

## The Way to *Nibbāna*

### How to attain *Nibbāna* as a Buddhist layman - Part 1 Late Ven. Waharaka Abhayarathanalankara Thero

The original document was drafted off of a [video with English subtitles by Janith Boniface Fernando](#). A Word document was compiled using that English text by Lair Valio Alves and Seng Kiat Ng.

- The following document was prepared by Lal A. Pinnaduwege by revising and expanding the above document.
- I am going to leave some time stamps so that one can see the relevant part of the video.
- However, I have added my own comments and explanations at many places.

**Question:** What is the ideal way to achieve *Nibbāna* without delay, while attending to the day-to-day activities of lay life?

Since we have no idea as to when this human life will be over, we need to make progress on the Noble path in this life as quickly as possible. But we are lay people with other responsibilities too.

Venerable *Bhante*, will you be kind enough to tell us the way?

**Waharaka Thero:** That is right. One does not necessarily need to become a *bhikkhu* to attain *Nibbāna*. First, we need to figure out the Path that anyone can follow.

Many lay persons have attained the *Sotapanna* stage while living their family lives as husband and wife.

- Some have been living family lives and then have become Never Returners (*Anāgāmi*). and completed their *Samsāric* journey subsequently.
- Some even become *Arahants* and completed their *Samsāric* journey, while leading a lay life. Of course, at that point one will need to become a *bhikkhu*.

Whatever way we are going to take towards *Nibbāna*, we should have a good idea of the path that we need to follow.

- If we plan to drive to a certain city, we need to figure out the directions first. We cannot just jump into the car and start driving.
- It is the same for attaining *Nibbāna*.

Now if you look around, you can see different people practicing all sorts of things to get to *Nibbāna*.

- Many *bhikkhus* today practice different methods like breath meditation. However, if we ask them whether they have truthfully attained a *magga phala* (one of the four stages of enlightenment) or a *jhāna* (*dhyāna*), most of them just say they are still working on it.

There are a few individuals who claim to have achieved the *Arahantship*. However, if we question them, whether they are certain as to getting rid of their *rāga* (attachment to sense pleasures), *dosa* (anger), and *moha* (delusion), we do not get a convincing

answer. If we observe their behavior, it is clear that they get angry even at the slightest provocation. Or they seem to have many worldly desires.

- Then there are some who have very nice, quiet manners, but do not seem to have grasped the essentials of Buddha Dhamma.
- Therefore, we cannot really conclude, just by looking from the outside, whether someone has actually achieved a *magga phala* or not.

To get to a *magga phala* one needs to have at least realized the dangers in the desire for sensual pleasures; greed is another name of that. Anger is another facet of greed.

- We become angry when someone gets in our way.

Furthermore, when the mind is covered with greed, we cannot learn Dhamma and get rid of *avijjā* either.

- Thus, we need to figure out how to reduce greed.
- Both greed and anger arise due to ignorance or *avijjā*. We could say that *avijjā* is the ignorance of the teachings of the Buddha.
- Therefore, “seeing the dangers in sensual pleasures” is the first step.

If someone has attained *magga phala*, he/she would have seen that cravings and anger are like raging fires that can be very dangerous.

**In simpler terms, we have to figure out the way to keep us from giving in to desires or cravings.** That is the first step.

- If we can figure out a way to lose cravings for sense pleasures, we will no longer be impassioned by worldly things and make wrong decisions.

When one realizes the dangers in craving for worldly things, one starts losing such cravings. We can say that one becomes **dispassionate** (lose cravings) about worldly pleasures through that deeper understanding that cravings can be as dangerous as raging fires.

Therefore, **dispassion** (loss of cravings) comes by understanding the real nature of this world, **not just by observing a set of precepts** promising to abstain from immoral acts.

Commitment to abstain from immoral acts alone will not lose one’s cravings for sense pleasures. However, it is a good start.

- One needs to realize that such sense pleasures do not provide a long-lasting fulfillment.
- Not only that, but craving for sense pleasures can lead to much suffering in the future. We need to “see” that danger.

We need to figure out the way to reduce our cravings without just trying to follow a set of precepts. Even though that is a good start, it does not work when temptations become high.

Some of the people who had encounters with the Buddha were very aggressive people, and even killers.

- When Buddha visited his residence, *Alawaka yakkha* threatened to rip open his heart, grab him from his feet and fling him over to the other side of the river. It

was not the case that *Alawaka yakkha* came to the Buddha and respectfully asked for advice.

- Angulimāla drew his sword and chased the Buddha with a necklace of human fingers hanging around his neck.
- But after hearing a few Dhamma verses, they understood the basic principles of Dhamma. Only then, they became restrained.

Hence, it is quite clear that Alawaka yakkha or Angulimala did not follow precepts or rituals.

- They just understood some critical basic facts.
- From that fundamental understanding emerged a kind of discipline to the mind, speech and body.

If we are abstaining from something with sheer will power, that can fail. That failure happens especially when temptations become high.

- **Instead, moral discipline (*sila*) has to arise out of an understanding of the nature of this world.**
- That is called morality that comes out of understanding. That *sila* is “unperturbable” and is called “*saṃvaraṭṭhena sīlaṃ*” or *sila* that comes from reducing/removing “*saṃ*” from one’s mind.
- Nowadays, many people think that reciting the five (or eight) precepts and try to abide by them is considered *sila* or morality. **It is good first step.**
- But without a true understanding of the underlying principles, such “forced morality” cannot be sustained.

First, let us try to understand WHY we tend to do immoral deeds, and WHY it is so hard to stop doing them.

- If we engage in killing animals for sport, that is based on a perceived pleasure. Of course, eating the animal’s flesh is another form of “pleasure.”
- If someone steals or engages in sexual misconduct, there is a reason for it. There must be some type of a “payback” or a “pleasure” that one is expecting. Always, it is a sense pleasure.

**But if we realize that such actions will have dangerous and unseen consequences, would we still do them?**

Consider the following analogy. Someone gives us a very expensive and tasty chocolate bar. We would be happy to eat it. But if we are told that it is poisoned and will kill us in a month, would we still eat it? Of course not.

Even though that chocolate appears to be tasty, we would not touch it if we became convinced that there is poison in it.

- The Buddha explained that there are “hidden dangers” in sensual pleasures. All sensory pleasures have “hidden sufferings” in them to varying degrees. Those dangers are not direct like the poison in chocolate bar in the above analogy.
- The dangers arise in a complex way. That is why it is hard to understand.

If we realize that there are truly no lasting “pleasures” in certain activities, and instead they can lead to much suffering, would we still willingly engage in them?

To explain those “hidden dangers,” the Buddha introduced three words with eight letters. **“Attakkarā thīnapadā Sambuddhena pakāsithā, na hī sīla vatan hotu uppajjāti Tathāgatā.”**

- That means “a Buddha (*Tathāgata*) is born NOT just to show how to live a moral life, but to reveal three words with eight letters to the world.”
- Those three words are *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

A Buddha arises in this world to explain those three words, and not to advise to live by a “moral code” or a set of precepts. What is essential is to understand the meanings of these three words. Without that understanding rules or precepts will not work, when temptations become high.

When we understand the meanings of those three words, we will realize that there is no value in sensory pleasures. Instead, there can be hidden dangers in our quest to seek sensory pleasures.

- That goes against what we humans are accustomed to. It is ingrained in our minds that there is “value” of sensory pleasures.
- Our minds are not capable of ‘seeing’ the wider world with 31 realms, and that life in some of those realms can be very harsh.

**(6.40)** When we start understanding this “previously unheard Dhamma or the teachings” of the Buddha, the value that we place on worldly pleasures for worldly things will start to reduce.

**- We will realize that we had placed high value on things that are really worthless.**

With that new-found understanding, a *Sotapanna* would have given up an innumerable wrong deeds. Such “giving up” happens voluntarily, without an effort, after “seeing” the “worthlessness of worldly pleasures” and their dangerous consequences.

On the other hand, for an **inept worldly person (*puthujjana*)**, it is very stressful to try to give up “worldly pleasures.” For them, worldly things are of utmost importance.

Therefore, the difference between a *Sotapanna* and a *puthujjana* is the “state of mind.” A *puthujjana* sees a high value in many worldly things and thinks that they provide long-lasting happiness.

**07:21** Someday, when a *puthujjana* understands Buddha Dhamma, he will come to realize that all this while he has given such immense importance to some petty worthless things.

- Then he would realize how foolish it was to work so hard to get hold of “valuable things.” In some cases, one would have hurt others during such activities. All in vain!
- Then he would lose the desire for many of those “valuables”, especially if such efforts involve hurting others, i.e., if such efforts involve immoral deeds.
- That sense of worthlessness of worldly things registers in the mind when one comprehends the *anicca* nature.

**08:00** The Buddha said that the amount of defilements that still remains intact in the case of a *Sotapanna* is analogous to the amount of water that remains on a finger-tip,

after you have dipped your finger in a mighty ocean. The water in the ocean is comparable to the defilements in a *puthujjana*.

- **That difference comes from the change of mindset. Not by following a set of precepts.**

In another analogy, compare grains of sand on a finger nail to the amount of sand on Earth. That is the difference between the defilements left in a *Sotapanna* versus in a *puthujjana*. A *puthujjana* would have defilements comparable to all the sand on Earth to get rid of. A *Sotapanna* has left only a small amount left to get rid of.

**08:23** How do we even start to explain such a HUGE change in a person? How can a *Sotapanna* get rid of such a huge amount of defilements, just by comprehending the true nature (*anicca* nature) of this world?

The change from a *puthujjana* to a *Sotapanna* is astronomical.

This is almost inconceivable to some of us, the idea that the stream enterers (*Sotapannas*) with such a small amount of defilements left. Especially when they live family lives, raising children, and seemingly enjoying “sensual pleasures.”

But they have abandoned a huge part of “attachment to this world and even to *kama loka*”. That is why they will NEVER engage in immoral actions to gain sense pleasures. Even though they still have a perception (*saññā*) for enjoying sense pleasures, it is INGRAINED in their minds that all such “pleasures” are fleeting and “empty of any value.”

There is a *Tipitaka* story about a woman born into wealth. She attained the *Sotapanna* stage at an early age. But she eloped with Kukkuta Mitta, a poor man who killed forest animals to make a living. She went to the forest with him and raised seven children, while helping her husband with his livelihood.

- It is hard for us to figure how she could have removed a huge fraction of defilements from her mind and still seemed to have lived a “not so moral life.”
- The following description was inserted by Seng Kiat Ng, which describes her story in the *Tipitaka*.

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## NO EVIL BEFALLS THOSE WHO HAVE NO BAD INTENTION

### Kukkuṭamittanesādavatthu

*Pāṇimhi ce vaṇo nāssa,  
hareyya pāṇinā viṣaṃ;  
Nābbaṇaṃ viṣamanveti,  
natthi pāpaṃ akubbato.*  
Dhammapada 124

### Kukkuta Mitta the hunter and his family comprehend the Dhamma

At Rajagaha there was once a rich young girl who had comprehended the Dhamma. A hunter by the name of Kukkuta Mitta came into town in a cart to sell venison. Seeing him, the young lady fell in love with him immediately. She followed him, married him and lived with him in a small village. As a result of that marriage, seven children were born to them and in the course of time, all of them got married. One day, the Buddha surveyed the world early in the morning and found that the hunter, his children and their wives were due to realise the Dhamma. So, the Buddha went to the place where the hunter had set his trap in the forest. He put his footprint close to the trap and seated himself under the shade of a bush, not far from the trap.

When the hunter came, he saw no animal in the trap but a footprint and surmised that someone must have come before him and let out the animal. So, when he saw the Buddha under the shade of the bush, he took him for the man who had freed the animal from his trap and flew into a rage. He took out his bow and arrow to shoot at the Buddha, but as he drew his bow, he became immobilised and remained fixed in that position like a statue. His children followed and found their father. They also saw the Buddha at some distance and thought he must be their father's enemy. All of them took out their bows and arrows to shoot at the Buddha, but they also became immobilised and remained fixed in their respective postures. When the hunter and his children failed to return, the hunter's wife followed them into the forest, with her in-laws. Seeing her husband and her children with their arrows aimed at the Buddha, she raised both her hands and shouted, 'Don't kill my father.'

When her husband heard her words, he thought, 'This must be my father-in-law', and her children thought, 'This must be our grandfather', and thoughts of loving-kindness appeared in their minds. Then the lady said to them, 'Put away your bows and arrows and pay respect to my father.' The Buddha knew that, by this time, the minds of the hunter and his children had softened and so he willed that they should be able to move and put away their bows and arrows. After putting away their bows and arrows, they paid their respects to the Buddha. He expounded the Dhamma to them. In the end, all of them understood the Dhamma.

The Buddha returned to the monastery and told the other bhikkhus about the hunter and his family. They then asked the Buddha, 'Venerable Sir, is the wife of the hunter who has comprehended the Dhamma also not guilty of taking life, if she had been getting things like nets, bows and arrows for her husband when he went out hunting?' The Buddha replied, 'Bhikkhus, those who are *sotāpannas* don't kill, they don't wish others to get killed. The wife of the hunter was only obeying her husband in getting things for him. It never occurred to her to think she was helping her husband to commit evil deeds. Just as the hand that has no wound is not affected by poison, so since she has no intention to commit evil she has not created any bad *kamma*.'

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We need to think about that account to figure out how such a person, seemingly living an "immoral life" could have gotten rid of huge amount of defilements from her mind.

The key point is that what she removed from her mind is what is hidden in a mind. **A huge amount of defilements is hidden in any person. That is called *anusaya*.**



It is not possible to figure out how much any normal person is “attached to this world.” It is like an iceberg. **One can only see the tip of tip of an iceberg. A vast amount of ice is hidden under water.**

- That is why we cannot just look at the demeanor of a person and decide whether that person is an immoral person or one with *magga phala*.

The woman in the story had only a tiny amount of “ice left” but it was very visible. **On the other hand, an average human would show up even less but could have an enormous amount of “ice (defilements)” buried under water, hidden.**

It is only when “triggered” by a strong enough temptation that such hidden *anusaya* come to surface. **An average human has an enormous amount of “hidden anusaya.”**

- Most of it may never “come to the surface” even once in a given lifetime. But it is there.

**In contrast, that woman had an inconceivable amount of *anusaya* already removed from her mind.**

For instance, we have heard many people say that they do not desire much of anything. But unless that person had attained a *magga phala*, he/she would have an enormous amount of desires. **They may not be aware of that.** Such *anusaya* can popup to the surface only when “conditions are right.”

- One may genuinely believe that one has no aspirations or expectations. But it is just that it is all hidden.

**10:13** *Āsava* means our expectations. They remain hidden as *anusaya* and come to the surface (based on strong *ārammaṇa*) as *āsava*.

- These aspirations or expectations are driven by ignorance and greed. They perpetuate the rebirth process (*samsāric* journey.)

When these expectations disappear through UNDERSTANDING of the nature of this world, all such hidden *anusaya* will just evaporate.

- **That can happen in just a single thought-moment.** For that to happen, one must first cultivate the path for a while and “prepare” the suitable mindset. It normally happens while listening to a discourse by a Noble Person (*Ariya*.)
- That is like the rising Sun evaporating a dense thick mist and making everything perfectly clear. The darkness of ignorance evaporating in an instant. But that may not be “felt” at the moment.
- That is the moment of attaining the *Sotapanna* stage.
- However, one could still have already removed a large portion of the *anusaya* as a *Sotapanna Anugami*. The *Sotapanna phala* moment just “clears the plate clean.”

That purified mind will never engage in immoral deeds suitable to bring rebirth in the *apāyā*. That person, over time, will realize that he/she has indeed gotten rid of a huge burden. “*Chanda rāga*” for worldly things has been significantly reduced.

- But the tendency to enjoy sense pleasures is likely to stay on at a reduced level. Even though the wrong views and the corresponding *ditthi vipallāsa* have been REMOVED, *saññā vipallāsa* and *citta vipallāsa* may remain.

- But that remaining *vipallāsa* are a tiny fraction compared to *ditṭhi vipallāsa* that one had removed. See the recent post on [“Difference Between ‘Me and Mine’ and ‘Sakkāya Ditṭhi.’”](#)

**10:59** One who stays in the rebirth process expects “worldly pleasures” with “*chanda rāga*”. The word “*rāga*” means to “roam around” implying “roaming in the *samsāric* journey.”

The desire to attain *Nibbāna* is also a *chanda* or a desire. It is *chanda iddhipāda*,

One needs to clearly see the difference between those two desires or expectations.

- One has ***chanda rāga*** when one desires worldly things that may provide sensory pleasures. That desire comes from attaching to worldly things (*taṇhā*) due to *avijjā*, not knowing the unfruitfulness and hidden dangers in them.
- One would desire *Nibbāna* (and cultivate ***chanda iddhipāda***) when one can “see” with wisdom the dangers of having worldly desires. That means comprehending the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature of the world.

The desire for *Nibbāna* (*chanda iddhipāda*) is a part of the 37 Factors of Enlightenment (*Sattatīṃsa Bodhipakkhiya dhammā*).

- *Chanda iddhipāda* is also part of the four bases spiritual power (*cattāro iddhipāda*).

A *puthujjana* seeks worldly pleasures with ignorance and greed.

When we say “liking for worldly things” what are those things that belong to the world?

- The world includes people and things, sounds, tastes, smells, touches, and concepts.
- We experience those things in the world with **a set of sensory faculties**: eyes, ears, tongue, nose, body, and the mind.
- Since we desire to experience them, we keep making such sets of sensory faculties again and again in the rebirth process.
- **Yes. It is the *javana* power in our THOUGHTS that create *kammic* energies to give rise to “mental-bodies” with those sensory faculties.**

For example, the *gandhabba* for a human life is created with such *kammic* energy. That *gandhabba* has the seat of the mind (*hadaya vatthu*) and a set of five *pasada rupa* that **detect or FEEL the sense inputs**.

- Our physical eyes, ears, etc are just “devices” (made of the four great elements) that bring in those external sensory inputs (with the help of the brain.)
- It is the same process that leads to the arising of a hell being, a Deva, or an animal.

Why do we need those five physical senses and the mind? We need those to see objects, to hear sounds, to smell odours, to taste foods, to feel touch, and then to think of all of them again and again (and to enjoy such thoughts.)

These things that we enjoy with our six senses are out there in the external world. We WANT TO find out what *rupa* are out there, what kind of pleasing sounds, what type



of tasty foods, etc. Even long after such sensory experiences, we re-create them in our minds and try to enjoy those memories too.

That desire to “know and find out” about all those things that are “out there” is an inherent NEED or DESIRE that we all have. Even when it is not necessary to know some of these things, whether it is really necessary or not, there is a curiosity to KNOW.

- That desire to “find out” will fade away when we realize that nothing in this world has any lasting value.
- Rather, pursuing them will only lead to more suffering.

Science has also confirmed that left to its own, anything material in this world will naturally drift to chaos. It takes an effort (energy) to prevent any system from evolving into chaos. Third law of Thermodynamics is a statement of that fact.

**12:17** This is the reason for the existence in the world, i.e., expectations for worldly things. As long as we want to experience those external sensory inputs, our minds WILL make the conditions to make that happen. **It may not happen the way we want.** Because arising of future lives is based on natural laws and those are laws of *kamma*.

That is the critical point to understand. One’s desire is just to enjoy some worldly pleasures. But one may do immoral deeds to get to such “pleasures” and such deeds will have their consequences.

- In the case of a rape, the desire is bodily pleasure. But since that involved hurting another person, that “violent mindset” generates an energy which gets deposited in the *kamma bhava*.
- At the *cuti-patisandhi* moment of grasping a new *bhava*, that *kammic* energy can come back to the mind and lead to an existence corresponding to such a violent mindset. That is a *niraya* or a hell.
- What we get is not the outcome we HOPE FOR. What we get would be according to CAUSES created in the mind. For example, no one wants to be born an animal. But if one commits rape that mindset goes with that of an animal. Therefore, an animal birth would be one possible outcome.
- However, if that person had attained a *magga phala* in the meantime (after committing a bad deed), then that purified mind cannot grasp such a violent mindset. That is why a person with *magga phala* will not be reborn in an *apāya*, even if he/she had committed such a violent crime.

We tend to get involved in worldly affairs regardless of even when there is no clear benefit.

- If one hears a sound, he would look towards that direction. Why? He wants to know what made that sound, what it is about.
- If it’s of interest (even if it has not benefit to us), we may get further involved.

Our need to know and inquire about many things in the world has no bounds. Many people spend a lot of time trying to find out about how humans evolved, or whether the universe is finite. **One can spend a lifetime pursuing such issues**, but what would he/she have gained by the time death comes?

- Of course, it would not matter if there is not rebirth.

- But if rebirth is valid (whether one believes in it or not), then one would have just wasted valuable time that could have spent on learning Dhamma and making progress on stopping the suffering-filled rebirth process.

There are no limits to what we want to find out.

- When one “sees” the true nature of this world, one will understand that it is a waste of time to engage in such efforts.
- Rather, an effort should be made to understand the nature of the “hidden part of this world” that only a Buddha can discover. That reveals the existence of many other realms where there is unimaginable suffering. Those things one would NEVER be able to figure out ON ONE’S OWN. Only the mind of a Buddha can ‘see’ the wider world.

For example, some people spend time researching the lives of famous or wealthy people. Then they keep thinking and desiring to become one of such famous or wealthy people.

- If they instead spent time learning Buddha Dhamma, they would realize that no matter how famous or wealthy one becomes, that would have to be given up in a ten twenty, or fifty years (at death). What is the use of that?
- Again, if one does not believe in rebirth, that waste of time may not matter. This is why one would not be able to comprehend Buddha Dhamma unless one truly believes in the rebirth process.

**15:01** The desire to “investigate” the appealing and interesting aspects of the external world will go away completely only at the *Arahant* stage.

- Until then one will gradually give up more and more such “investigations” of unfruitful things.
- First one will give up the desire to “gain happiness” by engaging in immoral activities. Those are the activities related to the five precepts.
- But instead of forcefully giving them up, one will ‘see’ the futility and the dangers in such activities. That comes from understanding concepts like *kamma/kamma vipāka*, the rebirth process within 31 realms, etc.
- But it is good to try to keep the precepts. That will help calm the mind and understand Dhamma.

The more “expectations” that one has about this world, the more one is bound to this world. One would have unimaginably large “expectations” if one has not “seen” the *anicca* nature.

- A person would say, ‘I don’t have such expectations’. But since it is hidden as “*anusaya*” as we discussed above, one would not know how strongly one is “bound to this world.”

When one starts seeing the “unfruitfulness” and “dangers” in this world (i.e., the *anicca* nature), one will start losing huge chunks of such expectations even without realizing it.

- That is one easy way to understand this point, without quoting Pāli verses. Anyone can get an idea that way.
- Of course, that has been explained in the *Tipitaka* in many different ways.

Therefore, when one attains the *Sotapanna* stage, one would have realized that there is nothing much to really wish for in this world. He/she would not wish for “pleasing things” with a high-level of desire. Of course, the tendency to enjoy sense pleasures is likely to be there. **But since its strength has been reduced, the “*javana power*” behind any such desire will not be enough to induce highly-immoral deeds.**

- Thus, no matter how strongly tempting, one’s mind would not ALLOW such deeds. One would not need to think about it or try to wilfully enforce it. It is automatic.

**16:13** A *Sotapanna* may enjoy many sense pleasures as before. But deep inside would know that those are of fleeting nature, would not last long.

- The value of any sensory pleasure has been permanently downgraded in the mind.

**This is the idea of losing defilements with “seeing Dhamma with insight” (*dassanena pahātabbā*).**

- As we discussed above, an unimaginably large chunk of hidden defilements or *anusaya* can be permanently removed by gaining insight on the *anicca* nature.

Any visual, sound, taste, smell, touch would only provide a brief moment of pleasure **while the sensation lasts**. In most cases, we re-live such experiences and mostly enjoy “mind-made pleasures”. Those are “*samphassa-jā-vedana*” that we have discussed in several posts at the website.

- Therefore, the wrong view that such “pleasurable experiences” can provide long-lasting happiness will be gone for a *Sotapanna*.
- “Mind-made pleasures” (*samphassa-jā-vedana*) vastly exceed any real *vedana*. That is easily seen in sexual pleasures. The actual bodily sexual experience lasts only during the sexual activity. But most sexual pleasures are “mind-made”, i.e., visualizing anticipated activities.

**17:19** After getting to that stage (*dassanena pahātabbā*), any left-over defilements are to be removed by meditation (*bhāvanāya pahātabbā*.)

- That means one should keep contemplating the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature.
- There are many *suttā* that clearly state that even to get to the *Arahant* stage, one just needs to contemplate *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature of this world.

**Therefore, it is essential to “see Dhamma with insight” (*dassanena pahātabbā*) first.**

- If one has not clearly ‘seen’ the true nature, there is no point in doing much of “formal meditation.”
- In order to be able to do “insight meditation” one would have to have grasped the *anicca* nature through reading and listening.

A person has to “visualize Dhamma” with insight and abandon a huge amount of *anusaya* (hidden defilements) first, as discussed earlier. Then that person (a *Sotapanna*) will be able to engage in further insight meditation to get rid the remaining defilements (*bhāvanāya pahātabbā*.)

- **Therefore, an unimaginable amount of hidden desires is abandoned by “vision” or “seeing with wisdom”,** by reading and listening to Dhamma and contemplating (which could be called part of *bhavana*)

- In the ***bhāvanāya pahātabbā*** step, one would keep watching one's actions to enforce what one has understood. Only the strongest immoral deeds (that can lead to rebirth in the *apāyā*) would be spontaneously stopped. A *Sotapanna* still needs to mindfully stop lesser immoral deeds (like excess greed or anger.)

The point is that one needs to first read/hear those new concepts taught by the Buddha before one can even start contemplating on them.

- This is why it is said that one cannot attain the *Sotapanna* stage by just meditating. That is also why “breath meditation” is totally useless.
- **First, one needs to learn the “previously unheard Dhamma” from a Buddha or a true disciple of the Buddha.**
- One needs to understand the unfruitfulness and dangers in attaching to worldly things.
- Reduced attachment means less greed. That, in turn, reduces anger. Both come with reduced ignorance. That is how comprehending *Tilakkhana* leads to reduction of *lobha, dosa, moha*.

That is why the four conditions necessary to attain the *Sotapanna* stage are: association with a Noble Friend (***sappurisa saṃsevana***), hear correct Dhamma from that person (***saddhamma savana***), clearly see how life originates via *Paṭicca Samuppāda* (***yoniso manasikāra***), and follow the path according to that understanding (***dhammānudhamma paṭipada***).

#### Another way to state:

- Association with “*sappurisa* (*sath + purisa* or “Noble friend”, i.e., an *Ariya*)”, sometimes called a “*Kalyana Mitta*.”
- Listening to Dhamma discourses (while reading is enough to get to *Sotāpannā Anugami* stage, listening is necessary to attain the *Sotāpannā* stage).
- Act with *yoniso manasikāra* (basic idea of *anicca, dukkha, anatta* and *Paṭicca samuppāda*).
- *Dhammanudhamma paṭipadā* (following the Noble Path in accordance with that new “vision”, which is beyond the mundane path.) That is also *Anapānasati* meditation, stopping of unwise actions and engaging in moral deeds.

In this process, one would understand how the world arises for oneself based on one's cravings for things in this world. One would realize that there is nothing in this world that is worth craving for.

- That requires a good understanding of how life arises in different realms according to the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* process.
- Furthermore, any and all realms have the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature.
- One had previously pursued worldly things only because one did not know the “true nature.”

**18:29** That means comprehension of the true nature of this world (*yathābhuta ñāna*.)

- With that understanding a huge amount for future expectations (*anusaya*) will be removed, as we discussed above.

However, a *Sotapanna* has not gotten rid of the tendency to enjoy sensual desires. That still remains.

- He still wants to engage in fulfilling the five sensual desires, but NOT at any cost.
- Attachment to sensory objects (*kāma rāga*) still there. Anger or frustration with others (*paṭigha*) is still there. Wherever there is desire (attachment), friction with those who oppose that (*paṭigha*) will be there. But all those would be vastly reduced.

**Then one needs to cultivate the four parts of *Satipaṭṭhāna* (*Cattāro Satipaṭṭhāna*) in order to get rid of *kama rāga* and *patigha*.**

- **This is the *bhāvanāya pahātabbā* part that comes after attaining the *Sotapanna* stage.**
- Therefore, one needs to read and listen to Dhamma AND contemplate on what is learned first. That is *dassanena pahātabbā* that comes first.

In other words, one needs to get to the *Sotapanna* stage (at least the *Sotapanna Anugami* stage with some understanding on *Tilakkhana/Paṭicca Samuppāda*) before starting on *Satipaṭṭhāna bhavana*. Of course, it is good to practice it even before. But it will be more effective after the *Sotapanna Anugami* stage.

- As we discussed above, a huge amount of hidden defilements would have to be abandoned by “seeing through wisdom” first.
- In other words, before proceeding on the Noble Path, one needs to figure out the Path. That is done with ***dassanena pahātabbā***.

What sort of Dhamma would bring about that new vision?

What we loosely termed in English as 84,000 teachings of Dhamma, are different paths to arrive at this point.

- That is because each person is different. But that does not mean one needs to learn about 84,000 ways of getting to the *Sotapanna* stage. In most cases, there are only subtle differences among those.

This is why it is good to explore different aspects of Dhamma until one finds a “latching point” to “engage”.

- For example, some people can better understand the five aggregate approach than the *Paṭicca Samuppāda* approach at the beginning.
- By the way, that is why there are so many sections/subsections at [puredhamma.net](http://puredhamma.net). **There is not need to understand them all. One needs to focus on a section or sections that one is able to understand.**

However, when one proceeds on ANY possible path, **they will ALL converge at the end to the Noble Path**. At that point, one will be able to see the “connections” among those various approaches.

- That is when one attains the *Sotapanna phala* moment.

That is why *Satipaṭṭhāna* is sometime called the “unified way to *Nibbāna*.” That will enable a *Sotapanna* to get rid of the remaining defilements of ***abhijjhā domanassa (kama rāga and patigha)***.

This is why the verse, “*satimā vineyya lōke abhijjhā dōmanassam*” appear all throughout the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* which describes how to cultivate *Satipaṭṭhāna bhavana*.

The Unified Path to eradicate *kama rāga*, *patigha*, and *avijjā* is the same as the Noble Eightfold Path.

- One starts on the Noble Path with *Ariya Samma Ditthi*, which means comprehension of *Tilakkhana*.

**20:02** An average human (or *puthujjana*) would have various forms of wrong views. To get to the Noble Path, all those need to be discarded via ***dassanena pahātabbā***.

- It is said that those ignorant humans who have not heard Buddha Dhamma may have various combinations of 84,000 distinct views. Those are various minor forms of 62 wrong views discussed in the *Brahmajala Sutta*.

The Buddha was able to recognize wrong views of each individual. Thus, he first pointed out the problems with those specific wrong views.

- Then the person would realize that he had wrong views about this world. In most cases, it is not knowing the unfruitfulness and dangers of attaching to worldly things.
- After realizing the problem of valuing and craving for worldly things, it would be easier for that person to see the correct path forward.
- That is where he would see the unified and only path, the Noble Path. That can be cultivated with *Satipaṭṭhāna*.

That turning point is reached when one gets rid of the ten types of *micchā ditthi* and hears the true Dhamma. The mindset to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* nature would NOT be there until one gets rid of those basic wrong views. Now he would be able to comprehend the true nature of the world or *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- That true nature described by those three words with eight letters (in Pāli) can be discovered only by a Buddha.
- That is why only a Buddha or a true disciple of the Buddha can explain the true meanings of those three words.

Now that one has gotten rid of the BASIC wrong views such as not believing in rebirth, not believing in *kamma/kamma vipāka*, the existence of the *gandhabba* (mental body), etc, one has the capability to understand the “big picture.”

- That big picture is the existence of 31 realms and a rebirth process that has no traceable beginning.
- None of those 31 realms offer refuge from suffering.
- Furthermore, our tendency to do immoral things to satisfy our senses WILL get us into trouble, and thus, we have spent most of our deep past in the four lower realms.
- When one starts seeing this “big picture” one would want to get out of this rebirth process as quickly as possible.

The first step is to see the *anicca* nature, that it would not be possible to attain a permanent happiness in the rebirth process. That any existence cannot be maintained



to our satisfaction. Each and every existence WILL end up in getting old and death. No exceptions.

This is stated in the first *sutta*, *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*: “*Yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ*” or “*Yam pi icchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ*”.

- “If one does not get what one craves or likes, that leads to suffering.”

That *anicca* nature also prevails within a lifetime, from the moment one is born. One will be subjected to unexpected sufferings (injuries, sicknesses, etc).

- The *anicca* nature pervades every corner of every existence.
- The inability to get/maintain things to one’s satisfaction is built-in.
- The bottom line is that any existence in the 31 realms cannot be maintained no matter how good it is. Each and every existence ends in death at some time.

That *anicca* nature leads to suffering. That is expressed by the verse “*yad aniccam tam dukkham*” or “something of *anicca* nature leads to suffering.” Since nothing in this world cannot be maintained to one’s liking, everything is of *anicca* nature.

- As we can see, this means the same as, “*Yam pi icchaṃ na labhati tam pi dukkhaṃ*” in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*. That means, “when one does not get what one wants, that leads to suffering.”
- That suffering makes one without refuge in most cases (when one is born in an *apāya*.) That is expressed by “*tam dukkham tad anatta*” or “since it ends up in suffering, one becomes helpless at the end.”

### **That is really the essence of Buddha Dhamma.**

At the time of the Buddha, people did not have the opportunity to listen to discourses as frequently as today. Of course, writing was not widespread, it was not available in the written form.

- But many people grasped the essence of *anicca, dukkha, anatta* with a single discourse by the Buddha.
- Many who had never heard Buddha Dhamma sat down to listen to a discourse by the Buddha and got up having realized a stage of *magga phala*.

Those people had no idea what Buddha Dhamma was about. But they were able to understand the futility of attaching to worldly things within a discourse that possibly lasted an hour or two.

Of course, they had been possibly exposed to *Vedic* teachings about *kamma/ kamma vipāka* and rebirth (more likely reincarnation that involved a “soul-type” concept). That probably helped them grasp things a bit faster.

- As explained in some posts at [puredhamma.net](http://puredhamma.net) site, teachings of Buddha Kassapa had come down many generations as *Vedic* teachings. While the concepts of *kamma* and rebirth were there, the true meanings had been lost.

The problem today is that the necessary steps to get to the Noble Path are covered. For example, many people spend years and years practicing breath meditation instead of trying to grasp the essentials discussed above.

- Many people who spend many days at a meditation retreat never learn the basic, essential concepts like *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

- Many of them have spent years learning and practicing breath meditation, but do not even believe in rebirth.
- That is like just getting into the car and start driving without knowing the correct route to the destination.

That is a very sad state of affairs.

The key to attaining *Nibbāna* is to comprehend *anicca, dukkha, anatta*.

**However, one MUST get rid of the ten wrong views first. See, “[Micchā Ditthi, Gandhabba, and Sōtapanna Stage.](#)”**

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**22.30 Without moral conduct, one cannot get into a state of *samādhi* (not necessarily *jhāna*). Without *samādhi*, wisdom cannot arise in a mind.**

However, one should not assume that moral conduct means just obeying five or eight precepts.

- Moral conduct comes from understanding that immoral deeds have bad consequences. Such bad consequences include getting bad rebirths in the *apāyā* (four lowest realms).

Another word for *dasa akusala* is *panca nivarana* (five hindrances). Those five hindrances cover the mind. It is easy to do *dasa akusala* when one’s mind is covered by those five hindrances.

The five hindrances are: Sensory desire (*kāmacchanda*), ill-will (*vyāpāda*), sloth-and-torpor (*tīna-middha*), restlessness-and-worry (*uddhacca-kukkucca*), not taking Dhamma seriously (*vicikicchā*).

- If one or more these are present, it is possible to commit one or more of those ten unwholesome deeds.

One does an *akusala* with a motive to destroy life, or to take what is not given, or to engage in wrong actions to get sensual pleasures, or to speak falsely, slanderously, harshly or idly. All such actions arise with greed (*abhijjhā*), anger/hatred (*vyāpāda*), and ignorance (*avijjā*).

- Therefore, the seven immoral deeds by actions and speech done with the three possible immoral states of the mind.

If any of those intentions arise in a mind that mind is covered with the five hindrances.

- A good example is when one becomes angry, At that time, the mind is covered with *vyāpāda*. That mind is unable see right from wrong.
- One can hurt or even kill others depending on the level of *vyāpāda* that arises.

If a mind is covered with five hindrances, that is not the time to read or listen to Dhamma. One needs to have a calm mind devoid of the five hindrances. For example, if one feels sleepy (*tīna middha*) or distracted (*uddacca kukkucca*) or confused (*vicikicca*) that is not a good time to learn Dhamma.

- This is why it may be beneficial to ‘set the background” first, at least for some people.
- When I was small, I went with my family to the temple to listen to discourses. Before sitting down to listen, we would offer flowers to the Buddha, light some

oil lamps, recite the customary verses, etc. The temple atmosphere itself had a calming effect.

It is not possible to understand Dhamma without getting rid of any bad intentions in the mind. And they can arise only if one or more of the five hindrances are present.

If one sits down with the intention of learning Dhamma, one would be unlikely to have any of those problems. That motivation itself can set the necessary background for some. With time, one would build confidence and will cultivate a sense of high respect for the Buddha. That sense of faith comes through understanding the deep Dhamma.

*Samatha* means to “come to equilibrium” or to “*sama*.”

- If there is greed or anger obviously the mind is far from the “equilibrium state”.
- An equilibrium state is free from anxiety. There is nothing much to do to “maintain it.”
- Think about the following analogy. If one is in a warm room, that ambient temperature is away from the equilibrium, the temperature of the body. Then one would become uncomfortable. One can bring it to equilibrium by turning on a fan or an air-conditioner. If the room is cold, again it is away from equilibrium and one would become uncomfortable. In this case, one needs to turn on heat to get it to equilibrium.
- However, if the room temperature is close to the body temperature, one feels comfortable. One is relaxed. The body is in equilibrium. That is the mindset needed for insight meditation.

A mind that is devoid of *akusala cetana* or five hindrances is a mind in equilibrium. It feels calm and is ready to learn new concepts. That is *samatha*.

- Now we can see why *sīla* comes before *samādhi* or *samatha*.
- One who has moral conduct does not engage in *dasa akusala*. That mind is devoid of five hindrances.
- Then if one is exposed to the correct Dhamma, one would be able to comprehend it and cultivate *paññā* or wisdom.

**That is *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*. Also, see [“Sīla, Samādhi, Pannā to Pannā, Sīla, Samādhi.”](#)**

**24.30** That may not necessarily mean that one has REMOVED the five hindrances. They are at least suppressed at that time. That is called *tadaṅga pahāna*. It is a temporary *samatha* state or *tadaṅga samatha* state. But that is enough for the mind to grasp key concepts and to cultivate *paññā*.

But that state of *samatha* is not necessarily a *jhāna*.

- A *jhāna* is a deeper state of *samādhi*. It is called *vikkhambhana samatha* state reached via *vikkhambhana pahāna*.
- When the five hindrances are permanently reduced to a lower level, one gets to the *Sotapanna* stage. That is *uccheda pahāna*. While the last three of the *nivarana* are removed, *abhijjha* and *vyāpāda* would be reduced permanently to *kama raga* and *patigha*.

**However, one can do *vipassanā* or “gain insight” during *samatha*. That is enough to get one to *magga phala*.**

*Vipassanā* (or *Vidassanā*) means to “see in a special way”.

- Normally one sees the world as fruitful.
- With that “special seeing” one will realize that the worldly things devoid of any essence. That attachment to them will only lead to future suffering.

**25:00** So far, we discussed how to get the *samādhi* or *samatha*, by at least suppressing the five hindrances (*panca nivarana*.)

*Vidassanā* (or *vipassanā*) means “to see with special insight”. That “insight” is based on the new concepts that the Buddha taught.

- An average human normally “sees” with wrong views. They think that worldly pleasures are beneficial. They have a “*nicca, sukha, atta*” mindset. That is based on *avijjā* or ignorance.
- But the “previously unheard Dhamma” taught by the Buddha says that pursuing worldly pleasures can only lead to suffering and helplessness. That is the “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*” nature.

Thus, we need to understand the “*anicca, dukkha, anatta*” nature.

The relationship among those three words are in the verse “*yadaniccam tam dukkham, yam dukkham tadanattā*”.

- When expanded it says: “*yad aniccam taṃ dukkham, yaṃ dukkham tad anattā*”.

Most current texts translate that verse as: “if something is impermanent, then it will lead to suffering (*dukkha*). If something is impermanent and causes suffering, it is non-self”.

That wrong translation has kept many people from understanding Buddha Dhamma.

We know that “*yoniso manasikara*” or “contemplate with reasoning” is required to attain the *Sotapanna* stage.

- Have those people who made that translation really think that verse makes any sense?
- Most people just assume that is what the Buddha meant by that critical verse. Then they spend countless hours “meditating” on that. For most people, “meditation” means just repeating it.

Has anyone thought logically that such a translation makes sense?

- If something is impermanent, does that ALWAYS lead to suffering?

It is only a “scholarly interpretation” by some “scholars” who had ZERO knowledge of the deep Buddha Dhamma. They substituted “easily comprehensible” mundane meanings.

- They assumed that the Pāli word “*anicca*” is the same as the Sanskrit word “*anitya*”.

- Now, the Sanskrit word “*anitya*” does mean “impermanence”.

We can easily test that hypothesis: “If something is impermanent, does that ALWAYS lead to suffering?”

27:16 By “something” the Buddha meant “anything that is in this world.”

There are many discourses by the Buddha, saying that all five aggregates are *dukkha*. The five aggregates include everything that we have experienced or are planning to experience in the future.

The whole world is full of suffering (this does not mean there is suffering at all times. If there is any pleasure at times, that will also LEAD to suffering).

- The Pāli verse is, “*dukkhe loko patit̥thito*”, or “The world is established on suffering”. (Uḍḍita Sutta, SN 1.67)

Then, if you either look at what’s included in the five aggregates, or look at what’s included in “a thing”, you will see, everything is full of suffering. Everything that has come into being, is full of suffering. Of course, if you just disregard the future consequences, you can say there are many “enjoyable moments” in a day. But the overall effect is to induce suffering in the long run. This is the hard part to “see.”

So, let us look at that statement. “If something is not permanent, then it causes suffering.”

Suppose someone becomes paralysed. Isn’t it a thing that happens in this world? What about cancer?

Then, if paralysis/cancer were to be impermanent, would that lead to suffering?

- Obviously, the impermanence of those two WILL NOT lead to suffering.
- Rather, the impermanence of them will lead to stop an existing suffering.

If they became permanent, they cannot be cured. The patient will just remain in that bad condition.

- If impermanent, that means that cancer or paralysis will go away. For example, medical treatments can cure those diseases and make them impermanent.

Therefore, impermanence of cancer WILL NOT lead to suffering. Instead it will stop the existing suffering.

If you have a headache, the impermanence of that condition will lead to a relief, not to more suffering. It is so easy to see the problem with the statement, “If something is not permanent, then it causes suffering.”

29:30 There is a *saṃsāric* journey. We do not know where we will be reborn next. Most people end up in the *apāyā* for very long times. A human existence is very difficult to get.

If this rebirth process were to become permanent, that will be big problem.

- We can escape from the rebirth process, because it is NOT permanent.

Therefore, the of suffering itself is possible only because the rebirth process is impermanent.

If suffering itself was to become permanent, we would not be able to stop it.

- It is clear that we can escape suffering only because it is impermanent.

30:28 Therefore, that statement “If something is not permanent, then it causes suffering” is not logical at all.

- We can explain that even to a child.

Why are so many people still clinging to such obviously wrong translations?

The Buddha admonished us to discard any teachings that are not consistent with *Dhamma* and *Vinaya*.

- But this inconsistency is so obvious.
- We don't need deep Dhamma concepts to see the problem with that idiotic translation.

That is obviously a wrong view (*micchā diṭṭhi*). One cannot hope to attain *Nibbāna* with such wrong views.

With such a view as the basis, one cannot get to moral discipline (*vinaya* or *sila*). As we discussed earlier, the moral discipline comes through getting rid of wrong views.

- Understanding the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta* is critical to getting rid of wrong views.

If someone has *micchā diṭṭhi*, that will lead to *micchā samādhi*.

To get to *Sammā samādhi*, one needs to have *Sammā diṭṭhi*.

- Only with *Sammā Samādhi* can one get to *Sammā Ñāna* and *Sammā Vimutti*, the *Arahanthship* (via the other stages of *magga phala*).

Therefore, the critical first step is *Sammā Diṭṭhi* or the correct views. Once getting rid of the ten wrong views, the next step in getting to *Sammā Diṭṭhi* is to comprehend *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

- **If someone starts off with the wrong idea of “impermanence” for *anicca*, then there is no hope of getting to *Sammā Diṭṭhi*.**

In the absence of the right view, it is impossible to practise the other seven in the Noble Eightfold Path.

One can have *Sammā Sankappa* (or correct thoughts) only if one has *Sammā Diṭṭhi* or correct understanding about the world.”

- One can have *Sammā Vaca* (appropriate speech), only if one has *Sammā Sankappa* (appropriate way of thinking.)
- The rest of the steps proceed the same way. *Sammā Kammanta* (appropriate actions), *Sammā Ajiva* (appropriate way to live), *Sammā Vayama* (appropriate



effort), *Sammā Sati* (appropriate mindfulness or focus), and *Sammā Samādhi* ((appropriate state of mind) will follow sequentially.

Hence, it is critical to start off with *Sammā Diṭṭhi*.

- Without the correct interpretation of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*, one cannot have *Sammā Diṭṭhi*.
- Of course, one needs to get to mundane *sammā diṭṭhi* by removing the ten types of basic wrong views first.

If one starts off with “*anicca*” to be “impermanence” then the whole process is blocked from the very beginning!

- This is why it is so critical to understand the true meanings of *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*.

32:30 Before trying to get to *Nibbāna*, one needs to “see” the path to get there. That path has eight steps and the first step is *Sammā Diṭṭhi* or “to see the path”. That is the correct view.

To acquire the correct view, we need to see how the three characteristics *anicca*, *dukkha*, and *anatta* are related to each other.

- The first step is “*yadaniccam tam dukkham*” or “*yad aniccam tam dukkham*”.
- We saw above that the translation, “if something is impermanent, it will lead to suffering” is NOT correct.

Thus, it is impossible to have right view by starting off with that wrong translation.

- One’s mind is bound to the wrong view that “if something is impermanent, it will lead to suffering”.

**A listener:** Things are subject to *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anatta*. First, since it is subject to *anicca* (inappropriate, unsatisfactory), it will lead to *dukkha* (suffering). Is that so?

**Waharaka Thero:** “*yad aniccam tam dukkham*”. if something is of *anicca* nature, it will cause suffering. If something would not meet one’s expectations, that will cause suffering.

**Another listener:** Now if we look at it as characteristics, firstly because its *anicca*, it generates *dukkha*, therefore it is *anatta*.

All three are the same?

**Waharaka Thero:** They are not the same, but are related.

Each and everything in this world has the *anicca* nature.

- **However, one would be subjected to suffering ONLY IF one attaches to those things.**

- One will not be subjected and suffering and will not become helpless UNLESS one attaches worldly things. **That is how one would attain *Nibbāna*, by losing those cravings for worldly things.**

**A listener:** Each term has its own characteristic. Is that right?

34:01

**Waharaka Thero:** No. Think about it this way. *Anicca* nature is everywhere in this world. The characteristic of *dukkha* is experienced by the mind.

- Suffering arises ONLY IF we attach to things of *anicca* nature.
- Those things with *anicca* nature WILL ALWAYS be there in the world.

The characteristic of *anicca* is there in worldly things (including our own bodies and even our thoughts). Worldly things cannot be maintained to our satisfaction. They come into existence and have limited lifetimes. Furthermore, they can change unexpectedly. That is why they do not fulfil our expectations.

None of those things can be maintained to our satisfaction.

If we try to keep those things to our satisfaction, that is an impossible task. We get tired of trying.

- We may also try to get our expectation met by doing immoral deeds. Such actions make things worse and get us rebirths in the *apāyā*.
- **That is when one becomes helpless (*anatta*)**

**We cannot change the *anicca* nature of things in this world. But we can stop attaching to them.** That can be done only when one can clearly the bad consequences (*ādinava*) of attaching to them. It is possible to change that mentality to attach.

If we don't attach to things in this world, we will not be subjected to suffering. **Then there is no danger of becoming helpless (*anatta*).**

**A listener:** We take something *anicca* nature as if it were of *nicca* nature. We think we can maintain it to our satisfaction.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes. We get into trouble with the wrong view that we can maintain those things to our liking. We think that those are worthy of possession AND that we can maintain them in good condition or the way we want.

Which means that the suffering is something we do to ourselves, not something that is there in the object. If we realize that those things have an intrinsic nature of changing unexpectedly and dying, then we will not attach to them.

- Then we can avoid being disappointed in the first place. Getting attached can lead to danger too, via getting involved in immoral deeds.

So, the characteristic of *anicca* is in the object (whether it is our own body or external objects, or even mental entities).

**A listener:** So, anything in the world has the characteristic of *anicca*. But suffering arises ONLY IF we do not see that and attach to them.

**Waharaka Thero:** Correct. Suffering is what we cause for ourselves. We suffer and become helpless only if we get attached to those worldly things. They all have the *anicca* nature.

However, *anicca* does not mean just impermanence, even though worldly things are impermanent too. *Anicca* means much more than impermanence.

However, as we discussed earlier, impermanence itself does not lead to suffering in all cases. If we have a headache that suffering will go away if it becomes impermanent, i.e., if the headache goes away.

There are two types of changes (impermanence).

- If something that we like changes that will cause us suffering.
- But if something that we do not like changes, that will give us relief, not suffering.

**But in both cases, the following statement is true. “if something cannot be kept to our liking, that will lead to suffering”.**

- In the case of having a headache, what we would like is for it to stop. If we cannot stop the headache, then that will cause us suffering.

**A listener:** Now if we recover from a sickness (i.e., if the sickness becomes impermanent), that does not cause us suffering.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes.

- Impermanence of somethings may remove suffering. If something that causes us suffering goes away, that will make us happy.

The Buddha said that there are things in this world that we like as humans “*yam loke piya rūpaṃ sata rūpaṃ*”). Those are the things that we attach with *taṇhā*: “*ette sa taṇhā uppajjamaṇa uppajjati, etta nivisamaṇa nivissati*”.

- Those are the things that cause “craving to establish and take hold”. We get distressed when those things do not stay that way.
- But then there are distasteful in the world too. We will suffer if they become permanent or at least hang around for long times.

Those “mind-pleasing things’ are the root cause of suffering. That may not be obvious if we take a short-term view or if we do not see the “big picture”.

- A fish only sees the tasty bite, and does not see the hidden hook. That is why it gets into trouble. Once it gets caught in the hook, it wants to be released. But, of course, that does not happen, and the fish becomes totally helpless.
- In the same way, we are unable to see the “suffering hidden in pleasurable things”. Once we get to real suffering (in the *apāyā*) it is too late. That is when one becomes totally helpless.
- To see that we need to look at the ‘big picture’ of the Buddha with the laws of *kamma*, rebirth process within 31 realms, etc.

The Buddha never denied that there are “pleasurable things” in this world. What he pointed out was that suffering arises IF WE GET ATTACHED to them.

**This is the “previously unheard Dhamma.”**

If there are no “mind-pleasing things” in this world, would living-beings crave for this world? NO.

- Living-beings are trapped in the rebirth process BECAUSE there are “mind-pleasing things” in this world.

But then the Buddha pointed out the following as well.

If there are no bad consequences (*ādīnava*) of attaching to worldly things, will living beings willingly give-up those pleasures?

- The answer to that is also NO.

But it is not easy to see the bad consequences (*ādīnava*) of attaching to worldly things. It is a Buddha who can see that and explain that to the world.

- Otherwise, living-beings will be perpetually trapped in the suffering-filled rebirth process.

Those “mind-pleasing things” that we attach to, have *anicca* nature.

- They are unstable, prone to change unexpectedly (whether we like that or not), and will invariably disappear one day.
- **Everything in this world has that *anicca* nature. That is an inherent characteristic of nature. No one can change that.**
- However, once we understand that, we can stop attaching to them, craving for them. Then the suffering will stop.

Thus, we need to realize that the cause of suffering is *anicca* nature. It is not just impermanence.

The Pāli word “*anicca*”, was replaced at some point in time with the Sanskrit word “*anitya*”. That makes all the difference and can block the way to *Nibbāna*.

- The Sanskrit word “*anitya*” means “impermanent”. But the Pāli word with that meaning is “*aniyata*”. They sound similar.
- The Pāli word “*anicca*” has an entirely different complex meaning.

“*jīvitam aniyataṃ maraṇam niyataṃ*”. Life is not forever (not permanent), death is certain to take place.

Therefore, the confusion arose when the Pāli word “*anicca*” was assumed to give the same meaning as the Sanskrit word “*anitya*”.

“*icca*” means what one like. **If it stays the way we like that is “*nicca*” nature. “*Anicca*” means the opposite of “*nicca*”, when that thing would not behave the way one wants to.**

- We want “mind-pleasing things” to stay that way forever. But that will not happen.

- We also want “things that we don’t like” to be removed or bypassed. But that will not happen when we want it to happen.

If something behaves opposite to our expectations, then that causes suffering. What we like (*icca*) is for “mind-pleasing things” to be safe and long-lasting and things that we don’t like to go away immediately.

- Of course, sometimes things happen the way we want, and we become happy. But that would not last. That is *anicca* nature.
- Furthermore, any immoral deeds that we do to make “good times last” will also lead to much more suffering. That aspect involves *kamma/kamma vipāka*.

38:50

There are “mind-pleasing things” in this world. Our desire is to get hold of them and to keep them that way. But they do not stay that way as we like them to. That is *anicca* nature.

**A listener:** Then *nicca* is the ability to fulfil our desire or *icca*. The ability to enjoy “mind-pleasing things” and keep them in that good condition.

**Waharaka Thero:** *icca* is what we like. If it is possible to keep things the way we like, that would be “*nicca*” nature. But things do not stay the way we like. They change unexpectedly and end our enjoyment. That is *anicca* nature.

Whether we like it or not, suffering will come if we have the *nicca* mindset. We don’t want suffering and we don’t like it, but it will come.

- Furthermore, whatever happiness we have, that will cease. We cannot maintain any happiness for too long.
- That holds for any existence. That is the *dharmatā*! That is the Nature of this world!

Nothing can be maintained the way we want, that is suffering.

- We like to keep happiness forever, and that will not happen.
- We like harsh and unpleasant things to stay away from us, but that is also not possible.
- Both can be stopped only by stopping the rebirth process, i.e., by attaining *Nibbāna*.

**A Listener:** That is captured in the verse, “*yampicchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ.*”

**Waharaka Thero:** Exactly. That is how the Buddha explained *anicca* nature in the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta*.

“*Yam pi icchaṃ na labhati tampi dukkhaṃ.*” When what one likes (*iccha*) does not happen, that causes suffering (*dukkha*).

40:00

Instead of that most people translate *anicca* as “impermanence”. This is where it all went wrong.

Things in this world have that *anicca* nature. **IF we attach to things with *anicca* nature**, it is inevitable that we WILL be subjected to suffering.

But some things with that *anicca* nature are “mind-pleasing” or ‘attractive’. These are the things that we willingly embrace and even fight for. Sometimes we steal them, or lie to get them. Some people even kill others to get hold of them. We think those things are quite valuable.

- Such thinking is due to *avijjā* or ignorance of the *anicca* nature.
- Those are the actions that lead to rebirth in the *apāyā*.

Why do we crave for things in this world?

- We are under the illusion that those things can provide us long-lasting happiness. Furthermore, we are unable to see the consequences of our actions based on craving. Since we cannot recall past lives where we were born an animal or worse, it is hard to appreciate the dangers.
- Of course, there are many things in this world that can provide happiness. But they don't last long.
- We get into real trouble (with *kamma vipāka*) when we engage in immoral activities to get those brief sense pleasures.

Not realizing that is *avijjā* about the *anicca* nature.

- As long as we have *avijjā*, we will crave things in this world.
- Furthermore, we will try our best to maintain those “mind-pleasing things” to our satisfaction.
- But that will not be successful. No matter how hard we try, those “pleasures” will not last.

We can summarize this with two statements for anyone trapped in the rebirth process:

- Any happiness will not last long.
- Even though we do not like to face stressful/painful events, those cannot be avoided.

That is the “previously unheard Dhamma” of the Buddha.

- That is the essence of Buddha Dhamma.
- All our efforts to seek permanent happiness in a world that is of *anicca* nature will not be successful.

With those unfruitful efforts, we just become stressed. We will have to struggle physically and mentally in those efforts.

- When those efforts do not succeed, some people even commit suicide.

We hold onto things calling them “me” and “mine”. But there is nothing in this world to be valued. Even our bodies last only about 100 years. No matter how hard we try, we will not be able to keep them any longer. Furthermore, after about 50 years, we will face more and ailments and diseases.

- Anything else that we call “me” or “mine” have the same nature.
- That is what we need to understand.

The truth about nature is that those things that we like do not last long. Furthermore, those things that we don't like cannot be avoided.



**A listener:** What we hope for does not happen. What we hope not to happen, does happen.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes. That is true nature.

Now, if we realize that any existence in this world has that problem, would we desire such an outcome? Of course not.

We believe that we have control over our lives. **That is, we believe the nature to be of “atta” nature.**

- If we did have control, then we should be able to be happy and avoid suffering.
- But since we are unable to do that, we will be invariably subjected to suffering. **That means the nature is of “anatta”.**
- Despite our efforts, we will lose control. Even if we are to avoid significant suffering in this life, we have no control over our next life.

We would like what we consider to be either “me” or “mine” to be maintained in good condition, and avoid any problems.

- But that does not happen.
- We will have to leave behind all those when we die.
- Even from the birth to death, many things happen that we don't like.
- We do not have control. The idea of “having control” is “atta”. But instead we have “anatta” nature.

Many of us may like the human existence that we have. But none of us will be able to keep it that way for too long.

- That is true of existence in any realm, including *Deva* and *Brahma* realms.
- That is the ultimate *anicca* nature, we WILL NOT be able to maintain things the way we like.
- Not only that, even those *Devas* and *Brahmas* will end up in the *apāyā* and become helpless (*anatta*) at the end.

The wrong view that we do have control about our affairs is called “*attānudiṭṭhi*”.

- With that “*attānudiṭṭhi*” we generate craving for our five aggregates. That means we have wrong view that things in this world to be fruitful and valuable. That is also called *sakkāya diṭṭhi*.
- When we understand the truth of Buddha Dhamma (the *anicca* nature), those wrong views of *attānudiṭṭhi* and *sakkāya diṭṭhi* will go away, and our minds will feel a huge relief.

Then we will not fight against the true nature of this world. We will realize that such efforts ALWAYS end up in more suffering. And that we will get rebirth in the animal or even worse realms as a result of our efforts.

- Thus, *anicca* nature inevitably leads to suffering. “*yad aniccam tam dukkham.*”
- Because of that we will end up totally helpless if we get a birth in an *apāyā*. “*Tam dukkham tad anatta.*”

When we see that, we see the truth about this world. That means we see the Buddha.

- As we know, Buddha comes from “*bhava*” + “*udda*” or stopping future existence (future births).
- Thus, seeing that truth will lead to *Nibbāna*.
- All existences in this world have the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature.
- *Nibbāna* is where this world does not exist. That is where there is no suffering!

With the wrong view of *sakkāya ditthi*, we are prone to act with greed, anger, and ignorance or *lobha, dosa, moha/avijjā*. Those lead to rebirths in the ‘bad realms’.

- But sometimes we do act without greed, anger, and ignorance. We may do meritorious deeds in such cases, and those lead to rebirths in “good realms.”
- That is what we have been doing for an uncountable number of rebirths. Since we are prone to do “bad” more than “good”, most of those past rebirths have been in bad realms.
- The problem with the “good realms”, of course, is they also cannot be maintained. They also come to an end, and the whole process starts all over.

**When we understand the *anicca, dukkha, anatta* nature, we would just want to stop this whole process.**

43:00

That is all we need to understand. That is not much. Why is it so difficult?

It is difficult to see because an average human CANNOT see that whole picture. Only a Buddha, with a totally purified mind, can see and verify that “big picture”.

- A fish sees only the tasty bait. It cannot see the hook hidden underneath that tasty bait.
- In the same way, we are unable to ‘see’ the suffering hidden in “mind-pleasing things” in this world.
- But when explained by a Buddha, we can understand it.

We are unable to see our past lives. So, we just have to take the word of the Buddha. But there are many things in that “big picture” we can ‘see’ to be true.

- **That verification also comes from the change in the huge relief that one can experience as one starts following the path.**

45:09

Once we see the *anicca* nature, we realize that no person, no *Deva* or no *Brahma* can change that. It is a *dhammatā* (or a law of Nature) that DOES NOT change, whether there is a Buddha in this world or not.

- Suffering arises because we attach to things with *anicca* nature.
- We do not realize that those “mind-pleasing things” will not last.
- Furthermore, when we make an effort to try to maintain them, we do immoral things and get into even worse trouble.

There have been mighty kings, emperors in this world. There have been pre-eminent scientists, philosophers, artists, etc. Where are they now? They all had to face death just like anyone else.

- There are *Devas* and *Brahmas* with long lifetimes, enjoying various types of “pleasures”. They will have to face death too. Unless they comprehend Buddha Dhamma attain *Nibbāna*, they will also be born in the *apāyā* in the future.
- No existence in this world is exempt from the *anicca* nature.
- All existences have the suffering (*dukkha* nature).

Therefore, no existence is of “*atta*” nature. They are all of *anatta*” nature. Eventually, they all end up in an *apāya*.

- When an eon comes to end, all those living beings will start over as *Brahmas*, but by the end of eon, most would have suffered mightily in the *apāyā*. That is what we briefly discussed in the post on *Agganna Sutta*.
- That cycle repeats endlessly. That is why one would be trapped in the endless *samsāric* journey, until *Nibbāna* is reached.

We are trapped in this rebirth process only because we are blinded by our sense desires. As long as we cannot comprehend the “big picture” of the Buddha, we are unable to lose our craving for worldly pleasures.

- Just like the fish cannot see the danger hidden in the tasty bait, humans cannot see the danger hidden in sensory pleasures.

If we are able to understand the ‘big picture’ of the Buddha, our ignorance (*avijjā*) about the true nature of this world can be dispelled and we can cultivate wisdom (*paññā*). That is also called *vijjā*, the removal of *avijjā*.

47:00

In other words, *avijjā* is keep trying to maintain things to one’s liking. That is going against the Nature. One will only be subjected to more suffering.

- “*tam dukkham*” or “arising of suffering” happens due to that *avijjā*.
- “*yad aniccam tam dukkham*”. Things of *anicca* nature CAN lead to suffering.
- But we have control over it. Suffering can be stopped from arising by NOT attaching to those things with the *anicca* nature. That means anything in this world.
- Of course, that cannot be done in one step. One needs to comprehend the *anicca* nature AND cultivates the Noble Eightfold Path to get rid of those cravings/attachments.

**A listener:** We need to understand the four noble truths.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes. This is exactly how we can understand the Noble Truths. What we discussed is the truth about the suffering that is prevalent in this world. And that it cannot be avoided as long as we do not comprehend the *anicca* nature.

- **The real suffering is hidden in those ‘mind-pleasing in the world.’**
- That statement is contrary to what is perceived by an ignorant average person (***assutavā puthujano***)
- That is the previously unheard Dhamma of the Buddha

That is ***Dukkha Sacca***, the First Noble Truth.

That *dukkha* arises because we willingly attach to worldly things that have *anicca* nature. That is ***Dukkha Samudaya*** or the Second Noble Truth (how suffering can arise).

Then we can see that ***Dukkha Nirodha*** (Third Noble Truth) of stopping future suffering, i.e., release from suffering can be realized only by reducing (and eventually eliminating) our desires (cravings) for worldly pleasures.

The way to stop attaching to those worldly things is the Fourth Noble Truth, ***Dukkha Nirodhagāmini Patipadā***. That is the Noble Eightfold Path.

We attach to worldly things due to our ignorance of the *anicca* nature.

- When we understand the *anicca* nature, that understanding itself will eliminate a huge chunk of our cravings.
- That is how a *Sotapanna* is released from the *apāyā* just with that “vision” or “understanding”.
- **That is when one gets to *Ariya Sammā Diṭṭhi*.**

This is how you see the Four Noble Truths. The Noble Truths are understood through this *Dhamma*.

- The Fourth Noble Truth is described by the Noble Eightfold Path.
- One gets rid of the cravings for worldly things by following the eight steps in the Noble Path **starting with *Ariya Sammā Diṭṭhi*.**
- As we saw earlier ***Sammā Diṭṭhi* leads to *Sammā Sankappa***. Then ***Sammā Sankappa* lead to *Sammā Vācā*, *Sammā Kammana***, and so on all the way to ***Sammā Samādhi*** and eventually to ***Sammā vimutti or Arahantship*.**

A listener: Until **we have no desire for worldly things, we cannot escape suffering.**

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes, that desire comes from ignorance of the futility and danger in attaching to worldly things. **Worldly things have *anicca* nature built-in.**

Therefore, we need to understand that *anicca* nature. Things we like cannot be maintained that way and things we don't like cannot be kept away. That is the nature of this world or a *dhammatā* (or a law of Nature) that DOES NOT change

That *dhammatā* is valid for all 31 realms in this world. No living-being can escape from it.

- Of course, one can overcome it by understanding that true nature and then following the Noble Eightfold Path to overcome the desires for things in this world.

48:00

Until we understand that true nature, **we have the wrong view** that we can attain long-lasting happiness in this world.

- That wrong view is *sakkāya diṭṭhi*.

Until getting rid of *sakkāya diṭṭhi*, we struggle to achieve that illusive happiness. But we just get tired with those struggles.

- But there is danger in those struggles too. If we do immoral things in our efforts to seek happiness in worldly things, we will be reborn in “bad realms” (*apāyā*) and be subjected much more suffering.

- Just by getting rid of *sakkāya diṭṭhi*, those dangers will SINK IN to the mind and one will never do such immoral deeds. That is how a *Sotapanna* is released from rebirths in the *apāyā*. Just by truly seeing the truth of this.

Until then an average human will be engaged in “collecting or piling up” worldly things. Such actions (*kāra* or *khāra*) to collect (“*sañ*”) are *sankhāra*.

Such efforts will only make one stressful and tired. One would be “going against the tide” and will only get tired. It is like spending a lot of effort to build something that will break apart soon after it is built. That effort itself is part of the *dukkha*. It is “***Sañkhāra dukkha***”.

One inevitable outcome is that anything that we build or prepare (i.e., any *sankata*) will be subjected to unexpected changes and eventual destruction. That is the *viparinama* nature built-in to the *anicca* nature. When that happens, we suffer too, and that is ***viparinama dukkha***.

**A listener:** Every time an effort fails, we will think about doing it another way hoping that will work.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes. We keep hoping that the next attempt will not fail. Until we realize that the *anicca* nature CANNOT be overcome, that it is universal, and that it is valid at all times without exceptions, we will keep trying.

- We do not know how much we have suffered, because we cannot see our past births.

If one were able to see past lives, where one had been subjected to unimaginable suffering, one would drop everything and focus on cultivating the path.

- Those “bad births” arise due to *apunna abhisankhara* (immoral deeds) done to achieve sense pleasures. Getting such bad births (or in general bad *vipāka*) is ***dukkha dukkha***.

This is how the *saṃsāric* journey is sustained. This is how we encounter three types of suffering in that journey.

Not understanding that is *avijjā* or ignorance.

**A listener:** If it failed this time, we hope that it will succeed next time, by doing it a bit differently.

**Waharaka Thero:** Yes. As long as we have such expectations for the future, we will keep doing it. That means keep generating *abhisankhara*.

- That is “*avijjā paccaya sankhara*” the first step in the *Paṭicca Samuppāda*, that leads to suffering.

So, we start with ***Sañkhāra dukkha***. But since those things that we come up with do not stay the way we want, we face ***vipariṇāma dukkha***. When those *abhisankhara* (bad *kamma*) bring their *vipāka*, we encounter ***dukkha dukkha***.

Therefore, not knowing the *anicca* nature (or having *sakkāya diṭṭhi*) leads to all three types of suffering.