

Context - spiritual death - *samatha* and *vipassana* which means seeing reality as it is.

Tools - Laksanas =3 marks or features of conditioned existence.

- 1. Anicca - impermanence

2. *Anatta* - no independent existing selfhood.

3. *Diukkha* - suffering or the insubstantiality of mundane existence.

### NOT ME, NOT MIINE

Habitual way of viewing existence involves identification with a 'me' who is supposedly thinking, feeling, having views, acting out. We have the view that we are this body and mind and feel that they belong to this so-called self.

Central teaching in Buddhism is this identification with a somebody who is able to act independently of conditions and this is what leads to suffering or *dukkha*. When we get tight, identification leads to attachment and clinging to an ego that wants its own way and resists reality as it is. We are not in control of circumstances and we need to wake up and realise that everything happens through the interdependence of conditions at any given moment and this so-called self is just an ingredient in those conditions and circumstances.

We are utterly dependent on gravity, oxygen to breathe, the sun for warmth, light and food, water to drink, all the functions of the body. Take a moment to feel all of this in this moment now.

Also dependent on parents. Think of chain of events and all the people that have resulted in you being here this morning.

Ego appropriation is the term for believing we are in charge and bring things about and we can appropriate status to find our sense of worth and this can lead to the abuse of power if not mindful.

We continually invent a sense of identity with the labels given us by society. I'm British, Buddhist, a son, daughter, brother. I'm Labour, Conservative, vegetarian, vegan.

And we also tend to identify with our possessions - my house, bike, car, cup, clothes. Sooner or later we lose these things due to impermanence???

Of course we need these things practically and need agreements about possessions but it's important to hang loose to them and not invest more in them than they actually are. With identification we become less mindful. One of the main Buddhist practices is non-attachment.

### QUOTE

Identification is a kind of hypnotic trance that humans are already in. The thoughts that we identify with, we have faith in, believe in, and feel ourselves to be. Each thought that we identify with has the word "I" within it, either literally or subtly. Through this subtle thought we can identify with anything, our bodies, our sensations, our impulses to do, and our emotions. When a Zen master teaches his students to "impersonalize" a phenomena, it means to not identify with the phenomena. For

instance, I can feel "I am angry" or I can feel "Anger is arising within me". The former is identification with anger and the latter is seeing anger as an impersonal objective phenomena arising within oneself. When we identify with something, we give it our energy and our faith, and keep the phenomena alive in us. When we see anger as an impersonal phenomena and fully feel it, then the anger will arise, abide, change, and pass away, and we will be done with the experience. When we identify with the phenomena, then it defines us and limits us, while we sustain the phenomena with our energy. It becomes "registered in our consciousness" and becomes a samskara or thought imprint in our subconscious mind.

A wonderful sense of freedom happens when we start to let go and realise that everything happens through interdependence of conditions. Hanging loose creates spaciousness and we can then appreciate material things. Also we can notice thoughts without clinging so tightly to them < flexible and more open and relaxed.

Engaging in insight practices where our present reality gets turned upside down can bring about fear so we need to pace ourselves. Amogasiddhi as the presiding Buddha figure can be turned to as an inspiration for fearlessness or courage.

Best to start with the things it feels easiest to disidentify with e.g. Body sensations, *vedanta (sensations)* where we can weave a story about a 'poor me' but letting them be there without the story allows tension and discomfort often to dissolve into nothingness and we slowly realise that everything is simply happening to us without an 'I' or 'me' making things happen and there is a strong sense of release in that realisation.

Vessantara - the unexamined 'me' spends a lot of time sitting in the control tower of the head directing practice and meditation.

We looked at the 'watcher' last session with the one who is witnessing the content of experience. So there is the s/o dichotomy, the watcher and the watched - the watcher watching experience. We found that there is no identity called the 'watcher' and were able to relax out of awareness experiencing content to just aware content in itself. Sangharakshita calls this 'integrated awareness.'

Through this practice comes the realisation that clinging to a sense of separate identity creates a separate self which the Buddha said is the source of all suffering