
GOING DEEPER IN MEDITATION

Mindfulness



“all conditioned things are of a nature to decay. With mindfulness strive on!”

THE BUDDHA – DN 16

Introduction

Mindfulness is a western word with a variety of usages.

There is no single Pali term that it translates.

I will be focusing on three Pali terms that get translated as mindfulness, presenting what they mean for me.

Sati

This is the term in the 5 spiritual faculties

Glossed as “recollectedness” – not in the sense of recollection of times past, but in the sense of recollecting where we are – our current experience – and what we are doing – our sense of direction. Recollection as a coming back in to the present.

Corresponds to “presence”

- in the sense of being “here” rather than “away” – off with the fairies
- and in the sense of being “now” rather than preoccupied with memories of the past or expectations for the future

Appamada

Glossed as “heedfulness” – our ethical sensitivity.

As in the Buddha’s last words: “*appamadena sampadetha*” – with mindfulness strive on! (DN 16)

Sensitivity to

- The feeling tone of sensations (vedana)
- Feelings about experience (how do we feel about that?)
 - Likes/dislikes
 - Wanting / not wanting
- Judgements about experience
 - Good/bad
 - Attitudes
 - Views
- Our directionality of mind: particularly the basic ethical tone
 - Reactive/Creative

Going Deeper: Mindfulness

- Wholesome/Unwholesome

“ whatever a bhikkhu frequently thinks and ponders upon, that will become the inclination of his mind ... If he frequently thinks and ponders upon thoughts of ill-will, he has abandoned the thought of metta to cultivate the thought of ill will, and then his mind inclines to thoughts of ill will” MN 19

There is always a directionality of mind in the sense of a gradient – even if that is completely level as in the complete equanimity of the directionless (apranihita) samadhi.

This directionality of mind is cetanaa, an omnipresent mental event.

The hindrances are all cetanaa, as are all the positive emotions – metta and the other Brahma viharas, Saddha (faith), and the jhana factors of initial and sustained attention (vitakka and vicaara)

Just as amidst the wide variety of sensations there is a dimension of vedana (pleasant to unpleasant), so in the wide variety of intentions there is an ethical dimension (wholesome to unwholesome)

It is the basic dimension of being “for” the wellbeing, prosperity, flourishing, freedom from suffering of ourselves and others or “against”.

These simple binaries: “pleasant”/“unpleasant” “here”/“away” “for”/“against” are not intended to reduce the richly varied colour of our experience to a simplified black and white – they just draw out and note one dimension of that experience.

Appamada is the quality of ethical sensitivity: sensitivity to the wholesome or unwholesome quality of the cetanaa: is the mind inclining in a direction that will lead to more suffering or less?

Sampajanna

Glossed as “clear comprehension” of

- Purpose
- Suitability
- Field
- Non-delusion

Bhante particularly draws out “purpose” – so

- “suitability” would be “the suitability of a certain means to the end in view”¹
- “field” (gocara – literally pasture: where the cow (go) fares (cara as ain dharmacarin)) - “The gocara of a monk, for instance, will be skilful mental states; they represent the field in which he should move.”²

Whilst “non-delusion” emphasises the quality of “clear comprehension”

For me, the clarity of “clear comprehension” is not a conceptual clarity, but a clarity of perception, as when adjusting the lens on a camera, the whole image comes in to focus at once.

“Bhikkhus, suppose there were a pool of water that was cloudy, turbid, and muddy. Then a man with good sight standing on the bank could not see shells, gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish swimming about and resting. For what reason? Because the water is cloudy. So too, it is impossible for a bhikkhu with a cloudy mind to know his own good, the good of others, or the good of both, or to realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. For what reason? Because his mind is cloudy”

“Bhikkhus, suppose there were a pool of water that was clear, serene, and limpid. Then a man with good sight standing on the bank could see shells, gravel and pebbles, and shoals of fish swimming about and resting. For what reason? Because the water is limpid. So too, it is possible for a bhikkhu with a limpid mind to know his own good, the good of others, and the good of both, and to realize a superhuman distinction in knowledge and vision worthy of the noble ones. For what reason? Because his mind is limpid” AN 1.45-46

¹ Study Leader’s Eightfold Path Questions

² Study Leader’s Eightfold Path Questions

Going Deeper: Mindfulness

Exploration

- Bring awareness to the body as lived from the inside: the field of sensation

Sati

- Noticing whatever arises. Being Present with it.
- Noticing the quality of Presence surrounding all feelings and sensations: being alongside experience.
- Looking for an equal awareness of felt sensations and of the quality of Presence.

Appamada

- Sensitive to the felt sensation of experience: its texture.
- Sensitive to how we feel about that experience: our likes and dislikes.
- Sensitive to a sense of direction:
 - Contracting, defending, raising barriers
 - Or Expanding, Opening, Seeking understanding
- Noticing the quality of sensitivity: all felt sensations arising within the sensitivity of awareness.

Sampajanna

- All felt sensations perceived directly, unmediated.
- Recognizing that it is clear that the sensations are just as they are sensed to be. The perceptions are just as they are perceived to be.
- All felt sensations are known, are comprehended directly.
 - Knowing that this experience is just this.
 - Clearly comprehending this
- Knowing that there is awareness around experience.
 - There is a being-present-with experience.
 - There is a sensitivity to experience.
- Recognizing this quality of Clear Comprehension
 - How all felt sensations arise within
 - This space of clarity
 - This quality of knowing.