

Attentive with the Ephemeral

Experience is not independent from the lens of perception, by introducing insightful intention into our way of looking we support a freer and more easeful way of being. In Buddhism there are the 3 characteristics of existence: Anicca, Dukkha and Anatta; All things are impermanent, unsatisfactory, and not-self.

Today we will focus on Anicca - transitoriness, inconstancy, impermanence. That all things arise and pass is quite basic and obvious to us. We can build on that acknowledgement and develop it into a tool of meditation. That can help us penetrate deeper into the experience and liberate the heart and mind, because seeing all things as anicca is actually counter-intuitive.

By developing a practice that deliberately pays attention to the inconstancy both of specific phenomena and generally of all things, we get a clear sense of the habitual and unconscious sense we have of things being permanent and lasting. When you attune to a phenomenon's impermanence notice how your response is affected. Can this reduce a sense of it being problematic, and ease any greed or aversion present?

It may seem obvious that heart-mind states and moods change through a day. But it can still be a really powerful reflection to recollect its changeable expression. Noticing the different emotional states and energy levels that flowed through our experience, note how they all seemed so significant, solid, and to some degree permanent, yet they all passed: All the states of happiness and openness, all the states of seriousness and contractedness were inconstant. Is that how they seemed at the time?

We can keep acknowledging and digesting this insight of anicca. In time it will adjust our way of relating to the present heart-mind state as it arises and is subconsciously intuited as permanent. "This too will pass" lessens aversion to an unpleasant state, and relaxes holding on to more pleasant ones, immediately bringing more ease.

We can develop our practice to include all objects touching the 6 sense doors. Paying attention to their momentariness relaxes our habitual problematic responses. We can also pay attention to all the possible arisings of the sense of self-identity via an exploration of the 5 aggregates; form (body), vedana (pleasant, unpleasant, neither... nor...), perception (label), mental constructs or fabrications (intention, attention, etc.), and even consciousness (knowing) all come and go.

Enjoy exploring the freedom of this way of looking, and notice its impact on experience. For many of us using a gentle inward noting keeps the attention attuned to moment to moment change. Just one word is usually enough: "Anicca," "Inconstancy," "Impermanence". If the noting becomes intrusive or obtrusive ease it off, thereby keeping the primary attention with the sense of change. Also we don't need to notice every refined phenomenon or part of a phenomenon that arises, just attuning to the general sense of this is passing, ephemeral, changing will bring more space, ease and freedom.