



Homage to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha

Welcome Dhamma Friends

Thanks so much for exploring this text on the 5
Illusionists by Venerable Dhammavuddho over
the past 3 months!



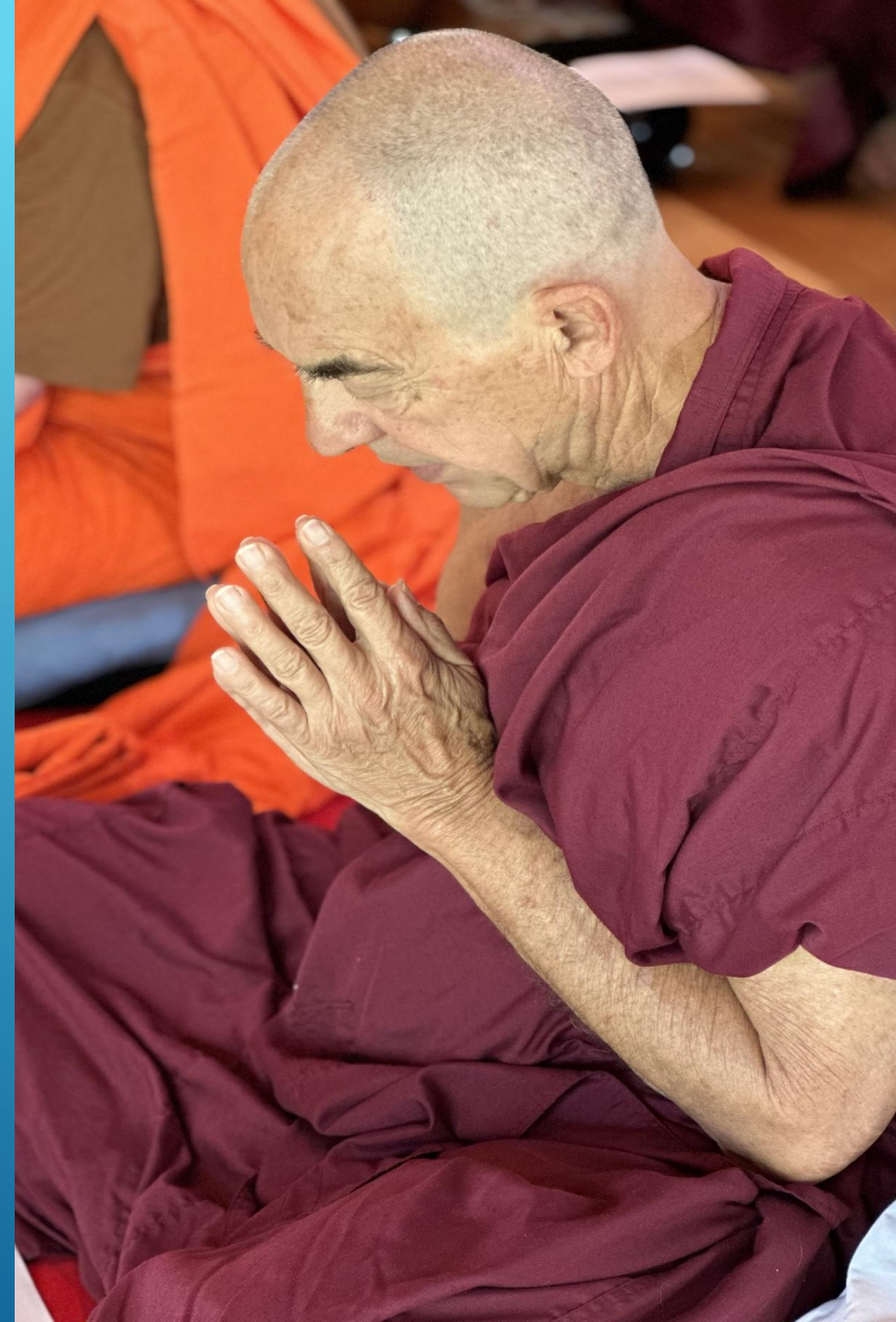
Deep Practice with the 6 Methods of Investigation

Summary of using the Buddha's
Buddha's instructions to investigate
investigate form, feeling,
perception, formations, and
consciousness — drawn from the
the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Inspired by
by the 5 Illusionists Reading from
from Venerable Dhammavuddho
Dhammavuddho

How to Use These Methods

The *Samyutta Nikāya* — the "Connected Discourses" of the Buddha — contains a rich collection of contemplations on the aggregates. These are not intellectual exercises. They are sustained practices meant to be applied in meditation.

- 1. Decide which contemplation you will use – you may need to do some light memorization**
- 2. Start with Lovingkindness**
- 3. Once Collected (4th jhana) begin to invite the contemplation subject**
- 4 . Once the mind says “ok that’s enough” enough” then let it rest in quiet mind
mind**



THE THREE STAGES OF CONTEMPLATION

- ▶ **1. Reflecting** — wise attention
- ▶ **2. Letting it Settle** — feel the meaning without thinking
- ▶ **3. Silent Awareness** — rest and observe without interference
- ▶ *From thinking → to sensing → to knowing*
- ▶ *This is a natural process — not something we force, but something we allow*

1. REFLECTING -WISE ATTENTION

Clear, intentional contemplation — using thought gently

Take a Dhamma truth: “This aggregate is impermanent”

Gently look at it: How is this true in my experience?

Not analyzing but you are developing your understanding of the concepts

**This is wise attention beginning — turning the mind toward truth*



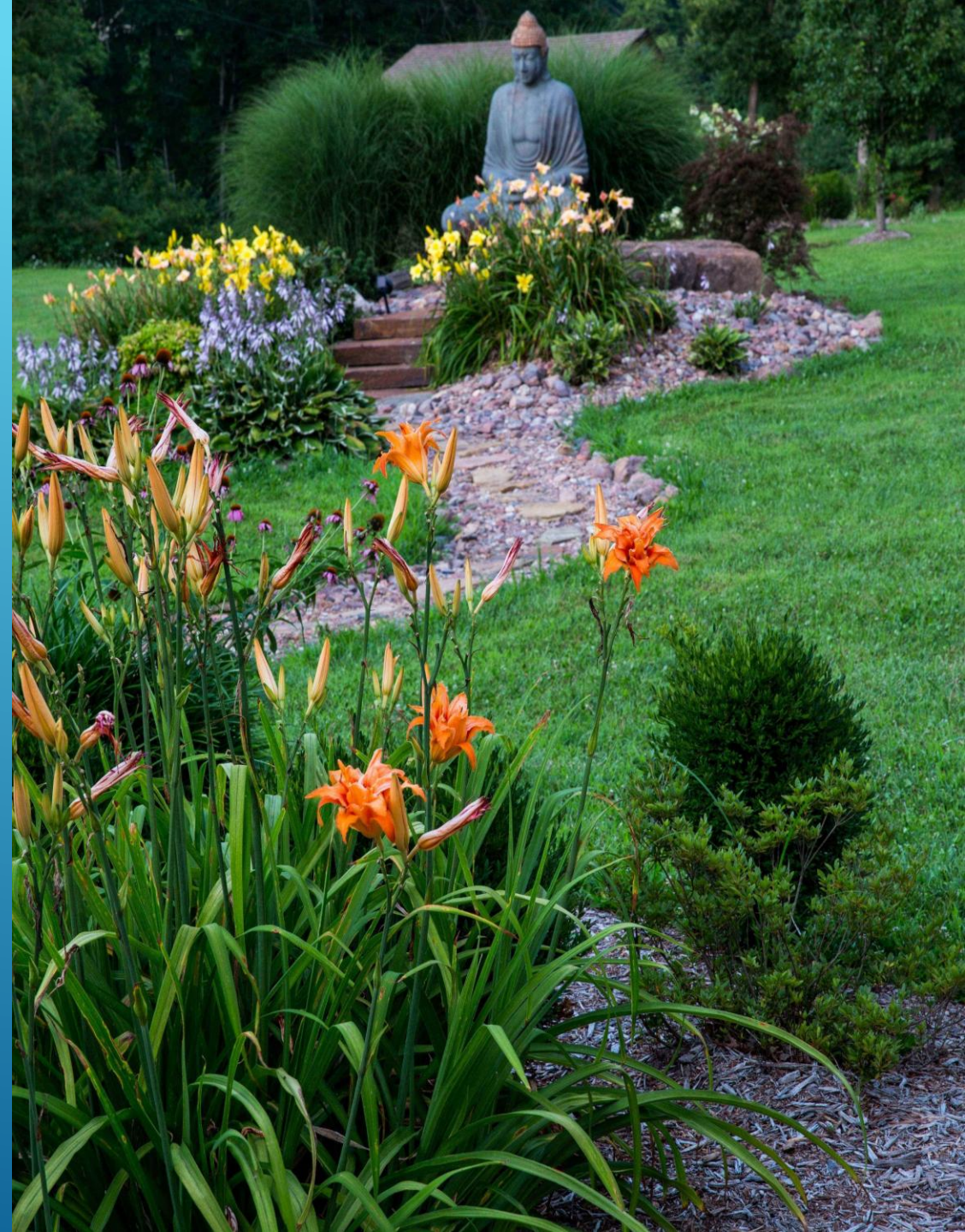
2. FROM THINKING TO INTUITION

- ▶ **“Let my intuition feel and sense the meaning.”**
- ▶ Allow the meaning to be *felt*
- ▶ You let it *settle* into awareness — no pushing, no grasping
- ▶ Like placing a seed in soft soil: you don't dig it up — you let it grow

*This is silent wisdom — yoniso manasikāra
– seeing things as they are*

3. MEDITATING- RESTING IN THE DHAMMA

- ▶ “Now, let go completely.”
- ▶ Awareness simply watches — craving, feeling, mind movements arise and pass
- ▶ The 6Rs are applied naturally
- ▶ Insight arises through the cessation of clinging
- ▶ No more doing — just awareness and natural unfolding



The Five Aggregates at a Glance

Before choosing a contemplation method, familiarize yourself with what is being investigated. The five *khandhas* are the building blocks of what we take to be a self.



Form (Rūpa)

The body and all material phenomena



Feeling (Vedanā)

Pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral tone



Perception (Saññā)

Recognition and labeling of experience



Formations (Saṅkhāra)

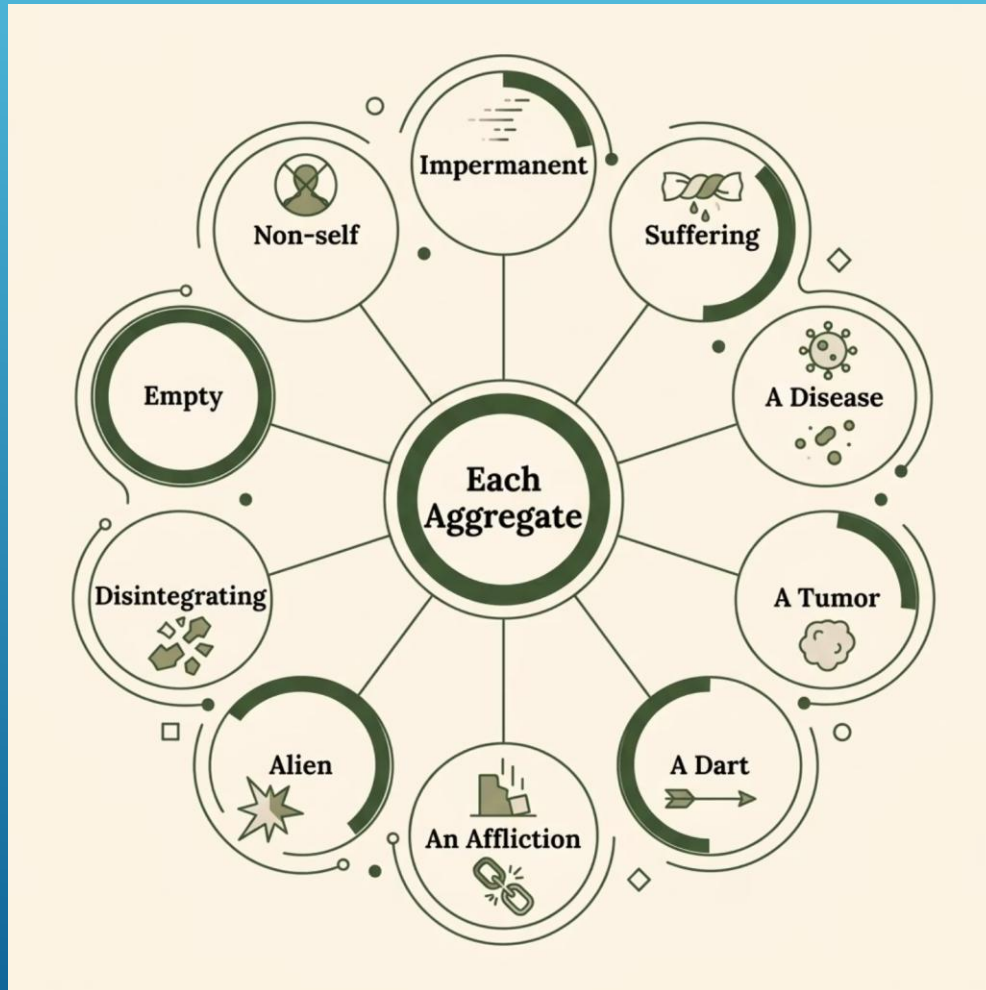
Intentions, volitions, mental factors



Consciousness (Viññāṇa)

Knowing or awareness of experience

Method 1 – The 10 Characteristics



Samyutta Nikāya 22.122: Virtue.
and related suttas, each aggregate is
seen through ten illuminating lenses.
lenses. Sit with one aggregate and pass
pass it slowly through each quality

*Carefully attend. Move slowly.
There's no hurry.

Note**

Method 2 — The Sevenfold Investigation

From SN 22.57 — Skilled in Seven Ways

The Buddha instructs us to investigate each of the five aggregates through seven lenses. This is not a quick scan — it is a complete and thorough seeing. Apply all seven to each aggregate in turn.



1. The Aggregate

"What is form (feeling, perception, formations, consciousness)?" — Know it directly as it is.



2. Its Arising

"What is the arising of this aggregate?" — Craving and conditions that bring it into being.



3. Its Ceasing

"What is the cessation of this aggregate?" — With the cessation of craving, the aggregate ceases.



4. The Way to Its Ceasing

"What is the path leading to its cessation?" — The Noble Eightfold Path.

Apply this sevenfold investigation to each of the five aggregates. Let each question be a doorway — not an intellectual exercise, but a direct looking.



Method 2 — The Sevenfold Investigation

Investigation (continued)

Gratification, Danger & Escape

The final three lenses complete the investigation — moving from what draws us in, to what harms us, to the freedom that awaits.



5. The Gratification

"What is the gratification in this aggregate?"
— The pleasure and joy that arise dependent on it.



6. The Danger

"What is the danger?" — That it is impermanent, suffering, and subject to change.



7. The Escape

"What is the escape?" — The removal of desire and lust for this aggregate; the doorway to liberation.

**Apply this sevenfold investigation to each of the five aggregates. Let each question be a doorway — not an intellectual exercise, but a direct looking.*



Method 3 – The Five Similes of Emptiness

In *SN 22.95*, the Buddha offers a remarkable set of images. Contemplate each aggregate as its corresponding simile — let the image rest in awareness until its meaning lands in the body, not just the mind.



Form

A lump of foam drifting on water —
— held together loosely, dissolving at a touch



Feeling

A water bubble on a lake's surface —
— arising and bursting in a single breath



Perception

A summer mirage in the desert —
— seemingly real, yet nothing is there to there to grasp



Formations

A plantain trunk — peel away every layer and find no heartwood, no core



Consciousness

A magician's illusion at a crossroads —
dazzling, yet empty of inherent substance

After resting with a simile, the sutta invites this inquiry: *"Carefully investigate it and find it void, hollow, and insubstantial — for what substance can there be in... can there be in..."*



“Bhikkhus, suppose that this river Ganges was carrying along a great lump of foam. A man with good sight would inspect it, ponder it, and carefully investigate it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in a lump of foam? So too, bhikkhus, whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: a bhikkhu inspects it, ponders it, and carefully investigates it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in form?”

Form is like a lump of foam



Feeling Is like a water bubble on a pond



Perception is like a mirage in the desert



Formations are like a plantain tree

Consciousness is like a magic show



Method 4 — The 20 Kinds of Identity View

From *SN 22.1* (the Nakulapitā Sutta) this method examines every way we construct a "self" around the aggregates — five aggregates × four modes = twenty varieties of *sakkāyadiṭṭhi*.



I am [aggregate]

Direct identification



[Aggregate] is mine

Claiming ownership



I am in [aggregate]

Self located within



[Aggregate] is in me

Aggregate inside a self

Apply each of the four modes to every aggregate. For each arising, pause and ask: *"Is this view true? Can I actually find the self that owns this?"*

This is a slow, careful dismantling — not an intellectual argument but a direct looking. Notice how the sense of self quietly reconstitutes itself moment to moment, and how each reconstitution is just another arising.

Method 5 – The Inability to Control

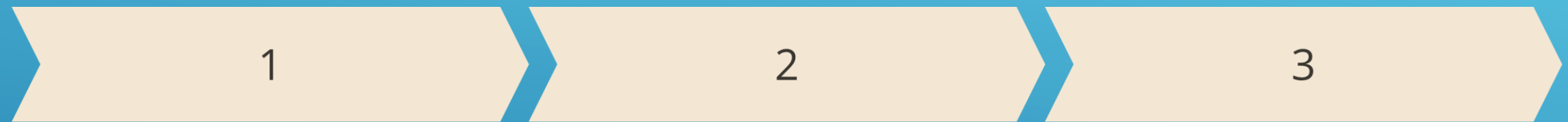
From *SN 22.59* — the *Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta*, the Buddha's first teaching on non-self. This method cuts directly to the heart of ownership and control.

“Bhikkhus, form is nonself. For if, bhikkhus, form were self, this form would not lead to affliction, and it would be possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’ But because form is nonself, form leads to affliction, and it is not possible to have it of form: ‘Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.’ *SN 22.59*

Sit quietly and notice: Can you command your body not to ache? Can you instruct a feeling to stay pleasant? Can you order order consciousness to stay still? The inability to control is not a problem — it is the direct evidence of non-self. Rest here. here.

Method 6 – The Natural Sequence

Also from *SN 22.59*, this three-question sequence is perhaps the most elegant and direct of all the methods. Move through all five through all five aggregates using the same logical chain.



Step 1 – Impermanence

"Is this aggregate permanent or impermanent?"

→ **Impermanent**

Step 2 – Suffering

"Is what is impermanent suffering or happiness?"

→ **Suffering**

Step 3 – Non-Self

"Is it fit to regard what is suffering as: 'This is mine, I am this, this is my self'?"

→ **No**

Apply this sequence to each of the five aggregates in three times: **past, present, and future**. Apply it to what is **internal or external, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near** — seeing the same truth everywhere.



BONUS – FAVORITE CONTEMPLATION





SAMĪYUTTA NIKĀYA 22.9

Impermanent in the Three Times

Connected Discourses on the Aggregates — At Savatthi

"Form is impermanent, both of the past and the future, not to speak of the present. Seeing thus, the instructed noble disciple is indifferent towards form of the past; he does not seek delight in form of the future; and he is practising for revulsion towards form of the present, for its fading away and cessation."

The Buddha's teaching extends this insight across all five aggregates — **form, feeling, feeling, perception, volitional formations, and consciousness** — inviting the practitioner toward a thorough release from clinging across all three times: past, present, past, present, and future.