherwise even the attempt to “endure” things will be just last-minute damage control, conveniently employed only when things go south and put aside once they go back to normal.

The right course of action is not finding the “right way” to counter arisen unbeneficial states (managing them), but reminding oneself of why one is liable to them in the first place, and putting an end to that root cause. Any state of mind that overpowers you, be it overly positive or overly negative, is a necessary byproduct of previously cultivated craving.

Also, a corner of my mind won't let go of the common knowledge that at least in the grief process, tearing up is in fact considered part of a healing process.

Perhaps. But the Dhamma is not about “healing”; it's about never getting hurt in the first place.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-04 13:36:45 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

recollect that this body brings all of those reactions (tears) and feelings without my say into it ?

Even if in theory you don't have a say in it at that time, it's because you yourself set the ball rolling already and now it's too late to immediately stop it. So don't try to gain relief from the pain in the moment by acknowledging and recollecting something or the other—which is looking for safety in management. Instead, now that you've been forcefully reminded of the undesirable consequences that doing so brings, use that to strengthen your resolve not to act out of craving from now onwards, regardless of whether things are going well or not. Recollect what will happen when you notice yourself getting heedless again.

## Question About Hindrances and Mental States

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** AlwaysOneLove 2025-02-02 11:20:34

### Context:

I am a complete beginner. I stumbled across the HH understanding of Dhamma 3 months ago; it has completely changed the course of my practice, for which I can't thank the Ven-erables enough. I have been keeping the five precepts for 3 months and have been celibate for 3 months. I have also been experimenting with the 7th precept and discerning why exactly it is dangerous to give in to that pressure for entertainment/distraction. Previous habits of scrolling on social media, watching football games on TV, etc., have largely been given up. I have only read the first 43 suttas of the Mahjima Nikāya (I have only recently started reading the suttas).

### Question 1:

While contemplating in the manner explained in the video “The Ultimate Method for Overcoming Hindrances,” when, for example, restlessness and anxiety are present in one's experience, is it then skillful to take that restlessness itself as the background (or yoni) of experience? Or should one recollect the state of mind with regard to that hindrance—or switch between both perspectives—so that, for example, one first discerns the hindrance itself as the background in relation to any bodily, verbal, or mental activity, and then switches to attend to the hindrance as the foreground while simultaneously recollecting the state of mind with regard to the anxiety, and vice versa? It seems that the latter is more effective and deeper than the former, but I'm not sure.

While writing this last sentence (with bodily activity as the foreground), I notice that the hindrance of doubt is present in the background. When switching perspective, I experience a state of mind of “mind with aversion.” It is quite subtle, but there is a craving in the mind for a clear answer to that question; therefore, asking this question is acting out of that state of mind and is unwholesome.

I could have never discerned the aversion toward the hindrance if I had stayed with the hindrance itself as the background. Or is this not important at all, and is it only important *not to act out* of the hindrance rather than to discern the state of mind in regard to that hindrance itself?

### Question 2:

How does one pick any of the “wombs,” and when is it skillful to switch from one womb to the other? Are the things that one is attending to of importance in this choice of recollection?

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-04 13:26:11

The hindrances first and foremost abandoned through the development of steadfast virtue (i.e., conduct free from greed, aversion, and delusion/carelessness). What you are



asking about pertains to a much subtler level of refinement that only becomes applicable once the hindrances have been abandoned at that coarser level.

Or is this not important at all, and is it only important not to act out of the hindrance rather than to discern the state of mind in regard to that hindrance itself?

So it's the former; what matters is not to act out of the hindrance. But you don't do that through some intricate mental exercises like what you're describing, but by keeping an eye on your conduct, because that's where the hindrances are. Usually people see virtue as something that they hastily set up (if at all) so that they can then move on to what they think is the "real" practice, failing to see that virtue itself *is* the real practice, *is* the abandonment of hindrances already.

You mentioned that you've only been experimenting with keeping the 7th precept. The hindrances are precisely what seeking entertainment is rooted in, so you need to do away with that completely first—and anything else you might do during the day that partakes in similar or even coarser forms of greed, aversion, and delusion—to be in a position to rightly deal with the more refined, purely mental aspect of the hindrances that is described in that video.

## A father's perspective

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** knwp7 2025-02-02 05:24:13

"The liability for suffering to arise" exists as long as I am around my children. For me they are the strongest attachment to this world and also the strongest influence on my karmic actions. I have experienced **sudden** rage - when a "possibility of harm" to my child arises. Similar upset or anger is less frequent if I find myself suddenly in adverse circumstances. "Sudden" is the keyword here. Upon reflection, the rational mind calms down; an ongoing adverse situation - mental or physical - is thus not a cause of suffering (i.e. in retrospective view). But this reflexive calming-down is "management" in HH-speak, as I understand. And so now I understand a little better, the non-arising of the 2nd arrow, or being free from the liability to suffer.

So what are my options?

For a long time now I have understood my kids to be my strongest attachment to the sansara; they make the path of renunciation more difficult for me. But I came across Dharma when they were already in their growing years. Having understood what I have, I am not inclined to take-up any more karmic obligations - in the form of new relationships (breaking precept #3), more children (incelibacy), pets (precept #7), etc. If this realization stays with me into my next birth - then I can hope to progress more swiftly on the path, staying single.

What about this lifetime?

I am responsible for providing direct care to my kids. That means I have to participate

in their life in an ongoing, daily basis - in-person, not thru proxies. The alternative to being present for them is to hand them over to social-media/internet. I hold a strong obligation towards bringing-up my kids in the right manner. This includes them being upright, compassionate, kind; besides doing well at school and having a balanced life with social-engagements, gaming and sports. I also sow the seeds of Dharma as everyday experiences present the possibilities. I know the outcomes, what they grow up to be, are not in my hands - but I nevertheless feel a strong duty to give them my best effort.

Since growing faith in Dharma and trying to “practice” it, I have experienced major shifts in my way of living. Dharma and kids are my only two priorities. Whatever worldly engagements arise, arise mostly on account of kids; a lot of my daily life revolves around them.

Downside of parenting?

Not only do I have to be present for them, I have to work, to make a living, to provide for them. I need to run a household, pay the bills. If I were to talk of conventional Dharma-practice, this would mean that the focus is not as sharp, and the time devoted is not as much - as they could have been - due to the worldly pursuits in the name of raising children; also giving me a pretext to not be rigorous in the HH-manner. However, I have the conviction that HH is the right interpretation of Dharma. So I continue, keeping the faith, despite occasional setbacks (getting indulgent) and conceit (my last post hastily titled in present-perfect).

Another downside is that I have very few opportunities for solitude - eg. school summer-break! A good side-effect of solitude is a naturally calm-mind that allows one to evaluate one's experience against the teachings (true “meditation”). For me, the only time for contemplation is had in a sitting “meditation” where, if/when the mind settles down, I use that (self-hypnotized?) state for self reflection. (Are there any better suggestions in absence of solitude?) I understand that “doing” meditation is not what the path is.

Future plan of action?

u/kellerdellinger was not wrong in asking to emotionally abandon family. Doing so to one's growing children is not feasible, though. Unless one is rich/fortunate to delegate their child-raising responsibility to another responsible human, the child is going to suffer thru the parent's negligence.

I have noticed that this liability I mentioned earlier reduces when I am not around my kids. If the perceived harm is not in the present-moment then it does not affect me because I know, thru a near-traumatic experience I had with them, that I can't intervene in their karma.

So sometimes I think I need to leave my family once the kids are mature. If I am not entangled in their everyday lives then I do not see the liability to suffer on their account arising. But isn't leaving them a form of deprivation/denial/self-mortification? Clearly I am trying to avoid the possibility of unpleasantness arising from their company. Giving up family seems “management”.

But then what does giving up family, friends and relationships mean? Maybe it is about not engaging in worldly actions on account of them. If one is not obligated then one does not have to take up worldly matters - otherwise, abandoning company is an escape, as in abandoning responsibility towards them. My motive is clear to me only. So whatever I choose, only I know whether it is right or not.

Thoughts and questions are welcome

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-04 06:07:42**

Dharma and kids are my only two priorities. Whatever worldly engagements arise, arise mostly on account of kids; a lot of my daily life revolves around them.

This is where the heart of the matter lies. If you want to stand a chance to make any significant progress, then it's the Dhamma that must be the highest priority. Whenever there is a conflict between the Dhamma and the affairs of household life, which will often be the case, the Dhamma needs to take precedence. And it will naturally take precedence for someone who has realized it already, which is part of what it means to have "unshakable confidence" in the Dhamma. The inability to think that anything else, even your children, could be more important. And that's not true only for laypeople; even monks would not necessarily feel that dealing with mundane affairs at the expense of their practice is never justified. That view makes stream entry impossible.

But then what does giving up family, friends and relationships mean? Maybe it is about not engaging in worldly actions on account of them.

For example, if there is a situation where doing something you think is beneficial for your kids would entail breaking a precept, you don't do it. Someone with unshakable confidence in the Dhamma will not kill even if it seems necessary for saving their kids' lives, let alone break a precept in a situation that's less urgent than that. And this should not be regarded as an "extreme" case: the Buddha said Nandamātā should be the example for all female lay disciples, and he also said that a layperson should be exhorted to give up concern for their family to the same extent as a monk.

Again, Pahārāda, just as the ocean's tide is never out of time, similarly, Pahārāda, in my true teaching and discipline, the monks, nun, laymen, and laywomen will never, until the end of their lives, break the precepts, which I have established for these clansmen. Pahārāda, that in my true teaching and discipline, the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen will never, until the end of their lives, break the precepts, which I have established for these clansmen—this is said to be the second extraordinary quality of my true teaching and discipline, having seen which the monks delight in it.

—MĀ 35

It's of course much harder to develop that dispassionate attitude when living at home, but it's not impossible if one doesn't move the goalpost and forget that that's what realizing

the four noble truths entails (making the Dhamma into some sort of metaphysical truth that one can partake in while one's actual cravings and emotional dependencies remain unchanged and unquestioned).

I have experienced sudden rage - when a "possibility of harm" to my child arises.

It's actually impossible for the mind to become suddenly defiled. When this happens, it's because you have been going beyond merely fulfilling your duty, and have been actively fostering emotional attachment towards your children. So when you notice that, instead of calming yourself down by secondary means that leave the root of the problem unchanged, you need to contemplate how attachment that you keep cultivating is what makes you liable to rage, and reflect on why no amount of it is beneficial even in the case of loved ones. You won't be able to fully give up that attachment for as long as you still live at home, but by giving precedence to the practice and leaving only the "leftovers" for everything else, you can contain the attachment enough to make the necessary amount of room for the Dhamma to be understood (passion is what obstructs understanding, as the Buddha said right after his awakening).

When your precepts are firmly in place, you can contain attachment further on the mental level by ensuring that whatever you do for your children is done with the recognition that they, or you, could die at any time and that you may not be able to prevent it. That context does not prevent you from fulfilling your duties as a parent; it only prevents you from overstepping beyond that. If the mind recoils from that context, it is recoiling from the Dhamma and seeking to ignore it.

## The extent of sense restraint

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2025-01-30 14:54:54

**EDIT:** Actually, after further reflecting on it this is probably Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation, which suggests that one doesn't grasp at any sign and feature, that made come to this conclusion, while the HH one rather suggests that this is only the signs and features connected to delight and upset.

Until now I thought that sense restraint needed to be performed only towards things that I know by experience can result in delight or upset, or as soon as I notice the mind going in the direction of delight and upset, by enduring the pressure without letting the thoughts crystalize any more than they already did. (this is from the point of view of someone with a wild mind, that can still overlook citta and run with it without thinking twice, if not constantly careful)

But reading the occurrences in the suttas about sense restraint, I tend to understand that it is something much broader, needed to be performed in regard to anything. (and it kind of makes sense considering that if I restrain myself in regard to what I know by experience can result in delight or upset, craving can still manifest in regard to things that weren't causing delight or upset until now)

Is this the case? And when well developed is it resulting in not grasping at any significance more than another one in regard to anything in my experience?

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Along with these questions, I was wondering if sense restraint would have an effect in this MN18 passage:

Mental-faculty-consciousness arises dependent on the mental faculty and phenomena. The meeting of the three is pressure. With pressure as basis, feeling. What one feels, one perceives. What one perceives, one thinks about. What one thinks about, one proliferates. What one proliferates is the cause for perceptions and considerations born of proliferation besetting one in regard to sights cognizable by the eye pertaining to the past, present, and future. – MN 18

I tend to understand that being accomplished in sense restraint would **only** remove that last step of proliferation, would it be correct?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-31 07:10:41**

Is this the case? And when well developed is it resulting in not grasping at any significance more than another one in regard to anything in my experience?

In a way yes, but you shouldn't be trying to perfect your sense restraint unless your precepts have been perfected. Getting used to never breaking the precepts no matter what is your sense restraint in the beginning (and your wakefulness, your mindfulness, your abandonment of hindrances, etc.). If you start trying to do more when that foundation is still shaky, you will only reap frustration because you will be trying to deal with impurities that are still too subtle to recognize reliably from where you currently stand. And that's when you inevitably fall from the middle way, and end up practicing either indulgence or a degree "absorption" (i.e., forceful denial of all objects in favor of a specific one). Sense restraint usually becomes the latter for people who are not sufficiently established in the precepts, and that's generally a very tiring and unpleasant endeavor.

## **Intense anxiety enduring while contemplating**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** AlwaysOneLove 2025-01-30 00:01:54

So when I'm contemplating in seclusion or when I'm listening to a dhamma talk there is an intense anxiety and restlessness of the body that endures in the peripheral of that contemplation/listening to dhamma talk.

My heart goes wild beating in my chest and initially I'll let this endure in the background for as long as it lasts, but when I have been contemplating/listening to a talk for an hour or longer and the anxiety/restlessness of the body and heavy heart pumping doesn't seem to stop, I'll have to bring this to the forefront of attention and try and manage it/ease into that

unpleasant general feeling/restlessness and anxiety that endures in the background. But even while attempting to modify that anxiety and displeasure of that bodily state/general feeling, I can see that my attempts are not per se successful.

Maybe I need to improve my emotional regulation first or learn how to manage this anxiety with some technique before I delve deep into territory that will inevitably stir up a lot of anxiety?

It has been said in the talks that this anxiety is very intense in the beginning and that it could be a good indicator of how well or deep the contemplation sinks in. To calm the aversion seems to be the best course of action. Is this the right way to go about this?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-30 05:41:31**

Maybe I need to improve my emotional regulation first or learn how to manage this anxiety with some technique before I delve deep into territory that will inevitably stir up a lot of anxiety?

That won't help. Employing a management technique would mean staying right where you are, if not altogether regressing (in your ability to be undisturbed by unpleasant feelings when they *do* arise, which is the only thing that counts as progress).

What you probably have to do is improve your virtue. The reason why contemplating the Dhamma would evoke anxiety is not because the contemplation itself is wrong or because one hasn't developed some other skill, but because the way one lives is still in opposition to the Dhamma and in line with craving, so there is an inherent discrepancy. While continuing to welcome craving, you contemplate the peril in craving, which will of course feel very unpleasant. If contemplating/practicing the Dhamma is pleasant for someone who still welcomes their defilements in their daily conduct, they can be sure that what they're practicing is not the Dhamma.

When you have been *living* renunciation and become fully established in it, then thinking about the dangers of sensuality and attachment, as well as the inevitable cessation of everything you once held dear, will be the most refined joy—the joy of seeing that you have freed yourself from endless amounts of pain that would have otherwise befallen you. That, in turn, motivates you to give up even more, and this is precisely what jhāna is if you read the Suttas.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-31 04:45:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

This and this are good examples.

Virtue can only take place within the precepts, but someone who doesn't break the precepts isn't intrinsically virtuous. Think of a child, for example. It only counts as virtue when it's done with a willful commitment to giving up greed, aversion, or entertainment/distraction. And that means you would be actively looking for those faults

and working to remove them regardless of what “allowances” the rules supposedly give you, because it’s about purifying your own mind and not about meeting some external expectation.

## Day in the life of Samanadipa / HH residents

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** upasakatraine 2025-01-28 05:45:26

Might there be a short video made, showing what a typical day looks like at Samanadipa and/or Hillside Hermitage looks like. It would be of benefit to me to try and incorporate a similar regimen in my practice.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-28 13:47:39 (*in reply to a comment not included*)

We wouldn’t make such a video because it would only give the wrong impression. We don’t have a daily routine, nor do we place any importance on having one. What matters is the permanent abstinence from acts rooted in greed, aversion, and delusion. No routine can fundamentally capture that principle because those qualities exist in each individual’s mind and can only be known internally. Apart from the breaking of precepts, they aren’t measured by outward activities.

Someone who spends a whole day in diligent “practice” might be completely consumed by hindrances while thinking they’re practicing well (which is not uncommon). Meanwhile, someone who spends the same amount of time doing nothing but menial work—perhaps considered by the other person a “distraction”—may do so with an internally composed mind free of underlying defilements. In another case, the person who occupies themselves with external activities could be doing so for the wrong internal motivation, out of an “itch” of distraction, and they should actually restrain that. You can’t tell when it’s which just by looking at someone.

## Thoughts on Unwelcoming Sexuality

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Formal\_Breath\_2025 2025-01-26 19:07:18

I’ve been practicing not welcoming thoughts of desire, not attending to their pleasant features, not giving them the centre stage etc., but I noticed that sometimes when too much lust arises, that becomes quite difficult (not necessarily impossible) to do with lustful thoughts that arise. So when that happened I moved to contemplating the body and feelings as well, and I noticed ‘pleasant’ feelings that are present in the body, not just in the thoughts. I thought “why is my mind relishing as pleasant those arisen bodily sensations which are, beyond the pleasant feeling, mostly just uncomfortable?” (bodily sensations that endure well before you *act* on them, just so we’re clear). I felt that it was a perversion of things to feel this situation as pleasant, so I kept attending to those pleasant

feelings through-the-origin and unwelcoming them until my mind started to turn away from the lust. I found this useful because even though I wasn't directly unwelcoming lustful thoughts or contemplating asubha, once I had practiced this, those thoughts started to have much less appeal, because you realise that people who wilfully engage in sexuality mostly just can't exert restraint over their bodies in this way, and they take sexuality up as their 'own' choice as a kind of existential wilful ignorance towards this fact. From this perspective, lustful images actually start to become quite unappealing without any traditional asubha contemplation at all. I think this might be part of what the Buddha meant in the Samyogasutta (AN 7.51) when he mentions "A man focuses on his own masculinity... he's stimulated by this and takes pleasure in this" *before* the man goes to seek 'union'. It's not just that he finds his own body, clothes, etc. attractive, but that he already must experience some level of pleasure with regard to his masculine body part *in order to seek union*, i.e. the pleasant feeling is enduring even before seeking union, and someone couldn't possibly desire to seek union if they don't take pleasure in that body part. Once you've uprooted the delight in that bodily sensation, lustful images naturally start to become unappealing. These are just suggestions so any feedback is welcome. I think it would be quite hard to practice this for anyone who hasn't already been practicing sense restraint for a while, but I'm mainly suggesting it for those who have.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-28 13:25:32**

Yes, sensuality is after all nothing but delight in one's own body. You can't purely experience the body of another. You can only experience your body experiencing the body of another, and that's where lust arises.

The "traditional" asubha contemplation is not just not necessary; it's misguided. It's a rote repetition of visualizations that's relies on another set of equally visceral reactions of your senses: using aversion of the senses to override lust of the senses. It's on the same level as someone w a pile of who keeps a pile of excrement ready so they can revisit it whenever they get hungry and thereby suppress their appetite. At some point you will get either so hungry that it will make no difference, or you will just get desensitized over time.

But if having long since stopped engaging with sensual objects you come to discern the "framework" of your own body—through which not only other people's bodies but all sensory experiences are encountered—and the fact that it is composed of these disgusting organs, then any delight, not just in human bodies, will inevitably fade. You realize that there isn't a single nook or cranny in your experience that isn't enveloped by that repulsiveness.

Then it's no longer a volitional exercise of "pasting" asubha images over whatever is beautiful in a short-term management/antidoting fashion. You cease to be concerned with whether this or that is beautiful because you have seen that the sole "gateway" through which any extent of beauty can possibly come is utterly revolting, and there is nothing you can ever do about it. And that's good, because that dispassion will then be rooted in the way things are and always will be, and not in your volition.



## Questions about internal sense bases and citta.

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** obobinde 2025-01-25 07:55:02

If the internal sense bases are a negative space that can't be felt but only discerned, would it be right to say they are in the same domain as 'that body because of which' ?

If yes : the sixth sense base being mano, can we say that the external part of it is composed, among other things, of the active thinking *and* of the felt sense of I since the I is a thought ?

What about citta then, is it also pertaining to the inaccessible domain of 'that body because of which' ?

In which case, can we say that all of the internal sense bases, even though being an empty negative space, are under the influences of the citta and that is the reason why our senses are pulling us in whichever direction without us having anything to say about it (since we have no control whatsoever on either the citta or the internal sense base) ?

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-27 07:25:06

What's "internal" and what's "external" is not determined by a universally present "structure", but by one's individual mental situation. For the puthujjana for example,

the felt sense of I since the I is a thought ?

this would not be correct. Their sense of self is always "internal," which is precisely why they're still a puthujjana. Hence whenever they contemplate self, it's inevitably an external thing that they're contemplating "through" their still internal sense of self. That's what is meant with "seeing not self with self."

What about citta then, is it also pertaining to the inaccessible domain of 'that body because of which' ?

For a puthujjana, yes. But seeing the signs of the mind means precisely that the citta is not "inaccessible" anymore. One is able to recognize it as a phenomenon, and it's not anymore "internal" (i.e., overlooked) as it used to be. But that of course doesn't mean that it becomes a quasi-sensory object as in the popular understanding of "nimitta." It's still just on the level of a recognition, similar to how you know you are human without that knowledge being represented by any particular sensory object.

In which case, can we say that all of the internal sense bases, even though being an empty negative space, are under the influences of the citta and that is the reason why our senses are pulling us in whichever direction without us having anything to say about it

Yes, for someone who is not free from sensuality this would be the case. So the say that you *do* have, which would eventually take your senses out of the influence of the citta and establish the right order of things, is to not act on the pull of your senses even if it's there. And that's why virtue is indispensable.

## Comfort zone of solitude

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** craveminerals 2025-01-24 17:52:01

Hello dhamma friends,

The other day I read Sister Medhini's interesting essay titled "Homelessness is Nibbana" where she talks about comfort zones, and how they reveal underlying attachments, and assumptions of safety.

In a footnote she states; "Company is a comfort zone for those who fear loneliness, but solitude can be a comfort zone for those who are insecure and anxious around others."

What would be the right course of action for one who takes solitude as a 'comfort zone'? I'm currently delighting more in solitude and non-activity than in company. I've seen great benefit in learning to enjoy solitude and cutting down on distractions.

But honestly I'm afraid of people, and am uncomfortable and filled with shame in almost all social situations, whether I'm with friends, family, at work- and this has been the case for my whole life- with some exceptions here and there. Even now, when I'm living more virtuously, keeping 5 precepts (and 8 as much as I'm able) and am not burdened by any serious wrong deeds (that would explain the feeling of being at blame)

So I'm wondering, what would be good ways of breaking out of this "comfort zone" of solitude, while keeping in line with the dhamma?

Is it simply a matter of actively confronting these fears- by putting oneself in social situations, while enduring unpleasant feelings whenever they arise, and not fuel further negative thoughts and actions? (Which I thought I had done "enough" of already, throughout my life)

A more indirect approach would be, I suppose, starving the root of these fears by severing the attachment to sensuality..

Any advice or comments would be appreciated ☸

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-24 19:52:48

Is it simply a matter of actively confronting these fears- by putting oneself in social situations, while enduring unpleasant feelings whenever they arise, and not fuel further negative thoughts and actions?

Definitely not. That would not solve the problem but only move it elsewhere.

Unless you're an anāgāmi, solitude would almost surely cease to be comfortable if you stopped making choices that you, through self-honesty, realize are rooted in simple desire for sense pleasure or distraction—temporarily taking your eyes off of the problem that your mind still is rather than "taming" it.

In order to truly abandon concern with what others think about you, you need to first give up not only physical acts but also thoughts of delight in sensuality. Those are coarser

impurities.

## Clarification regarding Ven. Ñāṇavīrā's note on Paṭiccasamuppāda

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** upasakatraine 2025-01-24 13:39:37

Dear Bhante, u/Bhikkhu\_Anigha

A question came up in my mind, in pondering over Ven. Ñāṇavīrā's note on Paṭiccasamuppāda, in particular Para23 and Para24

He tells us that :

“It should be borne in mind that *paticcasamuppāda anulomam* (‘with the grain’—the *samudaya sacca*) always refers to the puthujjana, and *paṭilomam* (‘against the grain’—the *nirodha sacca*) to the arahat.”

This indeed seems an accurate conclusion to me, but the question then is: what about the *ariyasāvaka*? Is it somewhere in-between? Is it *anulomam* most of the time, and *paṭilomam* some of the time (only when they are abiding in jhāna)?

Furthermore: He says that the principle of conditionality (i.e. *hetuppabhavā*) is a general principle, that is ‘exemplified’ in the *paṭiccasamuppāda* formulation (of the 12 *nidānas*) of an individual's experience. I.e. *paṭiccasamuppāda anulomam*, is a formulation that also adheres, to this same general principle, and is an ‘exemplification’ of it.

That is to say, that as long as there are conditions (*hetū*, plural), there will be the ‘playing out’ of the *paticcasamuppāda* formulation in experience.

But the fact that conditions are (i.e. *hetū* are), is dependent (*paccaya*) on *Avijjā*. This is how we arrive at “*Avijjā paccaya sankhārā*” (*hetū* and *sankhārā* being synonymous in this usage)

Which is just another way of saying “*Ye dhammam hetuppabhavā, tesam hetum avijjā*” (Ven. Assaji's words to Ven. Sāriputta)

He quotes:

“*Avijjāpaccayā sankhārā*” will thus mean ‘*paṭiccasamuppāda* depends upon non-seeing of *paṭiccasamuppāda*’. Conversely, seeing of *paticcasamuppāda* is cessation of *avijjā*, and when *paticcasamuppāda* is seen it loses its condition (‘non-seeing of *paticcasamuppāda*’) and ceases. And this is cessation of all *hetuppabhavā dhammā*. Thus *tesam yo nirodho* is cessation of *avijjā*”

Seeing the Dhamma, is synonymous with seeing *paṭiccasamuppāda*. And seeing *paṭiccasamuppāda*, is cessation (*nirodha*) of *avijjā*.

Therefore this also prompts the question of why Ven. Sāriputta, who upon hearing Ven. Assaji's words ‘saw the Dhamma’ (i.e. the general principle of *hetuppabhavā*, and conse-

quently his particular exemplification of *paṭiccasamuppāda*), but was at that point a Sotapanna.

If as per Ven. Ñāṇavīra, the seeing of the principle of *hetuppabhavā* marks *Avijja nirodha*, shouldn't that mean that Ven. Sariputta attained to Arahantship? Why then did he need a couple weeks or so, *after that* realization?

I hope the question is sensible, and isn't worded too clumsily.

Thank you for your explanations !

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-28 12:38:15**

Is it somewhere in-between? Is it *anulomam* most of the time, and *paṭilomam* some of the time (only when they are abiding in *jhāna*)?

From the puthujjana's perspective, it's not "anuloma" at all. The "grain" that you experience is the coarsest fetters that you still have. The higher ones are for all intents and purposes not present for as long as the coarser ones exist. So the puthujjana's ignorance and craving do not exist in a sotapanna anymore, and neither does a sotapanna's ignorance and craving exist in an Arahant.

Curd is not a bit of milk and a bit of something else. Accurately speaking, curd contains 0 milk. By processing *all* of the milk, you get curd.

## **Brahmaviharas from the perspective of a lay person not seeking enlightenment.**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** DaNiEl880099 2025-01-22 13:35:59

What exactly are brahmaviharas(I have general views on this topic, but I'm curious about people's opinions here)? As someone who does not plan to pursue enlightenment and develop restraint, can I pursue brahmaviharas?

You could say that I have developed a daily practice of contemplating what I have done throughout the day in the context of compliance with the brahmaviharas. I have noticed that this practice makes me less nervous about various things and I look for opportunities during the day to act on them.

As for this practice. In short, at the end of the day I ask myself "What was the course of this day and what did I do?", "Were my actions in accordance with the brahmaviharas?", "If I did wrong, why did I do it?". I ask these questions and evaluate my behavior. I praise myself for good behavior or breaking the pattern and I reprimand for negative behavior.

What do you think, is this a valuable practice for someone who simply wants to continue living a normal secular life, but also wants to partially introduce the dhamma into their life?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-23 06:19:01**

As for this practice. In short, at the end of the day I ask myself “What was the course of this day and what did I do?”, “Were my actions in accordance with the brahmaviharas?”, “If I did wrong, why did I do it?”. I ask these questions and evaluate my behavior. I praise myself for good behavior or breaking the pattern and I reprimand for negative behavior.

That’s good, but fundamentally you need to realize that you can’t become established in Brahmaviharas unless you give up desires and attachments too. Attachment is what creates the basis for anger and discontent, since whatever you are attached too will eventually have to deteriorate or be destroyed, and that’s precisely when anger will arise. You can might skilled at suppressing the arisen anger by fabricating nice thoughts and so on, and that can indeed help you manage your suffering just like anything your average psychologist without any Buddhist background would tell you. But it would be a disservice to call that “brahmavihāra,” since that requires giving up desires too. Hence the word for celibate/ascetic life in Pāli is “brahmacariya,” or “Brahma conduct,” alluding to the idea that sense pleasures do not exist in the Brahma realm.

but also wants to partially introduce the dhamma into their life?

This may not be altogether impossible, but “the Dhamma” proper exists to the extent that you give up *all* manifestations of a certain “layer” or “degree” of craving. If you try to go very far with giving up only one type of craving, letting other instances of craving go unchecked, then even though it may be helpful in a worldly sense, it’s not the Dhamma anymore. The right view, the recognition that all craving is equally bad regardless of its type, has been put aside.

Think of someone so deeply engrossed in the “hustle” of their emerging business that they no longer even care about coarse sensual pleasures like food and sexual intercourse, but who shamelessly acts out of ill will when annoyed at their subordinates’ mistakes. Or ascetics in the Buddha’s time who were often even more austere and separated from agreeable things than the Buddha, but would often become bitter and spiteful as soon as their views were questioned. Someone who tries to develop Brahmaviharas without giving up sense desire is the same—just inverted.

In other words, it would be better to find a level of withdrawal from unwholesome things that is “even” all around, even if it’s less than complete, than to try to go all the way with renouncing only one type of unwholesome state. The former carries at least an approximation of the right view, whereas the latter is necessarily rooted in a wrong one.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-23 15:32:16 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It certainly is possible, and I’m sure many people interpret the practice that way. But you wouldn’t strive for the richness of something if you truly saw impermanence and what it actually entails. You would go the opposite direction, because you would realize that

involvement + impermanence = suffering. But it's a suffering that one readily justifies because it feels like the path of least resistance in the moment.

So it's not so much about whether such compromises are "possible" or not, but about whether what is being developed through them actually is the Dhamma. It's fine not to want to practice the Dhamma, i.e., the comprehensive cessation of craving. But it's dangerous to forget that that's the motivation for the compromise. The person then ends up in a gray area where they are neither pursuing their ambitions to the extent that they could, nor actually practicing the Dhamma (because they don't want to give up craving but only "manage" it in their own admission).

On the other hand, if you view the Dhamma as the literal abandonment of craving, internally and externally, as opposed to a clever strategy for somehow maneuvering around it, then however little you do in accordance with that accurate view will be a step or two mostly in the right direction. You won't have muddled the waters regarding what the right direction is even if you hardly went for it.

Insisting in calling one's practice of management "Dhamma" can only be rooted in dishonesty and wishful thinking. If the positive outcomes of the management practice were truly all that one cared about, one wouldn't mind whether it can rightly be reckoned as Dhamma or not because how one labels it won't change its results. There would be no issue with acknowledging that the Dhamma is much more than that. Just as a self-honest Kia owner wouldn't struggle to acknowledge that their Kia isn't a sportscar, and that they *could* buy a true sportscar if they saved enough money.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-24 19:13:54 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It seems to me that one could make a certain division here into two groups.

Yes, that division will inevitably exist. The point is that people who know they belong to the second group cannot develop the practices that require the lifestyle, mindset, and outlook of the first group, such as the brahmavihāras. Likewise, to the extent the first group attempts to fulfill worldly aspirations, they lose their original direction. It's like any other situation in life where you can't do two opposing things at once to the same extent. As long as one realizes that and acknowledges the inherent limitation, there is no problem with trying to go as far it allows.

Not acknowledging the limitation is a problem because then the refined aspects of the Dhamma, such as the jhānas, brahmavihāras, and meditation in general, get shoehorned into a space where they can't fit, inevitably deforming them and "dumbing them down" in the process. And out of that arise all sorts of delusions about achievements and attainments that don't measure up to the standard of true, unshakable freedom from suffering.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-27 07:11:52 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Is the only advice in such a situation to then keep the 5 precepts or are there reflections which are suitable to such a person in order to keep the mind inclined towards morals behaviour? (Making sure to be faithful, not developing jealousy etc).

Yes, reflection is always beneficial no matter what one's situation is. It's just that the benefits of those reflections will be limited to the basis of virtue that you have. Reflection cannot undo defilements that you still act out of by body and speech, just as a toothbrush would never be able to scrape off hardened cement. Reflection can only keep your mind in check so that you are able to *maintain* your current level of virtue, in this case 5 precepts.

Also, how should one reflect on feelings of guilt for choosing this path rather than following the Dhamma?

If realizing the Dhamma is valued as a goal, then one should foster that guilt (*hiri-ottappa* as it's called in the Suttas), and not label it as bad. If you don't feel guilty about something that your mind craves for, there's little chance you'll ever give it up.

Should such a lay person still seek out solitude on occasion?

Yes, but that time should be devoted mainly to increasing their baseline of virtue for that period, not to doing more advanced practices that they might think will "make up" for what they do the rest of the time, which is not how *kamma* works. Eventually, after periodically establishing higher virtue many times, they may come to see the benefits of it for themselves and end up making that their default. That's the point of the Uposatha observance. But for that to work, one needs to actively *want* that increase to happen (i.e., actually value the cessation of craving *over* the continuation of one's present lifestyle) and not feeling justified and content with keeping 5 precepts indefinitely, which is most laypeople's mindset.

## Homelessness is Nibbana (by Sister Medhini)

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** GachiOnFire 2025-01-22 09:37:47

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-24 11:49:17 (in reply to a comment not included)**

I know myself enough to know that at short-mid term ordaining as a monk will lead to more proliferation, not less, to more socialization, not less... therefore it is likely that it will lead to more agitation, not less, and probably to accumulating more doubts.

It very well might, but those pitfalls can only manifest as a result of one's own choices. Monastic institutions are nowadays certainly far from the ideal, but you can still find a place that isn't too bad if you look further than the popular ones that are made to cater to the superficial needs of the majority. The views will almost inevitably revolve around wishful thinking, mysticism and magical experiences, and management techniques, but a good number of places would offer you an external environment that's still better than lay life in almost every way. In lay life you will for the most part be surrounded not just by wrong views but by wrong behaviors and values as well.

Going off to live in the wilderness as a layperson would probably be better than staying in the city, but it's still important to examine oneself as to why going to a monastery seems unpalatable provided one with reasonable seclusion and independence can be found. It may happen that it's because one still clings to the worldly type of freedom and safety of being able to do things according to one's desires. As long as they're not coercing you to break precepts, or to forsake your seclusion and sit in a room full of people for the whole day, then even the most inane expectations and tasks you might get from a senior monk cannot prevent you from developing your own mind.

## Rebirth

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-01-21 14:14:16

When do we get reborn? From my understanding when we go to sleep we leave the body(in sleep body is not there) and in the morning come back into the body for our next cycle of birth. This could create an infinite amount of lifetimes that create the separate experience in the present that we believe to be real. By this logic we are constantly getting reborn inside the body until clearly seeing the noble truths and putting an end to craving and attachment from which we narrate this story of coming from the past and going into the future. I think this is why seeing the dependent origination ends rebirth.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-21 16:37:52

From my understanding when we go to sleep we leave the body(in sleep body is not there)

This isn't really true. If you truly "left" your body, you wouldn't be woken up by loud noises, and things you're experiencing physically through any sense organ except the eyes wouldn't influence your dreams, as can happens sometimes.

Studies have demonstrated that auditory stimuli presented during sleep can influence dream content. This technique, known as Targeted Memory Reactivation (TMR), involves delivering specific sounds during sleep to cue associated memories, thereby modifying dream content. For instance, research has shown that pairing neutral words with positive imagery, and then re-exposing individuals to these words during non-REM sleep, can lead to the incorporation of positive elements into dreams.



putting an end to craving and attachment from which we narrate this story of coming from the past and going into the future

Whether there is a story or not, one will suffer for as long as there is craving. So the “stories” and the sense of continuity connecting past and future are quite irrelevant, neutral phenomena, and would not be abolished upon abandoning ignorance and craving. The Buddha himself would say things like “I was such and such a king at that time, and now I am the fully awakened Buddha” when referring to his past lives. The sense of self (*bhava*) is generated by *upādāna*, which is in turn bound up with craving, and not by a “story” or a sense of continuity.

## ‘Significance’ of mother and father.

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** upasakatraine 2025-01-19 08:29:11

Dear Bhante u/Bhikkhu\_Anigha,

I was revisiting the talk on Right View, and the point made that while one might ‘rationalize’ that mother and father are just a heap of atoms or just perceptions and such; they are actively ignoring the phenomenological ‘significance’ of those (heaps of atoms), in their present lived experience. It is this ‘significance’, that lends the ‘motherhood’ or ‘fatherhood’ to the persons referred to.

A question arose then, that since the entirety of a persons experience is encompassed by the 5 aggregates (and nothing beyond the 5 aggregates); where would this ‘significance’ then fit in, into the aggregates model. Would not the significance, most accurately be falling under the aggregate of *Sañña* ?

Also, per my understanding, it is the ‘overriding’ of this very strong significance, that renders the act of killing one’s mother or father, such a heinous act of *Ānantarika Kamma*. Therefore it stands to reason that the mother and father need not be biological. As long as an individual bears that significance towards any person(s) (e.g. one is adopted and isn’t aware of that fact), the act of intentionally violating that significance, through killing, would bear the same consequences.

So a person raised by adoptive parents, but grows up unaware of that fact (i.e. with the notion/significance of them being his birth parents), would still be committing an *Ānantarika Kamma*, should he take their life.

Thank you for your responses as always !

## Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-20 05:10:32

Would not the significance, most accurately be falling under the aggregate of *Sañña* ?

It would be all of them. Particularly feeling and intention.

Also, per my understanding, it is the ‘overriding’ of this very strong significance, that renders the act of killing one’s mother or father, such a heinous act of Ānantarika Kamma. Therefore it stands to reason that the mother and father need not be biological. As long as an individual bears that significance towards any person(s) (e.g. one is adopted and isn’t aware of that fact), the act of intentionally violating that significance, through killing, would bear the same consequences.

Certainly. The “overriding” of that significance requires such a strong degree of greed or aversion that the mind is irreparably “broken” as a result (any lesser passions or aversions also “damage” it and obstruct it from seeing the Dhamma, but such damage is reversible in this life). It has nothing really to do with the biological connection, which at the end of the day is something you can only take on trust.

## **Whatever has the nature of arising has the nature of ceasing; Freedom from suffering too?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Belozersky 2025-01-18 22:59:45

Whatever has the nature of arising has the nature of ceasing.

Freedom from suffering has the nature of arising.

Hence, Freedom from suffering has the nature of ceasing.

This argument would mean that liberation can’t be unconditional. The very fact that you’ve achieved liberation means that you will lose it at some point. What do you think about this argument?

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-19 05:34:48**

Freedom from suffering has the nature of arising.

Technically it does not. That’s one reason why the widespread conception of awakening/freedom from suffering as an “experience” is very misguided. Such a thing, having not been there before and then all of a sudden appearing, will inevitably be impermanent *in its nature* (i.e., its facticity of having arisen), no matter how extraordinary—even “unconditioned”—its *content* is.

“Bhikkhus, there are these three characteristics that define the conditioned. What three? An arising is seen, a vanishing is seen, and its alteration while it persists is seen. These are the three characteristics that define the conditioned.

“Bhikkhus, there are these three characteristics that define the unconditioned. What three? No arising is seen, no vanishing is seen, and no alteration while

it persists is seen. These are the three characteristics that define the unconditioned.”

—AN 3.47

For an explanation of what it means for Nibbāna not to be liable to arising, which also makes it clear that it’s not a miraculous event that happens to you but something that you *understand*, see this comment.

## Sutta accounts of jhāna while listening to/contemplating teachings

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Devotedlyindeed 2025-01-17 04:58:55

I was recently discussing with a monk (whose views on jhāna do not align with HH) the importance of contemplation in practice, and I mentioned that there were people who entered jhāna while listening to the Buddha teach. But it suddenly occurred to me that I actually don’t know any explicit accounts of that happening. Maybe I just recalling this based on implications of people gaining Noble attainments while listening, figuring that must mean they had to go into jhāna to fulfill the N8P; it makes way more sense than assuming everyone who became enlightened while listening to the Buddha had already been practicing jhāna. But are there unequivocal accounts that it was like this?

Additionally, are there unequivocal accounts in the suttas that people enter jhāna while actively contemplating, or is this something I’ve also inferred while reframing my views of meditation into something more contemplation-forward? (I know of modern accounts of such written pretty straightforwardly, such as Bhante Ñāṇadīpa’s, but can’t recall any so clearly stated in the suttas.)

I am seeking cut-and-dry examples, if there are any so clear. Thanks in advance~

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-17 07:00:30

You may have gotten that from SN 46.38, which doesn’t describe jhāna per se, only giving up the five hindrances. It’s also often mentioned how the Buddha would first teach about generosity and the danger in sensuality in order to make a person’s mind free from hindrances (*vinīvaraṇa*), and only then teach them the Four Noble Truths.

It does show that abandoning the hindrances involves something very different from what people tend to think. It’s fundamentally about *clarity of understanding*, chiefly regarding the harmful nature of sensuality, and the benefit and peace of giving it up. Hence it is said that understanding the former as it is, not just in theory but “as it really is with right understanding,” is an indispensable prerequisite for entering the first jhāna. After all, jhāna literally means nothing more obscure than “contemplation; reflection; consideration, etc.” Hence the Suttas say one can “do jhāna” either wrongly or rightly, i.e. with or without hindrances.

If an ordinary person's mind can be freed from hindrances and get to develop understanding in this way, then it's no wonder that a noble disciple listening to further expositions of the Four Noble Truths—who sees *the right meaning* of those teachings in his own experience directly and beyond doubt—would be free from the hindrances and fulfill the awakening factors at that time.

Additionally, are there unequivocal accounts in the suttas that people enter jhāna while actively contemplating, or is this something I've also inferred while reframing my views of meditation into something more contemplation-forward

Every description of someone entering jhāna in the Suttas describes them contemplating the drawbacks of the five hindrances beforehand (e.g., DN 2, MN 39). There's also MN 19 and SN 35.246, which put it in a slightly different way.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-17 12:21:05 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

These seem to contradict each other, unless jhāna in general is a more broad term than “The First Jhāna”?

Yes, that was essentially my point. “jhāna” simply means “contemplation/reflection,” and by itself in no way implies one is reflecting, contemplating *properly* (i.e., in such a way that the hindrances are overcome and the mind is tamed). The verb “pajjhāyati,” from the same root as jhāna, means thinking in a distressed/dejected way, and “nījjhāna” is used to refer to considering/pondering a view, as a result of which one (rightly or wrongly) comes to agree with it.

And then would it be right to say (proper noun:) Jhānas are simply when someone does jhāna, along with right view and absence of the 5H?

Correct. So when the Buddha spoke about “the four jhānas,” those are the four contemplations that are always right because they lead squarely to right knowledge, dispassion and relinquishment. Hence they are defined as *sammāsamādhi*.

And that since the Buddha describes going off to enter into and practice jhāna, he would therefore still experience the 5H. Is there somewhere you have explained this matter?

Not sure what you mean by this. If you mean that the Buddha still had the five hindrances and therefore had to go and practice jhāna, that would not be correct. As he said, an Arahant's hindrances are “cut off at the root, not liable to future arising.”

Thus, First Jhāna at the very least implies freedom from the five hindrances, but freedom from the five hindrances does not imply jhāna (as seen also in the Suttas I cited above). If Arahants were perpetually in at least the first jhāna, they would not be able to speak.

Thank you for elaborating; I'm not very good at logic with these things.

Sure, no problem.

## Two ways of thinking about Jhāna?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Formal\_Breath\_2025 2025-01-16 13:50:26

I have recently been listening to Ven. Nyanamoli's talks about Jhāna and I feel like there are two different themes that tend to come up. One is that Jhāna is developed naturally when one has abandoned the 5 hindrances and develops the pleasure of seclusion and renunciation, and the other is that Jhāna is developed by reflecting on subtle themes within experience: in the 1st Jhāna it's that speech is determined by thinking and pondering, and understanding that these are two separate domains with cessation of speech, all the way to the 4th Jhāna where it's that breathing itself has a prior life-determination which exists independently of it (but this is well beyond my understanding). I don't fully understand how these are linked - is it that someone who develops the pleasure of wholesomeness and seclusion will naturally come to perceive the dependent arising of e.g. thoughts and speech while dwelling in that pleasure? Or is that someone has wholesomeness and seclusion as the *prerequisite* for examining the relationship between thoughts and speech? If it's the latter then it seems like Jhāna would be quite hard to develop without instruction, but maybe it's something that seems much more natural after the 5 hindrances are already abandoned.

### Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-16 14:38:56

That would be the difference between someone who develops jhāna outside of the Buddha's teaching and someone who does so as a noble disciple. The distinction is never explicitly made in the Suttas, but it's implicit in many ways.

There are accounts of ascetics before the Buddha who were free of passion for sensual pleasures, and that can be taken as a sign that they had developed renunciation and made their minds value it and be joyful and peaceful on account of it (which is what jhāna is). MN 102 describes such a scenario in more detail.

The second "type" of jhāna that is bound with clarity about the nature of experience is the type that requires Right View, and that is the jhāna that is only accessible to noble disciples, that develops the seven factors of awakening, and that can truly be said to be *sammāsamādhi* (right composure), since it is born out of *sammāsatī* (right recollection). Both of which, of course, necessitate the right view. And only that second type of jhāna involves *complete* abandonment of the five hindrances, since the ability to give them up fully is a characteristic of a noble disciple. Giving up the hindrances requires understanding their nature and is not something that just "happens" on the basis of a method or technique.

You could argue that developing the first "type" of jhāna could serve as a basis for someone to get the right view, since, as we often see from the Suttas, whenever people would

understand the four noble truths, it was because their minds were relatively free from hindrances, though most likely not fully in the first jhāna since they were not in seclusion.

Still, just to emphasize: as said in the Suttas dozens of times, that freedom would have to come from reflecting on the hindrances rightly based upon a lifestyle where one is well restrained in regard to them already (which is what you end up with by following the Gradual Training). What people nowadays regard as “meditation” would play no role at all, which is why you never see *that* mentioned prior to someone entering the jhānas, but instead the completion of the earlier parts of the Gradual Training. The states arising out of those two things are worlds apart from each other.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-16 15:59:41 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

someone who is already proficient in establishing the right order of things would immediately understand the 1st Jhāna as indicating the relationship between thought and speech, even if they had not been given that specific teaching already?

They may not think of it in terms of “relationship between thought and speech” explicitly, but they will certainly be able to see the full scope of thinking, without overlooking anything, due to the strength of their yoniso manasikāra. And “not overlooking anything” is the only way to uproot the hindrances, for otherwise something or other will remain “underlying” you, keeping you subservient to it in some subtle way through its unnoticed pressure.

Seeing that full scope clearly, and not some specific contemplation, is what automatically makes one unable to speak, as well as freeing one from any assumptions of pleasures (or anything, really) “outside” this experience. All those pleasures are seen as simply vitakkavicāra *about* a sight, smell, etc., and one is unable to conceive even of the possibility of an “actual” sight outside vitakkavicāra that one needs to go and “get.” Hence some other Suttas speak of cessation of “sensual perception” (*kāmasaññā*) rather than of speech in the first jhāna. Both have exactly the same root and cannot exist without the other.

And, of course, seeing that “full scope” is only possible if one’s bodily and verbal actions of sensual or averse nature have been well restrained beforehand. Entertaining delight not only in thought but also to the extent of acting physically and verbally can only stem from the assumption that what you acted towards exists outside vitakkavicāra, which means the assumption will “ossify” even more and become harder to uproot.

## **What do I have to renounce?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** benedictus-s 2025-01-16 12:38:29

I am not yet following the eight precepts, even though I’m gradually going in that direction, and am full of doubt. I (believe I) understand that much of the practice revolves around

not feeding *taṇha*. The precepts forbid activities that necessarily do, and sense restraint is about dealing with the other subtler unskillful things we do. I've heard in dhamma talks that one not supposed to really be able to discern skillful from unskillful before having been restrained for a while.

I obviously do not know how much I would have to abandon, since I haven't even reached dhamma practice, and it is filling me with doubt. I think I could follow the eight precepts, but I'm not sure how much farther I could go. I know I don't have to renounce everything that brings me joy, but only what feeds the craving. I however don't really know what that entails? Is there a way to make that distinction in my present experience? For example, I like reading about non buddhist philosophy, but I don't know whether I crave it. I also enjoy reading fiction from time to time and the same question applies...

I'm aware my question does not reflect the existential terror that my situation should inspire. I would be very grateful if you could give me your informed opinion on the matter.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-16 16:20:02**

I know I don't have to renounce everything that brings me joy, but only what feeds the craving. I however don't really know what that entails? Is there a way to make that distinction in my present experience? For example, I like reading about non buddhist philosophy, but I don't know whether I crave it. I also enjoy reading fiction from time to time and the same question applies...

It's impossible to stop feeding craving completely from the very beginning no matter how hard you try. No particular "protocol" of living will do that in itself; that requires first-hand discernment of what craving is and its cessation, i.e., stream-entry. As the Buddha said, craving perpetually "moves," so it's not like by restraining one or even all of the specific things that arouse craving for you *now*, you won't see it come up anymore.

This is why it's a training that builds up progressively. In this case, your only concern should be to begin keeping the precepts and get used to that. Don't worry about anything else for now. Once you get used to the precepts and more "space" starts to open up as a result, you will naturally start to see subtler impurities in your own mind, and only with that first-hand discernment will you be able to abandon them rightly.

(If one has a severely wrong view of what practice and purification are, a view that places the emphasis on something completely unrelated to the precepts and one's behavior, then it's of course very unlikely that any further impurities at the level of conduct will be noticed—even after keeping the precepts perfectly for decades—simply because one won't be looking to find them. The precepts become simply boxes to tick mindlessly before moving on to the main act ASAP.)

## **Musings on right intention**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** TheDailyOculus 2025-01-15 23:08:07

It's not until recently that I truly began to notice/view/understand how the word intention applies. Below is my current understanding as I practice it:

Intention seems to me to be the closest you can get to the origin of any action. Even thoughts/images/pressure have a sense of being offered up by the mind, but you have to "take them up" (assuming you are the owner and that they are yours) by intending in the direction of what was already offered, for those thoughts to further escalate in that direction.

Only by being ignorant of their nature as independently arisen phenomena, not created by you, can you assume ownership and intend to act out. And as such, you don't see the intention, only the action. You don't "see" the thought/image/feeling/pressure, you only see that you act as you please in this world.

So when you see a pleasant sight or a pleasant image arise in your mind - "you" are in the presence of a mental image of that sight, a pleasant feeling, and a potential line of thinking.

But if you do not slip into that trap of image/feeling/thoughts, if you do not intend in line with the pressure to go in that direction, there is no fuel for them to burn brighter so to speak. With your intention present (to me it seems that the words "delighting in" and "being averse to" applies as well), the mind will be encouraged to offer up these independently enduring phenomena.

And to the degree you commit to non-delight and non-aversion (or non-intention) in regard to presently enduring phenomena, the mind will calm down more and more and offer up such suggestions less and less.

I've been applying the concept of studying intention in regard to the breath, while recollecting that the breath exists on its own with no overlap with ones intention. So the intention to breath and the actual breath are not the same. Aversion and delight comes from assuming that there is a cohesive "you" that bridges the gap between intention and body, or intention and mental phenomena. In intending to breath deeply, you intend in a direction that already exists in the mind in the form of a mental image.

But even the closest things to you, thoughts, mental images, feelings.. They are the minds territory, and the mind pressures you to go in its wanted direction.

And so the only real training, is to practice non-intention in regard to anything unskillful presented to you by the mind and the senses. That is, patiently enduring not acting out of greed, aversion and delusion.

I'm at a place now where I still act out unskillfully from time to time, but there is an overlap with me also knowing and seeing beforehand what I've described above, and so I act out knowing it is unskillful. But it seems to me, that I now know what abandoning sensuality truly means. All I have to do is to train this in a less disturbed environment until I've grown enduring enough to non-intend instead of intending in the face of greed, aversion and delusion.

Edit: I should also mention that it is that very intention affected with greed, aversion and



delusion that is the reason one still acts out in the presence of pleasant or unpleasant phenomenon. By knowing what phenomena that are skillful or unskillful, and by seeing that choice/intention, and by having enough strength to endure non-action in their presence, one's failure to non-intend becomes purified.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-16 15:23:22**

This sounds mostly like the right direction, but do make sure not to forget that you won't be able to recognize subtle things like the relationship between intention and breathing with any significant degree of accuracy until this

I'm at a place now where I still act out unskillfully from time to time, but there is an overlap with me also knowing and seeing beforehand what I've described above, and so I act out knowing it is unskillful.

...is no longer the case. If that's still happening, it suggests that your clarity of those acts as unskillful is insufficient and somewhat shallow, so I would focus on addressing that first. Otherwise you'll be trying to build the roof of the house before there is even a foundation. Proper knowledge of *kusala* and *akusala* would alone make you a sotāpanna.

## **“The More You Scratch an Itch..” Further explanation, Please?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** StrikingRegular1150 2025-01-12 00:24:11

First, let me say I absolutely love the Hillside Hermitage Youtube Channel. I'm so grateful for it! Discourse that I've been exposed to through it has really helped connect a lot of dots for me. So thank you, thank you, thank you on account of that.

I have a question I'd very deeply appreciate any responses on from either Hillside Hermitage or anyone in the community, here.

For years I've been trying to gain better insight into the dynamic of how the more one pushes away something not wanted it paradoxically not only does it not lessen the effects of what's desired to be pushed away, but only makes it worse. (When I say “push away something not wanted”, examples: anxious avoidance of a trigger, angry defensive pushing-away a trigger, or indulging in sensory escapism to forget a trigger.)

I've felt for years that better understanding this (paradoxical at face value) dynamic of what happens you react to internal pressure by giving in, or don't, is one of the most important lessons in human life there is.

I say that, not only for better navigating in real time what caving into pressures means for one's self, but also for eliciting feelings of compassion for others when seeing them cave into these pressures.

Hillside Hermitage video reference this dynamic within responding to pressures or not, and will sometimes make the analogy of:

“The more you scratch an itch the worse it gets.”

I was wondering if anyone could flesh this out much more deeply though?

Thank you very much in advance!

Love,  
Mark

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 16:21:08**

As with everything that has to do with the Dhamma, this isn't really something you can figure out in an abstract sense. The very act of trying to figure it out can often be underlain by the same dynamic of “scratching” an arisen “itch,” and you would be overlooking the actual dynamic right in front of your nose and contemplating abstract ideas instead. It can only be understood on the basis of practical, lived virtue and restraint. That's how you begin to see—on a first-person level, which is the where the Dhamma is found—how your choices and the attitudes they stem from impact the directions that your mind inclines to.

It can't really be described in any more detail than saying that your mind's inclinations are something you only have indirect, “delayed” control over, exactly like a dog. No matter how tight you have it on the leash, you can't force a dog to *want to* behave as you'd like it to. But when you see it getting excited having smelled something attractive, you do have a choice to either let it run towards it, or not. If you let it go where it wants, it will only get more agitated and defiant to your commands (the “itch” intensifies). If you stop it from running towards its target when the excitement is still only nascent, despite probably having to put up with a bit of whimpering initially, you cut off the possibility for an entire array of problems at its very root, and the “itch” will diminish too.

The same principle applies to aversion, just that the “itch” is of course different in its content (pushing back at a perceived threat).

[Edit: It's also important to remember that letting “the dog” get worked up over one thing means letting it get worked up over *everything*. So if a person struggles with a specific defilement, they should always consider not just that one, but all the other defilements they might be giving in to, not seeing them as a problem].

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-27 06:52:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Seems like the “jump over” part, the separation of sense door pressures, is some kind of illusion, perhaps?

No, it's not an “illusion.” The whole concept of “illusions” is something one should avoid, as it is almost always rooted in denying the factual state of affairs for the sake of managing

one's feelings in regard to it.

The pressure “jumps over” from one sense door to another simply because it's not the sense doors that are infected with craving themselves, but rather the mind (citta), which is tied to all the sense doors, including the sixth. And there's no “why” to this, it's just the way existence works.

## What is the appropriate attitude/view to have towards one's parents?

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok-Addition-7759 2025-01-10 20:06:07

As I prepare to go forth it's becoming much more real the fact that I'm leaving my family behind. When I leave, I don't know when or if I might see them again. It feels easier to see the body as not mine than it is to see my mom or dad as not my mine. I don't want to say they're “not mine” in the wrong way. Nothing can belong to anyone, but it's too easy to take that in the wrong way, in a way that avoids responsibility or isn't taken personally enough or is dissonant with the actual underlying emotions and attachments(denial, repression, etc).

The Buddha makes it clear that we owe our parents a lot, that it's a debt that is hard to repay. They are our first teachers and we aren't entitled to any of the food, protection, care, etc that they provide.

I used to have a very entitled mindset. I thought I was a victim. I've come to see how much of a lie that is, that I'm not owed these things, and that I am deeply, deeply cherished, loved and accepted by those around me. As I prepare to go forth it's becoming so much more real how much I owe my mom. How much she did for me. How much she sacrificed. I have a hard time not being ashamed for consuming resources like food and healthcare and accepting things without guilt. That part of being a monk will be difficult to get used to. I would like to be able to accept things without shame or guilt. I think the entitlement is a compensation strategy by the mind to cover that up.

I didn't have any relationship with my father before I found Buddhism, but my introduction to the dhamma was so profound and for whatever reason drove me to call my dad. We talked for the first time in 15 years. 2 years later, we have a wonderful relationship. He is a good man, a kind man, and I'm so blessed to have gotten to have this relationship with him. At first I was really apprehensive about the idea of reconnecting with him or building it into a relationship, but I kept coming back to the Buddha's teaching that there is mother and there is father.

I've practiced hard at home to earn merit for my mom, it's been a big motivator. She isn't really able to receive Buddhism much, I can't teach her or establish her in mindfulness, the things the Buddha says are best for parents and loved ones. When she asked what I wanted for Christmas I saw an opportunity for her to make merit and told her I wanted a donation to Hillside Hermitage. I'm really glad I was able to help her make merit with

that. I don't see much more I can do except be a good son and practice well.

How does one view parents and relationships with them? How does one properly say they're not mine? I'm not trying to get out of the pain of separation. I'll have to work through that and I plan on crying in the forest a lot when I get to Sri Lanka, for grief and joy.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-11 13:27:08**

How does one view parents and relationships with them? How does one properly say they're not mine?

You don't "say" they're not yours.

As usual, you first need to be established in the precepts and withdrawal from sensuality, especially because those defilements are much coarser than the attachment to loved ones. Then within that, don't try to deny all the good that your parents have done for you. Acknowledge how helpful they've been, but at the same time don't try to cover up the fact that you could lose them or be separated from them forever the very next moment. That's just to hammer in the same point that *any* attachment to anything in the world is unjustified and unbeneficial because it puts you in a vulnerable position due to impermanence.

Attachment doesn't help you the tiniest bit in being grateful for what somebody has done for you nor even in repaying them. Quite the opposite; all attachment is bound up with selfishness by necessity. It's based on your own attitude towards your own feelings, and has nothing to do with the other person. It will blind you and make you overlook ways in which you may even be harming the other person given that your tacit priority is getting what you want out of them.

## **Signs of the Mind/Practice Check**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2025-01-10 17:02:28

[deleted]

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-11 16:40:12**

This sounds like an attempt to find an escape from suffering through psychologizations, and is certainly not what we mean with "seeing the sign of the mind."

Seeing the sign of the mind would be taking a step back from this whole complex net of ideas and asking yourself why you feel compelled to engage with them in the first place. Most likely, through radical honesty, you would see that it helps you cope with challenging emotional states and situations better one way or another. But that's not how you arrive at freedom from suffering. It's the mind still trying to exert control over experience and have things go according to its preferences at the level of feeling at least, just in a way that's less obvious.

You can only arrive at true freedom from suffering by abandoning craving in regard to whatever feeling is present, not by trying to manipulate it by rehearsing various ideas, whether accurate or not.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-11 17:49:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Effort isn't necessarily always conscious, especially when something has become habitual. *Saṅkhāras* exist due to ignorance as the Buddha said, not because one explicitly wants to have them.

it's seen as a sentence without meaning. Then the sentence falls apart.

Even if it feels like it's not "you" making that happen, the fact remains that the freedom came from a change that occurred, and not from you being completely unmoved by both very meaningful and very meaningless sentences equally, or by whatever else happens to manifest regardless of its pressuring or non-pressuring qualities.

Such freedom cannot be unconditioned because the occurrence of a change is its condition.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 04:31:24 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Change occurs on its own.

It does, but you seemed to imply that the occurrence of the change is the reason for the freedom, i.e., that if the sentences continued having the same heaviness of meaning indefinitely, the suffering would also continue.

What I'm trying to share is the seeing that resulted from the cessation of craving.

And my point is that what you described seems like a change in feeling (regardless of whether you deliberately caused it or not), not the cessation of craving. Seeing the sign of the mind and Right View boil down to seeing that these two could not be further apart.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 05:09:04 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Simply put: when I see a mirage, no thirst for water arises. Why? Because the knowledge that a mirage is empty of water is already present.

My point is that the actual cessation of craving is such that even when the water is perfectly real and not a "mirage," you *still* don't crave for it. Understanding the four noble truths leads to direct cessation of craving without any intermediary, rather than indirectly

by altering the way you perceive things first, and *thus* not craving. The latter is adding a middleman, and it's what we tend to call "management." It's not what the Buddha taught.

The *direct* reason for your suffering is not that you see things as real and not a mirage, which is what your view seems to imply. It's that you cannot feel "real" pleasure without craving for it or feel "real" pain without craving against it. So that's where the wisdom needs to be developed. The "mirage"-type feelings and phenomena don't need to be understood because anybody will naturally be equanimous towards them.

That was all just to clarify what I said. Could you expand on this?:

"Seeing the sign of the mind and Right View boil down to seeing that these two could not be further apart."

Seeing the sign of the mind means becoming aware of its attitude of craving when things *aren't* easy to endure, i.e., when they're not a "mirage". That's how you develop Right View. And that could not be further apart from a practice based on things being a mirage always, which will only obscure the fact that if things were not so, your mind *would* crave. The latter practice involves a subtle assumption that feelings, not craving, are the root of suffering, and thus it's the polar opposite of Right View.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 05:36:34 (in reply to a comment not included)**

and now I understand where you're coming from

It doesn't seem like it, I'm afraid. The way you speak about your understanding quite clearly implies to me that you think feelings are the cause of suffering, despite not wanting to phrase it that way presumably because it sounds wrong according to what you've learned intellectually. I would've said the same even if you had never used any metaphors. I've only been using your metaphor to try to convey the message.

Thus, everything remains real as it is, but no longer as it once appeared to be.

This is the mistake I'm referring to. Everything *should* be exactly as it once appeared to be. *Avijjā* has nothing to do with things *appearing* otherwise than they truly are. The Buddha was no mystic. It has to do with not understanding that 100% real water is not worth craving for, for reasons completely unrelated to the ultimate truth/validity of its appearance.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 06:32:45 (in reply to a comment not included)**

Simply put, you are on the surface using the same words and expressions of "giving up craving" and "seeing impermanence" to describe a very different practice from what I'm describing. For you, those expressions mean the phenomenon's appearance changes. On

the other hand, what I'm saying is that knowing the nature of a phenomenon and abandoning craving in regard to it does not change the way it appeared when there was ignorance, and that is perfectly fine because appearances are not the root of suffering. If one needs to change appearances to not suffer, one is not addressing the core issue but simply sidestepping it.

This is how the presence of craving, in any form, fabricates experience so that things appear to be good and bad, me and mine.

I can't see how things would appear in any way similar to how they did when craving deluded perception, making everything appear as permanent, satisfying, and ownable.

It's the other way around entirely. Things appear the way they've always done (feelings of "good" and "bad") > craving is present due to ignorance of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* in regard to feelings and the aggregates in general > one suffers. This is quite clear from the Suttas.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-12 16:48:25 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Yes, that analogy might work on a crude level. But in the end it's subtler than that, since only the most misled people would genuinely think that insight leads to a transformation of sensory perceptions themselves. Ultimately, you need to stop expecting any change to occur even at the level of feeling, since that's also part of "appearance."

Over time, of course, the mind becomes more equanimous, and things that used to pressure it won't do so as much. But that is a secondary side effect of the right practice, and it is absolutely paramount not to be hoping for that effect and trying to bring it about when it's not there, for otherwise you won't actually be abandoning craving here and now, and any calm that comes out of craving will be feeble, limited, and require constant management.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-14 04:26:54 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

It is NOT sensory perceptions that change. It is ignorance (perceptual and conceptual fallacies) in regard to sensory perceptions that disappear completely.

I've no doubt that that's not what you're saying, and I never thought so. I wasn't referring to you when I wrote "the most misled people..."

As I made clear, the problem is not with the phrasing. The phrasing of what you wrote here to describe insight is not necessarily wrong because it's what the Suttas say. But what that content *means for you* seems to be something rather different. It involves still putting the blame for suffering on the way experience manifests.

This Sutta may help get my point across. The Arahant is completely free from suffering *in spite* of the potentially infinite magnitude of the tides (arising from the senses), whereas what you're describing sounds to me like "there is freedom *because* there is no tide" (the "tide" having been removed by the contemplation of impermanence, letting go, etc., which would not be the correct use for those contemplations).

Even if the content of the sense perceptions remains the same, their "weight" is gone. But that "weight" is in itself not craving and thus not suffering, yet your descriptions sound to me very much like you think it is.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-14 12:14:28 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

No need to stand apart from the tides of change, of conditions, of pain, because without craving it is impossible to suffer

Indeed, and it's essential to check whether one's practice revolves around removing that actual craving or whether it simply diminishes the tides.

having had experience altered in such a way that seeing phenomena as anicca, dukkha, anatta, has created a refuge within where nothing seems to reach.

And this sounds to me like diminishing the tides. It might still be "the same mass of water" as before and not have entirely turned into something else, but that freedom is still dependent on *an alteration of some kind*, in this case the magnitude of the tides.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-02-02 08:33:36 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I don't see why you would interpret this Sutta as support for the view that the cessation of craving involves alteration of perception. It is talking about what MN 1 describes, which is much subtler and very different from simply altering perceptions (which again, is inevitably "management", a much easier temporary fix that should not be assumed to be a true escape from dukkha even if it works in the present).

Having to search far and wide to find a single Sutta that lends support to what one thinks the cessation of craving is about is also a red flag, as you would expect the Buddha to talk about something frequently and explicitly if it were that important. Instead, probably hundreds if not thousands of times in the Suttas, the practice is said to be giving up passion and delight in arisen perceptions and other aggregates, not altering them.

**Isn't everyone in this community just blindly assuming that free will exists?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** senserestraint 2025-01-10 05:18:46



Ajahn Nyanamoli talks a lot about taking personal responsibility for giving into the pressure of desire. I don't understand - doesn't this imply that free will isn't an illusion?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-10 13:40:56**

I don't understand - doesn't this imply that free will isn't an illusion?

Why would it be? The Buddha certainly never said that. At least not if we define free will simply as the ability to exert intentions or refrain from doing so, and differentiate that from the ability to achieve desired results.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-10 17:12:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

A determinist would say that all your intentions and refraining are caused by prior conditions which you didn't have control over i.e., any of your actions can be traced back to the state of the world prior to your birth.

Indeed, but without a concrete basis or evidence for that belief (there isn't any), but only other beliefs/assumptions that they take on faith, often simply because not feeling the weight of responsibility is more pleasing to them. Quite the opposite, experiential evidence—which is apodictic and cannot be “proven” through secondary means—shows you that your choices make a difference. The person would choose to deny that evidence and settle for a belief instead.

Asserting that there are actions which are ultimately caused by you would imply that you are some kind of primordial unconditioned entity

That's quite a leap. You wouldn't feel like you're a “primordial unconditioned entity” if someone locked you into a cell even if they let you move freely within it, would you? That's what the power of choice is: the ability to put one of the options given to you above the others, never to actually create new things from nothing. Even on the mental plane, you can't think a thought that wasn't already available before you thought it. Otherwise you would never forget things.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-11 06:32:59 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Your choices making a difference isn't evidence for them not being pre-determined.

Nor will you be able to provide conclusive evidence that they *are* pre-determined. So my point is that it's a belief that isn't even supported by any more evidence than the opposite. It's not somehow a more rigorous or rational take.

that doesn't mean they have some free will independent of the flow of conditions, it just means that the current flow of conditions INCLUDES their wis-

dom from choosing the donut in the past and INCLUDES their current degree of ability to restrain.

In the overall picture, it's still a path of less resistance that will be used to avoid responsibility for indulgence, because the person will inevitably at some point *choose* to regard their supposed lack of free will as their reason for eating the donut, rather than making the perfectly possible, even if "illusory," choice to blame it on nothing but their own weakness—assuming eating the donut actually *was* an indulgent intention, which isn't a given—thus opening up the possibility for growth, even if an "illusory" one.

The Buddha's teaching is ultimately about the way things manifest to you and your suffering on account of those manifestations, not about hidden metaphysical truths. Even if actually and in truth your choices and your development in restraint were "not real", that will make no difference to your ability to practice the Dhamma and free yourself within the supposed "illusion". Whether it's an illusion or not, you suffer, and experience shows you that there are "illusory" choices that either go with the grain of craving, or not. That's all that matters.

## A point about meditation and question about sensuality

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok\_Watercress\_4596 2025-01-07 10:32:11

Hi, I wanted to share a little bit about my own "path" here to illustrate a point and to ask a question, maybe someone can help

1. I used to not be able to keep the 5 precepts and was really upset about it almost all the time, so having no other options I started meditating and eventually was able to start keeping the 5 precepts. Now I want to aim to increase the threshold further as I did in the past, starting with the most obvious things and to me it seems like sitting mindfully, aware of the body, with a quiet mind really helps me to overcome rising greed, aversion and grief, etc. To me it seems obvious that even though meditation may not be sufficient on its own as a technique to attain Nibbana, it is quite important and a crucial element of fulfilling the gradual training, in my experience. The thoughts are filled with sensuality as well, so sitting calmly helps me to undo the thinking habits that are unbeneficial and to me it seems like this cannot be avoided, a person must become aware of their thoughts and calm them down and try to give them up, otherwise these thoughts are the same as the sensuality I want to give up
2. I've been trying to contemplate drawbacks of sensuality, but it doesn't seem to work. I've given up various things, but at the same time value some other things and really struggle to give them up. I'm wondering if there is some trick or way or technique to clearly see the peril, danger, drawback, the problem with pleasure and make the thoughts of renunciation more appealing as a way out
3. Can I still enjoy some hobbies I like? Like 3D modelling, videogames and bodybuilding, are those also dangerous?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-07 15:19:51**

The thoughts are filled with sensuality as well, so sitting calmly helps me to undo the thinking habits that are unbeneficial and to me it seems like this cannot be avoided, a person must become aware of their thoughts and calm them down and try to give them up, otherwise these thoughts are the same as the sensuality I want to give up

It *can* be avoided by training yourself in virtue, restraint, and renunciation in the overall context of your life, since those actions create the momentum that keeps pushing you in the same direction mentally even when you're not doing anything in particular. Once you abandon those things on the bodily and verbal level, you need to learn how to abandon *only* the unwholesome thoughts whenever they arise as the Buddha described in MN 19, not shut down your thinking altogether, which is a form of cheating.

If you try to jump right into calming yourself down before all of this is done, it will be an act of suppression rooted in ignoring the work you need to do. It might make you more peaceful quicker, but it will be the peace of taking a nap in a dirty room, shirking your duty to clean it.

I've been trying to contemplate drawbacks of sensuality, but it doesn't seem to work. I've given up various things, but at the same time value some other things and really struggle to give them up. I'm wondering if there is some trick or way or technique to clearly see the peril, danger, drawback, the problem with pleasure and make the thoughts of renunciation more appealing as a way out

It might be that you're expecting a special contemplation to do the work of abandoning for you, but that's not how it works. Right contemplation internally becomes possible on the basis of renunciation externally, since what you're contemplating is not the peril in the specific objects (which would be an endless task) but the peril in feeding further the craving that becomes revealed when you're restrained, by giving in to it once more. Undermining your own wish to attain lasting peace for the sake of instant gratification.

Can I still enjoy some hobbies I like? Like 3D modelling, videogames and bodybuilding, are those also dangerous?.

Playing video games will always be rooted in a craving for distraction, which will in turn feed sensual tendencies too and make it harder to restrain them. And that cannot be beneficial. The others depend on the intention behind doing them at the time. It could be craving for distraction too, or vanity in the case of something like bodybuilding, or some practical purpose. Nothing apart from the five precepts, celibacy, and giving up entertainment is set in stone.

That said, you probably want to stop the coarser, most craving-driven things like sexual activity and entertainment before you try to closely examine your intentions behind subtler things that aren't covered by the precepts. You won't have a clear perspective to do so otherwise.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-07 15:29:48 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

You will have imperturbable peace to whatever degree you do that work, whereas the work of “meditation” as conceived of nowadays is just putting a bandage over a festering wound and doing next to nothing about it in the end.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-07 19:02:15 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Any action rooted in craving inevitably makes you liable to suffer more when you don’t get what you want or get what you don’t want. Even if the misfortune has nothing to do with the original action. That’s because it’s “one” craving that is fed by everything and spreads onto everything, so to speak.

Each time you give in to craving, you basically bind yourself down tighter with your head beneath a guillotine that could drop at any moment. Because nothing fundamentally guarantees that you won’t lose everything you cling to the very next moment.

If by not fueling it further you give up craving and thus break loose before the guillotine drops, it won’t be a problem no matter how hard it falls.

## **Practice for right view**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Wild-Brush1554 2025-01-04 06:06:09

I have been practicing sense restraint( for a few weeks) and non activity for a few days. I am restrained when it comes to my bodily and verbal actions because I’m only fulfilling my basic needs (eating, bathroom, sleeping, chores and other necessities) since any other activity would be done out of unwholesome intentions because its unnecessary.

While abiding in non activity, i just walk/sit(while sitting i try not to move and stare at one area)and let the feelings and cravings come up without changing them. Throughout the day mind is very active, it keeps bringing up thoughts rooted in craving, longing for company, past experiences and anxiety about the future/doubt. I endure craving and try to discern my intentions. I can clearly see that most of my thoughts are rooted in craving which would make them unwholesome( I could be wrong since I dont have right view). I dont try to think of unwholesome thoughts, however they come anyways and my mind jumps to them, but not all the time. I try to let the mind do its own thing without trying to change much.

Am I supposed to just keep doing the same thing and wait for the mind to settle(I assume it will since im not agitating it).

My current understanding of the practice is that I should:

1. Avoid acting out of unwholesome intentions.

2. See the danger in the slightest fault
3. Contemplate the danger of sense pleasures.

By contemplating i mean whenever a thought of craving comes up I reflect on how its impermanent, can never satisfy me and will be future suffering.

The time in non activity is not easy, although im not restless( which is a good sign) I still feel uneasy and suffer my minds craving

Is my practice of non activity and endurance happening rightly? Will this be enough( if done consistently and over long enough) to make me naturally devalue sense pleasures and get the right view?

Any help would be appreciated!

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-05 06:17:55**

More important than trying to “get it right” in this particular period would be to make sure that you establish yourself in sense restraint permanently (which you say you’ve done only for a few weeks). Otherwise, you will be trying extra hard now but sooner or later your motivation will run out, and since you tried to take on the whole thing all at once, you might just as quickly drop it all and default back to non-restraint.

And *that*, not the lack of intellectual clarity you’re trying to resolve, would compromise your training and undo any beneficial work you may have done.

So sure, do your best to contemplate and discern and so on, but don’t aim for perfection on that level. Aim for perfection only in regard to sense restraint for now (or even just the eight precepts, in case you aren’t 100% confident with them either).

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-06 07:04:00 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

How do we know if we are 100% confident in the precepts?

One way would be to review yourself at the end of each day to see not only whether you broke any of them, but whether you were at any point even *close* to doing so.

You should also, of course, ask yourself honestly whether your resolve is to keep them forever and you feel perfectly comfortable with that prospect, or whether the resolve is only temporary or only applies to when it’s relatively easy to say “no.”

Ultimately, if you doubt it, it’s because you’re not confident.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-06 11:43:55 (in reply to a comment not included)**

In order to permanently establish myself in sense restraint, I would have to find a substitute for sense pleasures right?

This is a common wrong view. The right kind of joy, which is the joy of renunciation, will come only when you give up any hopes of getting what you currently regard as joy, which most likely is still within the sensual/unwholesome realm. And that relinquishment that is peaceful won't happen for as long as you are restraining your senses *for the sake of* some kind of joy. In fact, that's exactly what would make the sense restraint painful, since you would just be feeding your craving through it.

The joy of renunciation will arise when you fully see the danger in sensuality and the value of renunciation, and keep your sense restraint with that alone as motivation. Not when you do something entirely separate from that, for otherwise it wouldn't be called "joy of renunciation" anymore.

Even if I don't give in, I would still be touched by the pressure which would make it very hard and a constant "doing" to not give in.

That's not a problem per se. You need to keep "doing" it for a long time until the mind calms down for no other reason than having gotten used to it. If you've been feeding these habits for years or even longer, like basically everyone, it's silly to expect them to subside quickly. Hence what I wrote about not expecting to undo it all at once.

Will this habit subside on its own through longer duration of practice

It will. The mind's over-activity is a result of the lingering momentum created by one's previous lack of bodily and verbal restraint.

A desire/thought arises about something pleasant, while the desire is there if I remind myself how it is painful etc, wouldn't that be done out of aversion to?

Yes, but that's a more subtle problem than what would happen if you didn't contemplate the danger, so you don't have to worry about that until the danger has become fully clear, and definitely not until sense restraint has become your natural mode of being.

## **What is the "you" that chooses what to allow the wild animal to engage with?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** MaggOtBrainz 2025-01-02 13:46:29

What is the "you" that chooses what sense objects to engage with or present to the wild animal?

Do you have control over that "you" and the choices it makes? Or is that also determined by further factors down the chain?

If you do have control, then what is the you that has control? Isn't that antithetical to the teaching of the Buddha? You would be some kind of separate acausal entity. You could've chosen not to be in ignorance in the first place. Whether or not you are pressured by the world would be completely up to you. But we know that we are ALREADY pressured - that's the starting point.

If you don't have control, what is the basis for that “you” that chooses what to engage with? And therefore, what is the basis of an ignorant mind, and what is the basis of an enlightened mind?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-04 05:44:37**

What is the “you” that chooses what sense objects to engage with or present to the wild animal?

In simple terms, you could say it's the faculty of attention.

Do you have control over that “you” and the choices it makes? Or is that also determined by further factors down the chain?

You can only attend to something because it is there as possible-to-be-attended-to already, cognized by your sense bases, without you having any ultimate say in what's available and what isn't.

You could've chosen not to be in ignorance in the first place. Whether or not you are pressured by the world would be completely up to you.

From the above, you can see that this doesn't really follow. In your own experience, is moving your attention to something else a fundamentally reliable method of avoiding suffering? If so, how come many people fall into depression anyways?

what is the basis of an ignorant mind, and what is the basis of an enlightened mind?

Not sure what you mean by this. Assuming you're asking what is the cause of each, a simple way to put it is that the ignorant mind continues to put an emphasis on the little control that it has and overlooks the more fundamental non-control. The enlightened mind does the opposite.

It bears mentioning that “not allowing the wild animal to engage with things” is not what leads to enlightenment alone. That's what anyone who attains samadhi even with wrong view would have to do. A tamed animal (assuming the taming came from the gradual training and not a meditation technique) is but a *suitable basis* for enlightenment.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-05 12:47:34 (in reply to a comment not included)**

What causes the mind to go down these paths? I think that's what I'm trying to get at. What are the conditions for you to make choices that are in alignment

with enlightenment or samsara?

Restraint in conduct and of the senses (or lack of it) is the condition. Things like sensuality and ill will are driven precisely by an emphasis on the very limited control one has and overlooking the bigger picture of non-control. If you saw that you have so little control over your own life that you could even die the very next moment, any value in sensuality or hatred would be gone at least for the duration of that recognition. But if you keep giving in to such acts, you can't even stop to consider the aspect of non-control because you're already fully bent on asserting your control.

What else is required?

The insight of non-control (which should not be confused with **denial** of control). The mind tamed by restraint has less of a pressure to assert its control, but that doesn't mean there is the understanding of how little control can be exerted regardless of how hard you try.

And to be clear, understanding non-control would not turn one into some sort of automaton. It just means one doesn't find any refuge in the power of choice that is factually there, so when things go bad, there will be no suffering if one fails miserably at improving them, as will inevitably happen sometimes.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-08 06:49:29 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I think I'm mindful of the possibility of death at any moment, (I accept it, and I'm ok with it, it doesn't worry me), and yet cravings for sense pleasures still arise.

That might be because you're thinking of death in an abstract sense. It's impossible for a non-Arahant to be at ease with death unless they misconceiving what death is. A courageous soldier on a battlefield is not afraid of death because his notion of death does not apply to whatever his sense of self and of safety has become established upon. Most people who feel that way would get closer to what death is by considering the possibility of losing everything they find the slightest bit of joy and reassurance in, forever.

This discussion might be helpful.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-11 13:15:14 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

I will cease to exist, all suffering will stop for me, from my perspective something completely new will be reborn.

I'm missing something, if I die then my sense of self will cease to exist.

These views are where the problem lies. That's not how it works, and it's not how the Buddha spoke about "rebirth." Think of it as things happening to you tomorrow without



having any memories of today. You would still most certainly be concerned about what position today’s actions will put you in even if you won’t remember them. *anattā* is the result of seeing dukkha in regard to the entirety of existence, not an intellectual standpoint you simply adopt.

Do I have to be seriously into 8 precept territory for years to be able to see what you are talking about here? Can a regular person with decent sense restraint understand this contemplation, or am I spinning my wheels at this point?

To be able to see it in a way that liberates unconditionally, yes. 8 precept territory is the least that qualifies as “decent sense restraint,” especially in modern times in a lay setting. Less than that would seem “decent” because of one’s habituated baseline and lack of a reference point for the sheer “size” of one’s craving in absolute terms. Even a lay sotāpanna would know that they’re mostly just “cruising” on 5 precepts, not *practicing*.

Sure, strictly speaking it may be possible to understand the Dhamma with slightly less, but why would you justify continuing to smoke any amount of cigarettes if you genuinely wanted to cure yourself of lung cancer, unless you had the very pernicious view that there is no connection between the two?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-15 05:01:20 (in reply to a comment not included)**

There are at least two things that may be missing which would constitute that “middle step.” The first would be that in order to start learning how to recollect death (or anything else) rightly, you need to have undertaken restraint and precepts first, rather than relying on the contemplation of death to do the restraint for you. It can only undo delight at the level of thought. If things have been proliferated past that point into bodily and verbal acts, there’s not much any contemplation can really do. We probably give that “disclaimer” quite often, though perhaps it wasn’t explicitly mentioned in this specific case.

The second thing, which comes within the first, is that you have to recognize the liability to death *rightly* (which means concretely, in a way that doesn’t leave out your point of view). Thinking about it as some sort of external fact will certainly not undo your passion for sensuality. Many people do already recognize that “we’re all going to die one day” and so on, but because they’re not relating to that possibility of death rightly, they can even use it as an excuse *for* sensuality, ironically.

It should also be qualified that undoing passion for sensuality does not necessarily mean exterminating the *pressure* of sensuality on the spot. If you’ve been cultivating delight mentally, you can’t instantaneously stop that train. But what recollecting death rightly *would* do is put things back into perspective so that you are unable to keep fueling the pressure that has been accumulated, at least for as long as the recollection remains properly established.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-31 16:28:57 (in reply to a comment not included)**

It's not that the memories *need* to be absent. Complete forgetfulness is just how it would generally pan out, but whether you remember or not does not matter.

Assuming this is the reasoning behind your question, the fact that someone may remember even everything from a previous life does not validate that person's wrong assumption of self and appropriation any more than remembering what happened 10 years or 10 seconds ago would.

Rather than being some sort of universal law that we can "observe" objectively, *anattā* is something that needs to be *realized* by understanding *dukkha* and becoming fully disenchanted with all existence, and memories from previous lives would allow for exactly that.

People are intoxicated and enamored with this life because they naively but genuinely believe that things will somehow be alright in the end. If they were able to look back at how they thought the same every single time and they *always* ended up being ultimately disappointed and remorseful of all the effort they put into pursuing impermanent things one way or another, with no consolation whatsoever in the end, they would abandon all passion for existence. And that's why in the Suttas, the knowledge of previous lives is a precursor to the final destruction of craving and termination of *samsāra*.

Even in this life, if you reflect carefully you will see that good memories are actually *painful*. It's just that if you have the means to experience the same sense objects again, the momentary pleasure can distract you from the pain of nostalgia, which can never be fully removed.

In other words, by understanding that both remembering and not remembering will inevitably be painful, and that both will make all the pleasures you acquire in this life either useless or direct sources of pain (nostalgia), you would realize that nothing is worth delighting in, and that is closer to *anattā* than any intellectual ideas about the self not remaining the same from life to life that one may have.

## **Is jhana necessary for enlightenment?**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** None 2025-01-02 04:38:15

I don't even fully understand what jhana is, mostly because of the many contradictory teachings from many different people who all say they know what it is and how to get it. I've sort of decided for a while to just not bother with the whole matter and do my practice. But is jhana a necessary part of the Buddha's instructions for awakening? If I don't know what it is, will whatever it is be cultivated if I'm practicing everything else correctly?

My basic point is - do I need to have this term clearly defined in the correct way, and is jhana a state I need to work towards intentionally, or is it something that will arise

naturally by doing other things that support it?

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-02 05:15:50**

My basic point is - do I need to have this term clearly defined in the correct way, and is jhana a state I need to work towards intentionally, or is it something that will arise naturally by doing other things that support it?

Unless you've already been leading a lifestyle of virtue (avoiding any verbal or bodily action driven by defilements and not just keeping rules), celibacy, restraining your senses, not tolerating the slightest unskillful thought, and seclusion for a good while and somehow you still haven't attained jhāna, then the answer is the latter. The Buddha always began his instructions on how to enter jhana not with a special technique for focusing on sensations, but by listing all these things, starting all the way down from virtue.

The contradictory teachings you mention are due to an underemphasis or altogether dismissal of those prerequisites. For someone who does fulfill them, and doesn't get distracted by any of the various views about what jhāna is, withdrawal from unwholesome states will take place regardless of their wishes. And that withdrawal is pleasant and joyful on its own because the hindrances are a burden that is now gone, because they were not acted out of and fueled for long enough. Not because some contrived method of fabricating joy is involved. Each teacher coming up with their own such method and justifications for it and putting that first, giving the prerequisites an honorary mention, if any, is the reason for all the discrepancies.

And yes, jhāna (read: successful abandoning of sensuality and all forms of aversion) is indispensable for enlightenment.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-03 05:03:50 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

And am I correct that you are saying jhana is not a state to be arrived at by putting yourself in a trance through a series of steps in accordance with a technique? Rather jhana is the pleasure that arises when one is sufficiently withdrawn from sensuality because of the intentional act of abandoning it throughout their life, not just temporarily during meditation, while being asleep, or for a period of time on retreat?

Correct.

Does this mean there are non-Buddhist jhanas that Hindu yogis can attain through trance states, but this is something different from what the Buddha called jhana?

Yes. They're such a different thing that arises out of such a different mode of practice (which the Buddha happens to never have talked about) that it's a bit of a stretch to call them jhānas, really. The fact that the people who practice that way are often still engaged

in sensuality outside of their meditation points to the fact that it's not the state the Buddha described, on account of which even a puthujjana would go beyond such pleasures.

Does this imply that jhana is a sensual experience too, but just a highly refined sensual experience because it is free from unwholesomeness?

“Sensual experience” and “free from unwholesomeness” going together is a contradiction in terms. One enters jhāna by being completely withdrawn from sensuality, as the Suttas always say.

How would one go about “letting go” of jhana?

By applying the same attitude to it as one did to sensuality and the world in order to enter jhāna.

**Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-03 05:14:55 (*in reply to a comment not included*)**

Then what you are saying is that jhana will not arise for anyone until anagami stage?

Certainly not. Often people struggle to see the middle line we are trying to convey between “jhāna can be attained by anyone and their mother by doing a meditation technique” on one extreme and “jhāna cannot be attained by anyone but an anāgāmi”.

Jhāna is the culmination of building up a momentum of renunciation and disinterest in the world through one's lifestyle. But that doesn't mean that the opposite momentum towards sensuality can never return. It will sooner or later, even if only in a next life, unless one develops the insight that destroys the fetters regardless of jhāna.

People who have been well withdrawn from sensuality, company, distractions, and worldly activity for a good while would be able to see that their minds have greater perspective, and are in general less disturbed by things. A lot of people would report that after staying at a monastery for a while. That's at least a few steps in the direction of jhāna.

But this would soon fade once they return to the world and start breaking precepts again, etc. One would also ironically be prevented from getting to that modicum of proper samādhi even if the external conditions are right when engaging in a meditation technique, since that's often yet another activity of pursuing pleasure and avoiding pain that takes the place of the external activities that were abandoned. What comes out of that isn't a truly calm state, but another ecstatic pleasure that tires you out eventually.

## **Getting up early and napping during the day**

**Subreddit:** r/HillsideHermitage | **Posted by:** Ok-Addition-7759 2025-01-01 21:12:40

So, I get up pretty early and after I eat my meal for the day at 8:00 I'm often useless for the next several hours and struggle to meditate or be mindful. I eat in moderation so that's not the issue. I have to fiercely fight to stay awake after eating and often can't sit down for a couple hours after eating or I'll just go into oblivion. I'm tempted to take naps all the time but it's really hit or miss if they actually make me function better.

Is it better to just power through and not nap until my mind stops steering to that as an option and gets used to it? (like it does steering to eat more after my meal but before noon since it's "allowable")

This sleep stuff really sucks because it feels like my body wants to get up this early, and I'd probably feel gross going back to more sleep at this point. Sometimes it's like the only time my mind relaxes and the pain in my neck goes away is when it's time for bed. It's really frustrating that calm might only come at that time and I have to meditate and live with anxiety and neck pain otherwise. I feel like I'm over determining things but I don't know how to stop.

Edit: A few of you mentioned food intolerance and I think that must be it. I think it's my whey protein. I had an inkling that might be an issue for a while but didn't test it out properly. It's that subtle inner feminine voice that I seem to often miss or ignore, and then stumble around this way and that before I finally listen to them to see that once again, they were right. It's a very male thing to prioritize thinking, logic, and prior determinations over intuition.

### **Comment by Bhikkhu\_Anigha on 2025-01-02 05:43:22**

If you know you're not tired due to some specific physical reason like recent strenuous activity or some food intolerance, then the problem might be that you're expecting the dull state after the meal not to be there, with the wrong view that "only then" can you practice. That aversion would in turn make the sleepiness worse.

The hindrance of sloth and torpor is not due to the drowsiness after the meal in and of itself, but due to your *ayoniso manasikāra* towards it:

“And what, bhikkhus, is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor and for the increase and expansion of arisen sloth and torpor? There are, bhikkhus, discontent, lethargy, lazy stretching, drowsiness after meals, sluggishness of mind: frequent *ayoniso manasikāra* to them is the nutriment for the arising of unarisen sloth and torpor and for the increase and expansion of arisen sloth and torpor.

—SN 46.51

