

Not Me, Not Mine, Not Myself

When we look with Avidya; without clear and wise seeing, we take this body and heart-mind to be who we are; to be our self, or to be ours; the possession of the self. This can happen consciously, but most of the time it is an unquestioned intuition of the way things are. Yet steady attention will show the sense of self is a spectrum; larger & grosser when the body or sense of awareness is contracted, and smaller & subtler when life is flowing with ease. Our sense of self is not usually seen as so fluid and diverse.

Ways of looking practices can be extended to this Avidya, just as it could be to the common Avidya of mistaking that which is inconstant for something permanent (Anicca) which we can rely on for lasting happiness (Dukkha). Through all the ways of looking practices we've tasted for ourselves the fruits of a changed perspective. We can also gain insights and a more liberated experience by dropping some degree of identification with or ownership of the aggregates.

This practice again builds on the previous ways of looking. We have the freedom to either view this as a new practice or see it as a continuation and deepening of what we already know. Seeing all phenomena come and go and as unsatisfactory we naturally loosened our grip, opening the sense of spaciousness in awareness. This will have naturally led to a lessening of identification with that which is experienced as 'me' or 'mine': When clinging lessened the sense of self lessens with it. Clinging, Dukkha, and sense of self are all interdependent.

This practice goes straight to lessening our sense of self, releasing clinging and dukkha from that side. The 'Anatta' way of looking does not reify phenomena on any level (as 'Anicca' can) nor necessitate noticing contraction (as 'Dukkha' can) this makes it the most penetrative and liberating of all the ways of looking offered.

The Buddha recommended to regard all the aggregates (that can become a sense of self, or felt as owned by the self) as "this is not me, this is not mine, this is not myself". This would make a long phrase to note, and shorter is more useful. If the terminology makes sense "Anatta" can be mentally said, or "not-self" or "not me, not mine".

What we are implying here is that phenomena are just happening. This goes for all phenomena including the ways of experiencing. Practice primarily with an easy aggregate, and once the practice stabilises expand to include all of them overtime. In the body aggregate we can notice not-self in sensations, in the vedana of the sensations, in the knowing of the body sensations and vedana, and in the subtler mental fabrications of intention, attention and perception; just happening - not-self.

It can be skilful at times to adjust the phrases to be "not just me, not just mine". For we do have a responsibility to phenomena; we need to care for our body & heart-mind, we're not abandoning the aggregates just not encouraging a sense of ownership.