

Ethics, vol. 12 pp. 24-26, Edinburgh 1922; Van Loon, L.H.: "Some Buddhist Reflections on Suicide", in *Religion in Southern Africa*, Pietermaritzburg 1983, vol. 4 pp. 3-12; Wiltshire, M.G.: "The 'Suicide' Problem in the Pāli Canon", in *JIAS* 1983, vol. 6 no. 2 pp. 124-140. See also DEATH.

Anālayo

References

- 1 Here it needs to be pointed out that the Buddha had not instructed them directly to undertake this meditation. A close reading of the passage show that he had only spoken in praise of such meditation in general, before retiring into solitary retreat. Thus possibly the monks had engaged on their own in this type of meditation, without having received proper instructions and without being supervised, which then led to the fatal results.
- 2 *D. II, 106: sato sampajāno āyu-saṅkhāraṃ ossaji*
- 3 J.S. Speyer: *The Jātakamālā*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1971, pp 2-8.
- 4 Bunn Kat et al.: *The Thereefold Lotus Sutra*, Tokyo: Kosei, 1993, p. 304.

SUKHA is a Pāli term whose meaning ranges from 'pleasant' feeling to a 'happy' state of mind. As a qualification of feeling, *sukha* occurs frequently in the Pāli discourses, forming part of a distinction of feelings into three mutually exclusive types (*M. I, 500*): pleasant (*sukha*), painful (*dukkha*) and 'neutral' (*adukkhamasukha*).

Pleasant feelings can be of a 'worldly' (*sāmisā*) or an 'unworldly' (*nirāmisā*) nature. While 'worldly' manifestations of pleasant feelings arise in relation to sensual pleasure, 'unworldly' pleasant feelings arise during absorption (*jhāna*), and 'more unworldly than unworldly' pleasant feelings (*nirāmisānirāmisatara*) stand for the pleasure experienced by *arahants* when

reviewing their mental freedom from defilements (*S. IV, 235*).

This distinction of pleasant feelings into worldly and unworldly types reflects their potential relation to the underlying tendency to lust (*rāgānusaya*). This underlying tendency will be activated and strengthened by engaging in sensual types of pleasure (*M. III, 285*), whereas unworldly types of pleasant feelings do not activate this underlying tendency. The propensity of pleasant feelings to result in the arising of lust and craving may well be the reason why pleasant feeling, distinguished into worldly and unworldly types, features in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* as one of the objects recommended for the development of mindfulness (*M. I, 59*).

The distinction into worldly and unworldly manifestations is however not the only way of carrying out an analysis of pleasant feelings. Pleasant feelings can also be distinguished into bodily (*kāyika*) and mental (*cetasika*) types. A discourse in the *Samyutta Nikāya* (*S. V, 209*) associates feelings of *sukha* arisen through bodily contact with the 'faculty of pleasure' (*sukhindriya*), and feelings of *sukha* arisen through mental contact with the 'faculty of joy' (*somonassindriya*). Though later developments of Buddhist philosophy show a growing tendency to use *sukha* predominantly for bodily feelings and to reserve *somanassa* for its mental counterparts, in its use in the discourses the term *sukha* comprises both bodily and mental feelings.¹ The same usage can also be found in the *Abhidhamma*, the term *sukha* being used in the *Dhammasaṅgī* and the *Vibhaṅga* to refer to mental feelings (*Dhs. 17* and *Vibh. 85*).

The basic distinction between worldly and unworldly pleasant feelings recurs also in relation to the complementary usage of the term *sukha* as 'happiness'. A recurring emphasis on this distinction can be seen in a set of analytical schemes applied to *sukha*, most of which revolve around the basic difference between worldly (*sāmisā*) and unworldly (*nirāmisā*) types of happiness, highlighting the same by contrasting the happiness of lay life (*gihisukha*) to the happiness of the life of one gone forth (*pabbajitasukha*), sensual happiness (*kāmasukha*) to non-sensual happiness (*nekkhammasukha*), happiness related to attachment (*upadhisukha*) to happiness free from attachment (*nirupadhisukha*),

happiness related to the influxes (*sāsavasukha*) to happiness not related to the influxes (*anāsavasukha*), and noble (*ariya*) happiness to ignoble (*anariya*) happiness (A. I, 80).

Other distinctions of happiness, occurring as part of the same discourse (A. I, 81), are related to the development of deeper levels of concentration, contrasting the happiness that arises together with bliss (*sapphīka*) to that without bliss (*nippīka*), happiness associated with pleasure (*sātasukha*) to happiness associated with equanimity (*upekkhāsukha*), happiness derived from concentration (*samādhisukha*) to happiness not derived from concentration (*asamādhisukha*), and happiness having a form as its object (*rūpārammana sukha*) to happiness with a formless object (*arūpārammana sukha*).

These analytical schemes highlight two aspects in relation to *sukha*. In addition to the basic discrimination between wholesome and unwholesome types of happiness, they draw attention to the successive refinement of happiness during deeper stages of concentration. Both aspects are of central importance in relation to *sukha* and build on each other, the first indicating what should be developed and avoided, while the second depicts a progressive refinement of what is to be developed. These two complementary perspectives on *sukha*, distinguishing between unwholesome and wholesome types and treating the development of its wholesome manifestations, run like a red thread through the entire compass of the Buddha's teaching, from his instructions on basic morality through the path of mental purification all the way up to full awakening.

If to develop and do what is wholesome were not possible and would not lead to *sukha*, the Buddha proclaimed, he would not ask his disciples to develop it. But since it is possible and leads to *sukha*, he kept on instructing his disciples to develop and do what is wholesome (A. I, 58). Moral restraint, such as abstaining from killing, theft etc., will lead to future happiness, whereas to indulge in immoral activities will inevitably result in future suffering. Hence to maintain moral conduct and to avoid evil is a fundamental condition for achieving *sukha* (*Dhp.* 333).

Happiness, as the Buddha emphatically asserted, is not achieved by mere wishing. Who wants

happiness has to undertake the path that leads to happiness (A. III, 48: *sukhasaṃvattanikā paṭipadā*). The path to happiness, however, requires a long-term perspective, a perspective based on the awareness that what yields happiness right away may be conducive to future happiness or to future suffering, depending on its ethical quality.

Who harms others, and thereby destroys their happiness, will himself subsequently not be able to achieve happiness (*Dhp.* 131). As *Ānanda* once explained to king *Pasenadi*, conduct that does not harm oneself or others is conduct that results in happiness (*M.* II, 115: *sukhavipāka*). The wise person, who maintains moral conduct, will experience the happiness of blamelessness in the present life and happiness of a fortunate rebirth as a retribution for his wholesome conduct (*M.* III, 171 and *It.* 67). One who thus acts in accordance with the *Dhamma*, a *dhammacārī*, will fare happily in this world and the next (*Dhp.* 169).

In several discourses, the Buddha showed a very practical sense of happiness. Considering happiness from the perspective of a man in the world, the Buddha acknowledged that a householder can expect four types of happiness from rightfully undertaking his livelihood (A. II, 69): the happiness of acquiring wealth by his own effort (*atthisukha*), the happiness of using this wealth to give pleasure to himself and to do meritorious deeds (*bhogasukha*), the happiness of being free from debt (*anaṇasukha*), and the happiness of being free from blame (*anavajjasukha*).

To use rightly gained wealth in a proper way brings happiness to oneself and others (A. II, 67). To support those worthy of support, in particular one's mother and father, as well as recluses and brahmins, is a source of happiness (*Dhp.* 332). By giving food to monks and recluses one gives happiness, and therefore will gain happiness in return (A. III, 42). Hence merit, the Buddha explained, is but another name for happiness.²

The main wellspring of happiness lies however in the training of the mind, which is the real source of happiness. No other thing is so conducive to happiness, the Buddha proclaimed, as a mind that is well trained and developed (A. I, 6). As the famous twin verses standing at the opening of the *Dhammapada* declare, mind is the forerunner of all things, hence who acts or

speaks with a pure mind will be followed by happiness just like a shadow (*Dhp.* 2).

To train the mind requires however a re-evaluation of happiness. The Buddha readily acknowledged that to indulge in sensuality does produce feelings of pleasure, which constitutes the aspect of gratification of sensual pleasures (*M.* I, 85: *kāṇānaṃ assādo*). Yet against this gratification stand their multiple disadvantages. Though pleasant feelings may cause happiness as long as they last, their changing nature inevitably spells dissatisfaction.³ Sensual happiness is not only ephemeral, but also has undesirable after-effects that outweigh the pleasure obtained. In the *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta* the Buddha vividly depicted the multifarious problems resulting from the pursuit of sensual pleasures, showing that criminality and warfare can, ultimately, be traced back to desire for sensual gratification (*M.* I, 87).

Another problem with the pursuit of sensual types of *sukha* is that gratification fuels ever stronger desires, a predicament the Buddha compared to a leper cauterising his wounds over a fire (*M.* I, 507). Though by cauterising his wounds the leper will experience momentary pleasure, the act of cauterisation causes the wounds to become more infected and thus inevitably leads to a deterioration of the leper's condition. In a similar way, the more beings indulge in sensual pleasure, the more they will burn with sensual desire, a vicious circle turning into a bottomless vortex of ever greater desires clamouring for satisfaction.

Thus the happiness gained through sensual pleasures, if examined from a long-term perspective, turns out to be spurious. Beings indulging in sensuality suffer from a perceptual distortion (*saññāvipallāsa*), which causes them to attribute *sukha* to what on proper examination turns out to be otherwise (*A.* II, 52). Such proper examination led the Buddha to call sensual pleasures a 'filthy' happiness (*mīḥasukha*), a 'lowly' happiness (*puṭhujjanasukha*) and an 'ignoble' happiness (*anariyasukha*), which should not be pursued (*M.* I, 454). This thorough re-assessment of the nature of *sukha* finds a succinct expression in the dictum that 'what others call happiness, the noble ones call unsatisfactory'.⁴

A motivation for a reorientation against the powerful pull of sensual desires can be found in the

reflection that it is reasonable to give up a smaller happiness, if in this way a greater and superior happiness can be gained (*Dhp.* 290). Consequently the Buddha invited his disciples to find out what really constitutes true happiness and, based on this understanding, to pursue it.⁵ He was well aware of the fact that all beings are desirous of happiness;⁶ hence he skilfully redirected this natural tendency in such a way as to lead to real happiness. The Buddha's injunction to find out what really constitutes happiness refers in particular to the happiness experienced with deeper states of concentration, a form of happiness far superior to sensual pleasures. Such happiness he explained to be a 'divine' happiness (*dibba sukha*), with which all interest in the vulgar happiness of sensuality ceases (*M.* I, 504). Such divine happiness is moreover the happiness of renunciation (*nekkhammasukha*) and of seclusion (*pavivekasukha*), it is a peaceful type of happiness (*upasamasukha*) and therewith a type of happiness that leads to awakening (*sambodhasukha*), so that it should indeed be pursued and developed (*M.* I, 454).

The injunction to develop and pursue such happiness leads from the distinction between *sukha* to be avoided and *sukha* to be developed to the other major perspective on *sukha* found in the early discourses: its gradual refinement through the practice of the path. The function and importance of *sukha* as a means for progress on the path appears in fact to be a direct outcome of the Buddha's own experience when still a *bodhisatta* in search of liberation.

Before his awakening, the Buddha himself had followed the ancient Indian belief that to gain liberation, all pleasure has to be shunned (*M.* II, 93). Once his ascetic practices had proved fruitless, the Buddha remembered the happiness of a deep state of concentration experienced during his youth. Reflecting on this experience, he asked himself: 'why am I afraid of a happiness that is aloof from sensuality and unwholesomeness?', and came to the conclusion: 'I am not afraid of such a type of happiness!'⁷ The realisation that *sukha* need not be avoided, since the type of *sukha* experienced during deeper states of concentration is a wholesome and recommendable type of happiness marked a decisive turning point in his quest for liberation.

The Buddha's newly found attitude to *sukha* stood in stark contrast to his ascetic contemporaries, a contrast highlighted in the *Cūḷadukkhakkhandha Sutta*. This discourse reports the Buddha in discussion with other ascetics, who believed that future *sukha* requires undergoing self-inflicted suffering at present. Their discussion ended with the Buddha making the humorous point that, in contrast to the pain experienced through self-mortification, he was able to experience *sukha* continuously for up to seven days. Hence his experience of happiness was superior even to the happiness experienced by the king of the country (*M. I*, 94).

In a similar vein, the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns extol their experience of happiness achieved through successful practice of the path.⁸ The early Buddhist monks delighted in their way of life, as testified by a visiting king, who described them as 'smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful and plainly delighting, living at ease and unruffled'.⁹

As the Buddha on another occasion indicated, one should not give up the happiness that accords with the *Dhamma*, if one wishes one's efforts to bear fruit.¹⁰ The reason for the Buddha to make such a statement is not merely a higher form of hedonism, but the very reason that the development of wholesome happiness constitutes a crucially important factor for progress on the path. That is, spiritual happiness has a clearly delineated function in the early Buddhist path scheme.

From this perspective it becomes increasingly clear why the arising of a Buddha and his teaching of the *Dhamma* are quite literally a source of happiness (*Dhp.* 194), and why the motivation behind the teaching activity of a Buddha and his disciples is the happiness of men and gods (*S. I*, 105). Simply because teaching the *Dhamma* they teach the path to true happiness.

In several discourses the Buddha indicated that the development of wisdom and the achievement of realisation depend on developing *sukha*. These discourses depict a conditional sequence that begins with delight (*pāmojja*) and leads via bliss (*pīti*) and tranquillity to the arising of happiness (*sukha*). Based on the presence of happiness, concentration naturally arises, which in turn forms the basis for wisdom and realisation. The Buddha compared the dynamics of this causal sequence to the natural course of rain falling

on a hilltop, gradually filling the rivulets and rivers, and finally flowing down to the sea (*S. II*, 32). Once spiritual happiness is present, he indicated, there is no need to wish for the mind to become concentrated and wisdom to arise, since this will naturally happen, as a matter of course (*A. V*, 3).

The *Kandaraka Sutta* reveals that during the gradual path of training a progressive refinement of spiritual happiness takes place (*M. I*, 346). The first stage of this ascending series is the happiness due to blamelessness (*anavajjasukham*), a happiness that results from maintaining moral conduct. Such happiness due to blamelessness will grow and become stronger when a frugal life style and contentment become additional contributing facts. Contentment, according to a *Dhammapada* verse, is in itself a source of happiness (*Dhp.* 331).

The next stage of happiness envisaged in the *Kandaraka Sutta* comes from leaving sensual distractions behind through the practice of sense-restraint. This type of happiness is a happiness that is 'unimpaired' (*abyāsekhasukha*). 'Unimpaired' since the bondage of sensuality has temporarily been left behind. According to another discourse (*It.* 24), to know measure with food and practise sense-restraint leads to both happiness of the body (*kāyasukha*) and happiness of the mind (*cetasukha*).

The *Kandaraka Sutta* continues from the unimpaired happiness through freedom from sensual distraction to the different types of happiness experienced with deeper levels of concentration, the 'bliss and happiness of seclusion' (*vivekajaṃ pīisukhaṃ*), the 'bliss and happiness of concentration' (*samādhijaṃ pīisukhaṃ*) and the 'happy dwelling in equanimity and mindfulness' (*upekkhako satimā sukhavihārī*) of the first, second and third *jhāna* respectively. These types of happiness corroborate that diligent practice of meditation is indeed a source of pure happiness (*Dhp.* 27).

This holds good not only for the development of tranquillity, but also for the practice of insight meditation. Contemplating with right wisdom the impermanent nature of phenomena is a source of joy (*M. III*, 217), and to see the rise and fall of the five aggregates can lead to delight and bliss (*Dhp.* 374). The rapture of rightly contemplating the *Dhamma*

transcends worldly types of rapture (*Dhp.* 373), and even fivefold music cannot compare with it (*Thag.* 398 and 1071).

In fact, though the Buddha's teaching of the four noble truths places much emphasis on *dukkha*, the third and the fourth noble truth are actually concerned with the positive values of freedom from *dukkha* and the practical path leading to that freedom. As the Buddha himself expressly proclaimed, insight into the four noble truths is not a matter of sadness and despair, since such insight will be accompanied by happiness and joy (*S.* V, 441).

The further the path has been developed, the deeper the happiness becomes. Hence it comes as no surprise that the culmination point of the successive stages of happiness described in the *Kandaraka Sutta* is the happiness of complete freedom through liberation.¹¹ The eradication of defilements and of ignorance are a well-spring of happiness indeed (*D.* I, 196).

A complementary presentation of a progressive series of types of happiness can be found in the *Bahuvedanīya Sutta*, proceeding not only through the four *jhānas* but also through the four immaterial attainments. Notably the Buddha considered the four immaterial attainments to be also types of happiness, even though with such sublime levels of concentration, 'feelings' of happiness are left behind.

The culmination point of this progressive series in the *Bahuvedanīya Sutta* is the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling (*M.* I, 400). This the Buddha reckoned to be a happiness superior to the other types of happiness he had mentioned earlier. Here some might object that it seems contradictory to speak of happiness when all feelings have ceased. In reply to such objections, the Buddha explained that his conception of *sukha* was not limited to the experience of feeling.

A similar perspective on *sukha* recurs in those discourses which declare *Nibbāna* to be the highest form of happiness (*M.* I, 508 and *Dhp.* 203). When on one occasion *Sāriputta* was asked how *Nibbāna* could be considered as *sukha*, since with *Nibbāna* all feelings cease, he readily replied that precisely the cessation of feeling is what causes *sukha* (*A.* IV, 415).

With these presentations by the Buddha and *Sāriputta*, the early Buddhist conception of *sukha* goes beyond the *sukha* envisaged by their contemporaries. At this point, the two main meanings of the term *sukha*, 'pleasant' feeling and a 'happy' state of mind, no longer coexist. By presenting the cessation of feeling as supreme forms of happiness, the culminating point of the early Buddhist conception of *sukha* transcends the entire range of felt experience.

From the lofty viewpoint of such transcendence, the attitude to pleasant feeling changes. An *arahant* no longer delights in pleasant feelings or clings to them, but experiences them with detachment and wisdom (*S.* II, 82). What attraction could they hold for one who knows the destruction of craving, a happiness superior to any mundane or divine form of happiness, the happiness of liberation¹²?

Bibliography:

Premasiri, P.D.: "The Role of the Concept of Happiness in the Early Buddhist Ethical System", in *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities* 1981, vol 7 pp 61-81.

See also DELIGHT and HAPPINESS.

Anālayo

References

- ¹ Cf. e.g. *M.* I, 302: *kāyikaṃ vā cetasikaṃ vā sukhaṃ sāmāyaṃ vedayitaṃ - ayaṃ sukhaṃ vedanā*
- ² *It.* 15: *sukhass'etaṃ adbhavacanaṃ ... yādaṃ puññāni*.
- ³ *M.* I, 303: *sukha vedanā thitisukhā vipariṇāmadukkhā*.
- ⁴ *Sn.* 762: *yaṃ pare sukhato āhu, tad ariyā āhu dukkhato*.
- ⁵ *M.* III, 230: *sukhavinicchayaṃ jaññā, sukhavinicchayaṃ nātvā ajjhataṃ sukham anuyūñjeyya*.
- ⁶ *D.* II, 269: *sukhakāṃā hi devā manussā*.
- ⁷ *M.* I, 246: *kinnu kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi, yaṃ taṃ sukhaṃ aññātr'eva kāmehi aññātra akusalehi dhammehi?... Na kho ahaṃ tassa sukhasa bhāyāmi*.

⁸ Cf. e.g. *Thag.* 35: *sukhaṃ sukhattho labhate tad ācaraṃ; Thag.* 63: *sukhen' anvāgataṃ sukhaṃ; Thag.* 220: *sukhena sukhaṃ laddhaṃ; Thag.* 545: *vimuttisukhena sukhto ramissāmi; Thag.* 888: *sukhaṃ sayāmi jhāyāmi, sukhaṃ kappemi jīvitaṃ; and Thag.* 24: *aho sukhan'ti sukhatto jhāyāmi.*

⁹ *M.* II, 121: *bhikkhū passāmi haṭṭhapahaṭṭhe udaggudagge abhiratarūpe pīṇitindriye apposukke pannalome paradavutte migabhūeṇa cetasā viharante.*

¹⁰ *M.* II, 223: *dhammikaṃca sukhaṃ na pariccajati ... evam pi saphalo upakkamo hoti saphalaṃ padhānaṃ.*

¹¹ *M.* I, 349: *nibbuto sūbhūto sukhaṃ paṭisaṃvedī.*

¹² *S.* I, 196: *vimuttisukha.*

SUKHĀVATĪ-VYŪHA-SŪTRA: The most important text belonging to the devotional Buddhism of the Mahayana School, in which Sukhāvātī, the Buddha Land or paradise of the Divine Buddha Amitābha himself is glorified. It exists in two versions, a longer and a shorter which latter some scholars believe to be the earlier text.

The *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*, the Larger *Sukhāvātī-vyūha* in particular, was one of the most popular books of the Buddhist Tripiṭaka and was widely studied, translated and commented upon in China and Japan from a very early age prior to the second century A.C. up to the tenth century. During this period at least twelve translations of the larger text were made in China, of which only five are now in existence. But unfortunately, not a single copy of the Sanskrit text on which the Chinese translations were based has not been found either in China or in Japan. However, there are five MSS. of the Larger *Sukhāvātī-vyūha* now available all in libraries in Europe: one at the Royal Asiatic Society in London, one in the Bodleian Library, one at Cambridge and two in Bibliotheca Nationale in Paris. All these five MSS. come from one and the same country, Nepal, and share the same corruption and omissions making it virtually impossible to restore a satisfactory text of the *Sūtra*.

According to the ancient catalogues of the Chinese Tripiṭaka, the following is a list of the twelve translations of the Larger *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*. It must however be mentioned that none of these Chinese

titles corresponds to the exact meaning of the title of *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*. On the contrary, all of them contain the name *Amitāyus-sūtra* or *Amitayur-vyūha*. The titles given below are the Sanskrit translations of the Chinese ones.

1. *Amitāyus-sūtra*, translated by An Shi-kao (148-170 A.C.)
2. *Amita-buddha-samyaksambuddha-sūtra*, by Lokārakṣa (147-189 A.C.)
3. *Amita-sūtra*, by C'Chien (223-253 A.C.)
4. *Amitāyus-sūtra*, by Saṅghavarman (252 A.C.)
5. *Amita-buddha samyaksambuddha-sūtra*, by Po Yen (257 A.C.)
6. *Amitāyus-sūtra*, by Dharmarakṣa (266-313 A.C.)
7. *New Amitāyus-sūtra*, by Buddhahadra (398-421 A.C.)
8. *Amitāyur-arhat-samyaksambuddha-sūtra*, by Cu Fa-li (419 A.C.)
9. *New Amitāyus-sūtra*, by Pao-yun (424-453 A.C.)
10. *New Amitāyus-sūtra*, by Dharmamitra (424-453 A.C.)
11. *Amitāyus-tathāgata-parśad* (the *Sūtra* spoken by the Buddha on the *Tathāgata Amitāyus* at an assembly), by Bodhiruci (693-713 A.C.)
12. *Mahāyānāmitāyur-vyūha-sūtra*, by Fa-hien (982-1001 A.C.)

Of these Nos. 2,3,4,11 and 12 are now available. The other translations appear to have perished before 730 A.C. when the catalogue titled *Khayuen-lu* was compiled. While the five Chinese translations that have survived differ considerably from each other, none of them entirely agrees with the Sanskrit text as preserved in the Nepalese MSS. However, all the translations and the Sanskrit text agree with the following details:

- (a). The dialogue takes place on the Gṛdhrakūṭa Mountain near Rājagṛha
- (b). The principal interlocutors are the Buddha (also referred to as Bhagavat), Ānanda and Maitreya.

ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF BUDDHISM

Founder Editor-in Chief

G. P. MALALASEKERA, M. A., Ph. D., D. Litt., Professor Emeritus

Editor-in Chief

W. G. WEERARATNE, M. A., Ph. D.

VOLUME VIII

FASCICLE 1 : Sātavāhana–Syāmapāli Nikāya



2007