

# 2008-03-21 Anapanasati 3 of 8

Sat, 8/1 11:10PM • 16:58

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

impermanence, change, impermanent, arises, awareness, passing, relationship, practice, meditation, part, aware, buddhist practitioners, mind, stay, field, thought, generalization, pain, leaves, breathing

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So as I've said, so this morning, there's a shift now in the 16 stages to impermanence, the insight or the wisdom, part of practice seeing impermanence. And then it's through the seeing of impermanence, the impact of that that can be a change. Whereas earlier in the practice, the changes that go about are primarily practice changes we're working with, you're calming the breath, calming the body, calming the mind. gladdening, the mind bringing about joy and delight is very stiff things that have been brought about to practice. And all those things are kind of practice contingent, depending on us doing the practice. to a great degree, and now they're just beginning to focus on impermanence. And then impermanence is a kind of recognition of perception. sorts and then that perception gives birth to understanding, which is the understanding, then initiate the change, change. It's not practice initiated change, but it's insight initiated change. that distinction makes sense to you. Specifically understanding and the, and I think all of you know that impermanence is a huge theme in Buddhism. The Pali word is Onitsha. And it's trying to say, usually, it's impermanent, sometimes, as in Taan, Geoff likes constancy can disturb the constancy. And I like transients sometimes because everything's in transit. Everything's coming through and the I think over there three aspects of impermanence, that sometimes people talk about. One aspect of impermanence is the loss part of it, that things are impermanent, and they're not going to stay. And then there's loss. And some people focus a lot on that and feel a certain degree of grief or sadness, about bitterness about things. Things are passing, they're losing their youth. They're losing their health, they're losing their relationships, or there's all kinds of things. impermanence means things are changing all the time. They're losing things. And for whatever reason, some people focus a lot on that side of the equation. And of course, sometimes, losing things and things pass is very welcome. And things are kind of not going well. I'm glad that's over. But and then the other side is, of impermanence is that there's something new happening. It isn't like things passed, and then they nothing's there to replace it. But there's the fact that things are changing all the time means that there's something new Coming into the field coming into your words mean new arriving as well. In fact, in order for something new to happen, there has to be change. Even in the kindergarten, teachers are teaching the kids about that, in order for leaves to, you know, this changing cycles of the seasons, the leaves fall that they died fall on the ground, they decompose. They provide the nutriment for the next next year's leaves to grow. And so there's a kind of neat, you need to have the dying of the leaves to have the new leaves come. So that when things pass away, allow something new to happen. And sometimes, you know, you don't want to tell that to someone when their loved one has just died. You know, this is good. That doesn't, that doesn't, you know, doesn't work that way. But, but, but there is this aspect of the impermanent nature of things that also allows the new things to happen and the new change. And more important, I think, from the point of view, point of view of Buddhist practice. It allows for because things are always changing, it allows us to be involved in that change. It allows us allows that we practice, we're not stuck with our suffering. We're not stuck with the way things are. But rather, because of practice, we participate in the field of impermanence in particular way that is very hopeful, and

meaningful, significant moves us towards greater peace and freedom and happiness. If things weren't in permanence, you wouldn't be able to do that. So because things are changeable, changing, there can be practice. And a third aspect of impermanence somewhat related to the second is that because we're living in a field of change, how things change is contingent upon the relationships it's in. It's, you know, the whole causal causal field of causes cause and effect

is comes into play. If things were fixed and solid and in absolute way, then they would not exist in relationship to anything else. But because things are impermanent and come to come into existence because of the gathering together of causes and conditions, it's there in relationship to a lot of other things. And so, a deeper insight into impermanence allows us to understand deep more deeply the relational aspect of our life as well and allows for a relationship that allows for both interpersonal relationships but also relationship to the world to ourselves and all kinds of things in a deeper way. So, impermanence has these three aspects aspect of things go away things pass, aspects, things, new things arise. And then there's also the aspect of the relationship that exists in that field of rising and passing

And the insight or the seeing perception of impermanence understanding of it doesn't take a lot of meditation. There's plenty of it in this world of ours, that is available all the time. We see, you know, we see ourselves getting old, we see our friends getting old, we see the seasons change, we see, you know, changes all kinds of changes in nature. We buy something and before we know it, it's gotten old, we buy bread in fast enough and it gets moldy. Or we buy a new toothbrush and pretty soon it's worn out. And for this, you see the change of things all the time. And, and, in fact, there are some people who are, I think, are are not Buddhist practitioners, who are a lot wiser than some Buddhist practitioners, because they've really taken in the obvious impermanence of life. What you can see kind of out there they really they're big A lot of maybe some of it's been quite difficult. And some Buddhist practitioners haven't really been right in the middle of the obvious change of life so much. They haven't been mature and by that contact I think that insight meditation allows us to, as I said earlier today be impacted by the impermanence in a more deeper way, but more importantly, to start seeing and permanence at a more refined level than the obvious level as we're walking around. And so we don't just see it, you know, that changes of nature, we don't just see it that you know, our car tires wear out over time. But we also start seeing that moment by moment, there are all these changes going on. So you might feel such you might you might feel a certain way. You know, you know, I'm in situations where I've noticed physical pain when I meditated and then I thought, Oh, this is terrible. I'm just miserable and just this is going to be here until they ring the bell for Sure, it's it's permanent until I ring the bell for sure. And, but then if I pay very careful attention, I noticed that I'm not constantly in pain, that there's a, there's a constant shift going on a 90% pain, whatever, but, but, you know, then there's this really loud sound outside. And for a few moments, I'm not in pain, I'm paying attention to sound. Or then I think some some thought arises about something that happened earlier in the day or yesterday or earlier in the week. And I get caught up in the world of last week for a few moments. And then oh, my pain, where the pain intrudes again. And so it turns out, it turns out that more subtle, your more refined your attention is to the moment to moment arising and passing of things. You'll find that you're actually not in pain all the time. Or if you're feeling depressed or sad or happy or whatever emotion might be. It might seem from a distance like a global picture. Oh, I'm just kidding. Happy. But if you actually kind of track what's going on moment by moment, there are certainly lots of moments of happiness. But there's moments of other things as well going on, there's a kaleidoscope that arises and passes of things. And sometimes we take in the generalization we take in kind of like the broad general view of what's happening. And we don't really see the details and make up the big picture. It's like the teacher in Burma like to do like the analogy of from there might be a row of ants walking down the path, black ants and from a distance, it just looks like a black line. You don't even see it and just looks like a black line. And you get close enough to it.

And you see actually it's it's individual ends with a space between them. You know, it's a it's not a solid line. It's a broken line events. And so you have to get close enough to see that or the other analogy is often used in meditation circles. Is that of film being projected on a screen. And I think we all know that this, what's being projected on the screen is not movement is a what's being projected on the screen is a whole series of still shots of photographs, basically. And However, it's happening so quickly, in many, many, many shots per second, that this wonderful capacity of the mind, the mindful ability of the mind, the mind has to make that into motion into something that has some kind of continuity is part of you know, the minds doing. And so it's past I've been told, I don't know if it's true, but until the some directors are so familiar and so sharp with their mind, so familiar with the world of film, certain films can actually see not the movement but see the still shots going up and down. I don't know if that's true.

But it's been pointed out through research, that meditators have a much higher ability to see that flicking. Change on and off, then people who don't meditate because a heightened ability to notice to differentiate and not generalize not tie it all together. So part of meditation practice is developing the capacity to see more clearly. So that we can start not seeing through the concepts that we paint reality with, with actually see the kind of details. If we do that we'll start seeing start seeing things are changing quite a bit. One of the grossest, one of the biggest generalizations we make is that about the self I, I am this way, and not few, not a few people talk about how they're said to me yesterday, I think we did it before. Someone told me that, you know, her self image basically, I think she was in her late 40s her self image of who it was she looks like it's stuck in her 20s she kind of that's kind of like you know, she knows she's older but somehow, you know, Cisco subconscious way of having a cell phone Midge is she's still stuck there in the 20s image. And, and so people we develop a view an idea of who we are. And sometimes we think, who we are is actually shifting and changing much faster than our view of who we are. And so part of again, the function of meditation is to drop down below the conceptual level, the generalization level, the interpretive level, and begin seeing what's actually going on in the details of our experience here. And if we do that, then generally we start seeing that things are actually arising and passing much more quickly, changing much more quickly than the mind sometimes believes. So thanks.

So in our the past nursing, there is a practice and it's called, sometimes called choice This awareness and choiceless awareness is taught, right, some subtly different ways. But the basic idea is that you don't choose what you pay attention to. But rather you sit and open your awareness up with your awareness, be present, be present for this, use the present. But then in the present moment, you allow whatever is going to rise as loudest, to come to your awareness, and you become aware of that, be mindful of that. So for read aloud, a car goes up by outside, you know, you weren't expecting it, you weren't constructing it, you weren't, you know, waiting for it, but just so loud that that comes into awareness without a choice. It's there. And because it's there, you pay attention to it. If suddenly there's a cough arises, you didn't plan it, you were thinking about it wasn't a choice, but then the sensations of coughing arise, and you just become aware of that. A thought arises into prominence and you just speak I'm aware of that, a feeling arises you become aware of that. And so there's no choice. But you stay open to what arises next, what arises next, and you don't stay, you don't land and stay and hold on to anything, you don't get involved with a nation thinking about reacting to something, you stay kind of choiceless at open, relaxed, aware of what comes next. What comes next is gonna be a constant shifting foreground and background shift, things are constantly shifting. Well, it also shifts in this choiceless awareness is your ability to be aware itself. So you can be aware Oh, now I was now in present now and I was I was drifting away for a while. And so it's all it's all this changing going on. So choiceless awareness kind of opens as a practice partly of paying attention to change to how things are always changing and moving. And if you if the point is defined to be open to notice that changing the digit you're using, were of that part of your experience which is changing, not that part of your

awareness, which is fixed. Really, as you get more concentrated, you feel fine. Everything is changing. So what I like to suggest is we try this for this next meditation and see what it's like for you to really kind of sit there in the middle of a field of choiceless change. And I see you do your ear lock, or their hearing system devices in the box there, maybe that'll help you. Some people use them. And so we'll do this with the breathing. So that kind of the breathing is kind of constant. It's kind of like having a you're standing in a strong wind, but you're holding on to a pole. And so you're not gonna be blown away. Exactly. So you're, you're staying with a big you know, you have this stability with the breathing your breathing, breathing itself as impermanent, but then your variable relaxed. And you're aware that in the greats in his field of experience that breathing something in the middle of that, all kinds of other things is happening. And make choices about it. Don't choose anything. And just be aware of different things come into awareness, different things impinge on awareness, different things have interest for you. And don't follow anything. Just be aware. Oh, that's a reason now. Almost like Oh, that's a reason now. What's going to rise next? By open if I relaxed and open again, what arises next? It's like if you have a room full of doors and all the all the way around doors, and you go around you open one door. No, that's interesting. That run then you walk over and you open the next door. Next door. It's kind of like going into any doors you just kind of staying open. Oh, what's that like? Oh, make sense? Since enough