



## Anicca

Impermanent" AND/OR "not one's own".

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Nicca in Sanskrit is nitya (नित्य). And it has two meanings in the Vedic literature, as seen in the Monier-Williams dictionary:

- one's own ( opp. to araṇa ) (RV) .

And

- continual, perpetual (permanent), eternal, (RV) .

.....

Because the concept of anicca is so important in (authentic) early Buddhism; let us put this concept in its most manifest situation.

To have the big picture in mind, refer to this [visual aid](#).

This sketch represents paṭiccasamuppāda, the conditionality of all physical and psychical phenomena in Buddhism.

What interest us here, are the nāmarūpa and the saḷāyatana links (in blue).

Note on the side that, what Buddhism calls "the world" (loka) [of senses], are the external fields, the internal fields, the contact link and the feeling link.

All of the above are aniccā (not one's own & impermanent), saṅkhatā (conditioned), paṭiccasamuppannā (dependently arisen) , khayadhammā (phenomena subject to destruction), vayadhammā (phenomena subject to vanishing), virāgadhammā (phenomena subject to fading away), and nirodhadhammā (phenomena subject to cessation).

A phenomena (dhamma) occurs first in our case, when there is a saṅkhārā, a coaction of the khandhas. The khandhas are the constituents of the Nāmarūpa link (in blue). They are: matter (a.k. a. form), consciousness, feeling, perception and the coaction (saṅkhārā) between them.

This coaction develops in two steps. The coaction itself (e.g. a guitar played by an artist); and the external sensory field of experience, that is the sound of that guitar.

.....

What Buddha says in SN 22.33, is that these khandhas are "not yours" (na tumhākaṃ).

They are "not one's own" (anicca).

Moreover, they are impermanent (anicca) and their phenomena are subject to change (vipariṇa).

Impermanent are all coactions (formations). Aniccā sabbasaṅkhārā

SN 1.1

For no one can say: "I want this phenomenon (dhamma), [born of the coaction (saṅkhārā) of the khandhas, that are "not my one's own" (anicca)], to be permanent.

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"All coactions are not one's own (& impermanent), and all phenomena are not self."

Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā, sabbe dhammā anattā'ti.

.....

"Is what is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this I am, this is my self'?"

"Yaṃ panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāmadhammaṃ, kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassitum: 'etaṃ mama, esohamasmi, eso me attā'ti?"

"No, Master Gotama." "No hidaṃ, bho gotama".

MN 35

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## ANICCA & ANATTA

Anicca is closely related to anatta (not self).

First, let's explain what a "self" is in this context.

Mr. Olivelle, a translator of the Upanishads says the following in his "The early Upanishads":

"atman/atta (self), is a term liable to misunderstanding and mistranslating because it can mean the spiritual self or the inmost core of a human being, besides functioning as a mere reflexive pronoun."

Therefore, to say "atta is anatta" is not illogical when it means "himself (he) is not self". But sounds illogical when translated as "the self is not self".

Here, we are in the situation where the self as mere reflexive pronoun (himself/herself/oneself), that is to say in proper English, he/she believes that he/she has to do something with the khandhas.

Which is what the late Vedic and Upanishadic folks used to believe (making it a continuous and permanent spiritual self). And what Buddha disavowed; because of the "anicca" intrinsic nature of the khandhas, their coactions (saṅkhārā) and ensuing phenomena (dhammā).

Oneself cannot be the same as the khandhas and their phenomena, because the khandhas are anicca (not one's own").

Oneself cannot make "one" with the khandhas and their phenomena, and be a spiritual self

that is a permanent continuity.

Oneself (atta) is anatta (not a spiritual self).

The view of a spiritual self as a blend between the phenomena from the coaction of the khandhas in the nāmarūpa link AND the "world" (of senses, as defined above), that would make a "one", is the late Vedic view of the Upanishads. And Buddha contradicted that because of the inherent anicca nature of the khandhas.

Bhikkhus, when what exists, by clinging to what,

by adhering to what, does such a view as this

arise: 'That which is the self is the world (of senses); having passed away, that I shall be permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change'?"

SN 22.152

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### "I AM THIS" & "I AM"

SN 22.89 tells us that we must first get rid of the "not ownership" (na tumhākaṃ) - the "I am this".

Then of the "I".

Let's go back to the [visual aid](#).

There are two arrows numbered 1 & 2.

The khandhas are coacting (saṅkhārā) to produce two major phenomena (dhammā) for "oneself".

- The arrow #1 defines the phenomena that one might be experiencing - e.g. one sees a player (form) with a guitar (form), and ears some music (sound)) - All three are experienced on the external sensory fields of experience (bāhirāni āyatanāni). In our case, rūpa & sadda.

This is what "oneself" believes wrongly as "I am THIS".

These phenomena are experienced by "oneself", through the internal sensory fields of experience (ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni). In our case, cakkhu & sotta).

- The arrow #2 defines how the internal sensory fields of experience (ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni) are created. This is our sensory "structure", so to speak. It is more than just "physical". It is a physical "structure" with a sensory field of experience.

And it is also anicca. That is to say "not one's own" and impermanent.

Buddha declares that khandhas are "not yours" (na tumhākaṃ) in SN 22.33 - and that the internal sensory fields of experience (ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni) are "not yours" in SN 35.138.

Both khandhas and ajjhāttikāni āyatanāni are "not one's own" (aniccā).

Buddha also declares that the external (SN 35.4) and the internal (SN 35.1) are impermanent. (Both suttas have their parallel in SA 195) .

In SN 12.20, Buddha also declares that all the links (nidānā) in paṭiccasamuppāda - and per extension, their components) - are aniccā.

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What's impermanent is suffering.

*Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ;*

What's suffering is not-self.

*yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā*

What's suffering is not-self.

*yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadanattā;*

And what's not-self should be truly seen with right understanding like this: 'This is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self.'

*yadanattā taṃ 'netam mama, nesohamasmi, na meso attā'ti evameva yathābhūtaṃ sammappaññāya daṭṭhabbaṃ*

**SN 22.15**

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"Bhikkhus, form (& all khandhas) is (are) impermanent, both of the past and the future, not to speak of the present."

*"Rūpaṃ, bhikkhave, aniccaṃ atītānāgataṃ; ko pana vādo paccuppannassa".*

Seeing this, the learned noble disciple is indifferent about past form,

*Evaṃ passaṃ, bhikkhave, sutavā ariyasāvako atītasmiṃ rūpasmiṃ anapekkho hoti;*

doesn't seek delight in future form,

*anāgataṃ rūpaṃ nābhinandati;*

and he practices for disgust, dispassion, and cessation regarding present form.

*paccuppannassa rūpassa nibbidāya virāgāya nirodhāya paṭipanno hoti*

**SN 22.9**

"Householder, whatever has come into being and is conditioned, a product of volition, dependently originated, is impermanent. Whatever is impermanent is suffering. It is just suffering that you are attached to and hold to."

*"Yaṃ kho, gahapati, kiñci bhūtaṃ saṅkhataṃ cetayitaṃ paṭiccasamuppannaṃ tadaniccaṃ. Yadaniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ. Yaṃ dukkhaṃ tadeva tvam, gahapati, allīno, tadeva tvam, gahapati, ajjhupagato"ti.*

**AN 10.93**

Bhikkhus, consciousness comes to be in dependence on a dyad. And how, bhikkhus, does consciousness come to be in dependence on a dyad? In dependence on the eye and forms there arises eye-consciousness. The eye is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise; forms are impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. Thus this dyad is moving and tottering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

*Dvayaṃ, bhikkhave, paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti. Kathañca, bhikkhave, dvayaṃ paṭicca viññāṇaṃ sambhoti? Cakkhuñca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññāṇaṃ. Cakkhu aniccaṃ*

*vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi. Rūpā aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino. Itthetaṃ dvayaṃ calañceva byathañca aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi.*

Eye-consciousness is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-consciousness is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, bhikkhus, eye-consciousness has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

*Cakkhuviññāṇaṃ aniccaṃ vipariṇāmi aññathābhāvi. Yopi hetu yopi paccayo cakkhuviññāṇassa uppādāya, sopi hetu sopi paccayo anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Aniccaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppannaṃ cakkhuviññāṇaṃ kuto niccaṃ bhavissati.*

The meeting, the encounter, the concurrence of these three things is called eye-contact. Eye-contact too is impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. The cause and condition for the arising of eye-contact is also impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise. When, bhikkhus, eye-contact has arisen in dependence on a condition that is impermanent, how could it be permanent?

*Yā kho, bhikkhave, imesaṃ tiṇṇaṃ dhammānaṃ saṅgati sannipāto samavāyo, ayaṃ vuccati cakkhusamphasso. Cakkhusamphassopi anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Yopi hetu yopi paccayo cakkhusamphassassa uppādāya, sopi hetu sopi paccayo anicco vipariṇāmī aññathābhāvī. Aniccaṃ kho pana, bhikkhave, paccayaṃ paṭicca uppanno cakkhusamphasso kuto nicco bhavissati.*

Contacted, bhikkhus, one feels, contacted one intends, contacted one perceives. Thus these things too are moving and tottering, impermanent, changing, becoming otherwise.

*Phuṭṭho, bhikkhave, vedeti, phuṭṭho ceteti, phuṭṭho sañjānāti. Itthetepi dhammā calā ceva byathā ca aniccā vipariṇāmino aññathābhāvino*

(idem for ear, nose,... mano).

**SN 35.93**

And what, bhikkhus, is the way that is suitable for attaining Nibbāna? Here, a bhikkhu sees the eye as impermanent, he sees forms as impermanent, he sees eye-consciousness as impermanent, he sees eye-contact as impermanent, he sees as impermanent whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition, whether pleasant or painful or neither-painful-nor-pleasant.

*katamā ca sā, bhikkhave, nibbānasappāyā paṭipadā? Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu cakkhuṃ aniccanti passati, rūpā aniccāti passati, cakkhuviññāṇaṃ aniccanti passati, cakkhusamphasso aniccoti passati. Yampidaṃ cakkhusamphassapaccayā uppajjati vedayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ vā adukkhamasukhaṃ vā tampi aniccanti passati*

**SN 35.147**

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## Additional note

What meditation is trying to achieve, is to get rid, first of the "I am this" of the external; then of the "I am" of the internal. So one can finally reach the "unpolluted" citta that is in the nāmarūpa link (nāmarūpa nidāna); so as to experience the estrangement of anicca ("not one's own" and impermanence) of both the external and internal sensory processes in the saḷāyatana link and part of satta; that is to say, in the Buddhist "world" (loka) [of senses].

It is a roll-back process. And it is called the obtention (sati) of the establishment (samādhi) of citta.

One needs to escape the "world/loka" and roll-back to the nāmarūpa nidāna to dwell in an unpolluted citta (not clinging).

When in the world of senses, citta is "polluted" (stained as in adhering, clinging to = upakkiliṭṭha - Sk.  $\sqrt{\text{}} kliš$  or  $\sqrt{\text{}} śliṣ$ ), it is called [citassa](#) .

Citassa works in unisson with mano. A "meeting of minds", so to speak. Mano (manas) is the locus of the intellectualisation of an emotional sensory affect. It is the locus of the conscious subjective aspect of feelings or emotions. It is also the kapellmeister - the leader or conductor - of the orchestra of the six senses including "himself".

To thoroughly establish (samādhi) and liberate the citta (cetovimutti), is to get totally rid of the influence of mano.

This happens in the 5th jhāna.

To "establish the citta" is a process that occurs in the 4th jhāna. And to reach this, one can meditate on the obtention/end of breath (for if sati means also "obtention", it also means the "end" - [See here](#).)

The obtention (and the "end" as nimitta) of breath is called Ānāpānasati. And it leads to the 4th jhāna.

Note that the goal is to get rid of the influence of mano. Not to play with both citta & mano. For that would not give the opportunity to be liberated by pañña (discernment a.k.a. wisdom). One would not be able to have any vipassana (insight/serene distinction) into the nature of anicca.

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Everything that has a beginning has an end.

yaṃ kiñci samudayadhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodhadhammaṃ”ti.

DN 5