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## Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta 1

The First Jīvaka’s Mango Grove Discourse | S 35.160 [Ee S 35.159]<sup>1</sup>  
 or **Jīvak’amba,vana Samādhi Sutta** The Jīvaka Mango Grove Discourse on Samadhi  
 Theme: How to meditate effectively  
 Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2009; 2014

### 1 The two Suttas

**1.1** There are two discourses called **Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta**. The first—the Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta 1—also called the Jīvak’amba,vana Samādhi Sutta because it deals with samadhi (*samādhi*), that is, mental concentration that brings about an inner stillness and clarity. But here, *samādhi* clearly includes its basic meaning of meditation, that is, the practice and its result.

**1.2** In both **the Jīvak’amba,vana Suttas**, the Buddha gives the same message: Dharma training is about seeing true reality, and such an insight is the basis for spiritual awakening. The only difference between the two Suttas is that in the Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta 1 (here), the method is “samadhi” (*samādhi*), that is, meditation and mental stillness (*samādhi*). That is why it has the alternative name of Jīvak’amba,vana Samādhi Sutta. The Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta 2 (S 35.161) teaches “solitude” (*paṭisallāna*) as the method for insight into true reality.<sup>2</sup>

### 2 The two methods and their goals

**2.1** In the Jīvak’amba,vana Sutta 2, the Buddha admonishes us to practise spiritual solitude (*paṭisallāna*). For this reason, it is also called the Jīvak’amba,vana Paṭisallāna Sutta. However, solitude here has a broad sense, the height or goal of which is samadhi, mental stillness and clarity, with or without dhyana. If such a solitude brings about dhyana, then it is possible for us to attain non-return or arhathood.

**2.2** However, if it brings only some level of calm, but without full-fledged dhyana, then we would only be able to attain streamwinning or once-return. This is actually the best spiritual approach for lay people who for various reasons are unable to meditate or renounce the world. As streamwinners, we have, at the most, only seven more wholesome lives to go before we fully awaken to attain nirvana.

“Wholesome” lives here means that we would naturally be inclined to keep to the 5 precepts, and so would not be reborn in any subhuman planes (or devolve into such states even in this life itself). Moreover, we are likely to be reborn in an environment conducive to proper Dharma practice, or in the face of challenges, we would be able to keep on the right path. In short, this would be like the lives of our Bodhisattva as he nears his last life as the Buddha.

### 3 The perception of impermanence

**3.1** Both the Suttas exhort us to practise the same method, that is, the perception of impermanence (*anicca,saññā*), very similar to that of such texts as **the (Cakkhu) Anicca Sutta** (S 25.1).<sup>3</sup> The Jīvak’amba,vana Suttas declare that both methods—samadhi as meditation, solitude and mindfulness practice—lead to our discerning (*okkhāyati*) true reality (*yathā,bhūta*) [§3].

<sup>1</sup> Sutta numbering. Not only does wrongly Ee titles S 35.136 as Agayha, but also treats it as part of the next text (beginning at S 4:128,8). Be titles S 35.136 as Paṭhama Rūp’ārāma Sutta, and S 35.137 as Dutiya Rūp’ārāma Sutta; Ce titles them as Sagayha Sutta and Gayha Sutta respectively (where the latter should be amended to Agayha, “impossible to grasp,” CPD). The Se *uddāna* gives *paggayha,aggayha* (perhaps to be amended to *paggayha,agayha*). Hence, from S 35.137 onwards the SD numbering exceeds the Ee numbering here by one.

<sup>2</sup> S 35.161 @ SD 44.15.

<sup>3</sup> S 25.1, SD 16.7. This is the first of the 10 suttas of the Okkanti Saṃyutta, all of which teach the same practice, using different methods, but for the attaining of streamwinning.

**3.2** In fact, these two Suttas are apparently telling us how the two methods—samadhi and solitude—actually allow us to “discern” (*okkhāyati*) true reality. The verb *okkhāyati*<sup>4</sup> is functionally passive, with the senses, “is seen or known, is visible, appears.” More freely, it means “to understand, to consider to be.” The vision of true reality is not really something we look for, but we can only rightly prepare ourselves for a clear vision of impermanence and experiencing true reality.

**3.3** In both the Suttas’ practice sections [§§4-9], the perception of impermanence is directed towards specific objects, which in themselves are the subject of separate suttas found in **the Okkanti Saṃyutta** (S 25), thus,

the 6 sense faculties or internal sense-bases	<i>ajjhatt’āyatana</i>	<b>(Anicca) Cakkhu Sutta</b>	S 25.1 <sup>5</sup>
the 6 sense-objects or external sense-bases	<i>bāhirāyatana</i>	<b>(Anicca) Rūpa Sutta</b>	S 25.2
the 6 sense-consciousnesses	<i>viññāṇa</i>	<b>(Anicca) Viññāṇa Sutta</b>	S 25.3
the 6 sense-contacts	<i>phassa</i>	<b>(Anicca) Phassa Sutta</b>	S 25.4
the 3 kinds of feelings related to each of the sense-contacts	<i>vedanā</i>	<b>(Anicca) Vedanā Sutta</b>	S 25.5

These five Suttas, in fact, form the first five of the ten suttas comprising the Okkanti Saṃyutta (S 25). The remaining five Suttas respectively use perception (*saññā*), intention (*cetanā*), craving (*taṇhā*), the elements (*dhātu*), and the aggregates (*khandha*) as their objects.<sup>6</sup>

All of these Suttas point to the same purpose and benefit, namely, the attainment of streamwinning in this life itself, certainly at the last breath.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it is clear that the teachings of the Jīvaka’amba, vana Suttas 1 and 2 are also directed towards attaining streamwinning through the perception of impermanence.

**3.4** While the suttas of the Okkanti Saṃyutta explicitly state that practising the perception of impermanence leads to the attainment of streamwinning, the two Jīvaka’amba, vana Suttas only say that the practice brings us to “discern true reality” (*yathā, bhūtaṃ okkhāyati*) [3.2], clearly a reference to at least the breaking of the 3 fetters, that is, self-identity view, spiritual doubt, and attachment to rituals and vows.<sup>8</sup>

These are the first three of the 10 fetters (*dasa saṃyojana*)<sup>9</sup> that hold us back in samsara, the cycle of life and death. When these fetters are broken, we start our true journey to awakening by descending (*okkanti*) into the boat of streamwinning on the river of wisdom downstream towards the ocean of liberation called nirvana.<sup>10</sup>

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## The First Jīvaka’s Mango Grove Discourse

S 35.160

- 1 At one time, the Blessed One was staying in Jīvaka’s mango grove<sup>11</sup> outside Rāja, gaha.
- 2 There the Blessed One addressed the monks, “Bhikshus!”  
“Bhante!” the monks replied in assent to the Blessed One.

<sup>4</sup> From *ava*, “downwards (surveying from a vantage point)” + √KHĀ = Skt √KHYĀ, to see; cf Dhātp 391; Dhātman 625,

<sup>5</sup> S 25.1/3:225 @ SD 16.7.

<sup>6</sup> They are **(Anicca) Saññā S** (S 25.6), **(Anicca) Cetanā S** (S 25.7), **(Anicca) Taṇhā S** (S 25.8), **(Anicca) Dhātu S** (S 25.9), and **(Anicca) Khandha S** (S 25.10). See SD 16.7 (11.3).

<sup>7</sup> See eg **(Anicca) Cakkhu S** (S 25.1,4.3+5.3/3:225), SD 16.7.

<sup>8</sup> **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

<sup>9</sup> See **Kiṭṭa, giri S** (M 70) @ SD 11.1 (5.1); **(Sekha) Uddesa S** (A 4.85), SD 3.3(2).

<sup>10</sup> See **Emotional independence**, SD 40a.8.

<sup>11</sup> The archaeological remains of this monastery were unearthed outside Rajgir btw Eastern Gate, Old Fort and Grdhrakuta Hill, in the mid-20th century. See Ghosh 1954-55:16 f & Dutt 1962:61-63.

**3 Cultivate samadhi [mental stillness], bhikshus! For true reality, [144] bhikshus, is visible to the one with samadhi.<sup>12</sup>**

### Perception of impermanence<sup>13</sup>

3.2 And what true reality does he discern?

- 4** True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘**The eye** is impermanent.’<sup>14</sup>  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Form is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Eye-consciousness is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Eye-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this eye-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,

that, too, he discerns as being impermanent,           just as it truly is.<sup>15</sup>

- 5** True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘**The ear** is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Sound is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Ear-consciousness is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Ear-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this ear-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,

that, too, he discerns as being impermanent,           just as it truly is.

- 6** True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘**The nose** is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Smell is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Nose-consciousness is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Nose-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this nose-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,

that, too, he discerns as being impermanent,           just as it truly is.

- 7** True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘**The tongue** is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Taste is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Tongue-consciousness is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Tongue-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this tongue-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,

that, too, he discerns as being impermanent,           just as it truly is.

- 8** True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘**The body** is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Touch is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Body-consciousness is impermanent.’  
       True reality is visible to him, thus,                   ‘Body-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this body-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,

that, too, he discerns as being impermanent,           just as it truly is.

<sup>12</sup> *Samādhim bhikkhave bhāvētha, samāhitassa bhikkhave bhikkhuno yathā, bhūtaṃ okkhāyati.*

<sup>13</sup> This whole perception is as in **Jīvak’amba, vana S 2** (S 35.161, 3.2-9), SD 44.15.

<sup>14</sup> *Cakkhum aniccanti yathā, bhūtaṃ okkhāyati.* Notice that this vision is almost a passive one: we prepare ourselves rightly and the clear vision of impermanence arises. See Intro (3).

<sup>15</sup> *Tam pi aniccan’ ti yathā, bhūtaṃ okkhāyati.*

- 9 True reality is visible to him, thus, ‘**The mind** is impermanent.’  
True reality is visible to him, thus, ‘Thought is impermanent.’  
True reality is visible to him, thus, ‘Mind-consciousness is impermanent.’  
True reality is visible to him, thus, ‘Mind-contact is impermanent.’

And whatever feeling that arises dependent on this mind-contact, whether pleasant, or painful, or neither pleasant nor painful,  
that, too, he discerns as being impermanent, just as it truly is.

- 10 Cultivate samadhi, bhikshus! For one in samadhi, bhikshus, discerns true reality.

— evaṃ —

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