

The Three Marks of Existence

1. *Anicca*: all phenomena are constantly changing
2. *Dukkha*: the unsatisfactoriness of experience
3. *Anatta*: there is no enduring or separate self

According to the Buddha, the Three Marks of Existence represent the “absolute truth” and the true nature of reality. They are among the main tenets of the Buddha’s teachings, which are called the *Dharma*. “I teach just one thing,” said the Buddha. “There is *dukkha* and there is an end of *dukkha*.” How are *anicca* and *dukkha* related?

Conventional understanding of the world can be expressed in two words. And these are the words “to have.” We have possessions. We have relationships. We have professions. We have a mind. We have a body. Our world is constructed within this framework of having. ... But there’s a problem in this. And the problem inherent in this worldview of having is that because of the great truth of impermanence and change, there is nothing that we have that we won’t lose. ... This truth of change is happening on every level that we look. Whatever we have eventually will be lost. So always in the world of having there is always an underlying, and sometimes very subtle, sense of unease or uncertainty or insecurity or incompleteness.

Joseph Goldstein, *The Life of the Buddha*, Dharma Seed CD #CD3C76H

According to the *Dharma* law of *anicca*, nothing lasts. Everything falls apart, not only material possessions, but also bodies, relationships, experiences, entire civilizations and cultures. *Dukkha* is not getting what one wants and wanting more than one gets. Not understanding the law of *anicca* leads to *dukkha*, the omnipresent uncertainty and stress and anxiety fluctuating between irritation and despair and arising from the sense that things are not right because I don’t have enough, because I can’t hold onto what I do have, because what I have doesn’t bring lasting satisfaction and that therefore I must persist acquiring and doing rather than being.

Not understanding the *Dharma* law of *anatta* leads to *dukkha*.