

lacking vision and knowledge, thereby succumbing to the grip of craving and becoming subject to worry and agitation, *ajānataṃ apassataṃ vedayitaṃ taṇhā-gatānaṃ paritasita-vipphanditam eva* (D. I, 40). The point behind this perspective on the process of view-formation is that often enough logic and thought serve merely to rationalize already existing likes and dislikes. Due to the arising of pleasant or unpleasant feelings, thoughts and associations are often coloured and influenced, resulting in a strong conditioning impact on views and opinions that often is not noticed.

The conditioning impact of feelings on experience and reactions is the central theme of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, which highlights that craving, the main culprit for the *samsāric* predicament (See also TAṆHĀ), arises due to feeling. Hence it is in particular at this junction of the dependent arising of *dukkha* that insight is required (See VEDANĀNUPASSANĀ). One who has reached the destruction of craving through full liberation has gone beyond the controlling power of feeling as well. Being devoid of lust towards any feeling, he or she has become a *vedagū*, a knower of feelings as well as a knower of the highest knowledge, *sabbavedanāsu vītarāgo sabbaṃ vedam aticca vedagū so* (Sn. 529).

#### Anālayo

#### References

- 1 Though the term *kāya* can at times stand for the entirety of one's experience, comprising body and mind, the circumstance that the suffusion of the *kāya* with joy and happiness during *jhāna* experience is listed in the *Kāyagatāsati Sutta* alongside other contemplations that are concerned with the physical body makes it quite probable that the same sense of *kāya* should also apply to this instance.
- 2 The relationship of contemplation of feelings to karma has been examined by Lily de Silva: "Vedanānupassanā: On the Management of Kamma", *Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, 14/1+2, 1988: 171-178.
- 3 See also M. I, 300 and SAKKĀYADIṬṬHI on a four-fold pattern of developing notions of selfhood in regard to any of the five aggregates.

VEDANĀNUPASSANĀ stands for "contemplation of feelings". Due to the conditioning role of *vedanā* on craving, which constitutes an all-important function in the twelve-link chain of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*, contemplation of feelings and of their conditioning impact on subsequent mental reactions has received considerable attention in the early Buddhist analysis of reality.<sup>1</sup>

According to the instructions given in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, contemplation of feeling requires one to be clearly aware of the affective tone of any feeling as either "pleasant", *sukha*, "unpleasant", *dukkha*, or "neutral", *adukkhamasukha* (M. I, 59). This basic division of feeling into three types is then to be further developed by distinguishing between "worldly" and "unworldly" manifestations of feelings, *sāmisa* and *nirāmisa*. In accordance with a mode of practice that is applied to any object of *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of feelings then comprises internal and external feelings, *ajjhata/bahiddhā*, and focuses on their arising and passing away, *samudaya/vaya*, with the aim of dwelling independently and without clinging to anything, *anissito ca viharati na ca kiñci loka upādiyati*.

These rather succinct instructions cover considerable ground in the field of insight and require a detailed examination. The first step envisaged in the *satipaṭṭhāna* training scheme for contemplation of feelings is to clearly recognize the affective tone of present experience, and to stop at that, namely at the bare experience of feeling itself, without giving room to any reaction. Having stopped short at the bare feeling itself, the experience of this feelings should be observed from the perspective of its affective nature, without getting involved with the individual nature and characteristics of whatever feeling may have manifested at present, whether this be, for example, 'feeling an itch', or perhaps 'feeling thrilled', or whatever else. Instead of getting carried away by the individual content of felt experience, awareness should be directed to the general character of experience in terms of its three possible feeling tones.

The rationale behind this distinction of feelings into three affective types as being pleasant, unpleasant and neutral can be understood in the light of the *Mahānidāna Sutta*, which points out that these three types of feeling are mutually exclusive (D. II, 66). That is, at the time of experiencing one of these three,

one does not experience any of the other two. The implications of this dictum is that the ability to feel is not a compact unit, not something stable that at times feels pleasure and at others displeasure. Instead, feelings are a process that consists of a series of mutually exclusive moments of felt experience. Hence the notion of an 'I' that feels or is identical with feeling turns out to be a thoroughly mistaken assumption. In this way, the distinction introduced during this first step of contemplation of feeling has considerable potential for bringing home the truth of *anattā*.

The next stage of practice, then, combines awareness of the affective tone of experience with mindfulness directed to its ethical context, expressed in terms of the distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings. The purpose behind this distinction is to draw awareness to the all-important relationship of feelings to the arising of wholesome or unwholesome mental reactions. A discourse in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* approaches this topic in terms of the underlying tendencies, the *anusayas*. This discourse explains that in relation to pleasant feeling the underlying tendency to lust should be abandoned, in relation to unpleasant feeling the underlying tendency to aversion, and in relation to neutral feeling the tendency to delusion (*S. IV, 205*). The same discourse emphasizes that the activation of the underlying tendencies is in each case related to a lack of clearly knowing the respective feeling, *vedanam appajānato*, thereby using precisely the same vocabulary as employed in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*'s description of contemplation of feeling, which enjoins one to clearly know the feeling that is felt at present, '*vedanam vediyānī'ti pajānāti*' (*M. I, 59*). This makes it clear that the antidote required in regard to the activation of the underlying tendencies is mindful observation of the nature of any feeling that has arisen. Being mindful in this way has the intriguing potential of stopping the reaction to any feeling even before this reaction has started.

In order to eventually be able to nip the reaction in the bud through clear awareness of the impending onset of unwholesome thoughts and emotions at their point of origin in *vedanā* contemplation of feeling needs to be undertaken comprehensively. Comprehensively in the sense that a special effort is required for contemplating feelings even when the mind is carried off by sensual fantasies, thoughts of aversion, or vain imaginings. Feelings arisen at such times are

obviously worldly types of feeling, and to wisely contemplate them is the very means for breaking through their conditioning impact on the mind.

The need for wisdom and continuity of practice is also implicit in the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* discourse, which continues by indicating that practice should be undertaken ardently and without loss of clear comprehension, *ātāpī sampajaññaṃ na riñcati*. These two terms also feature prominently in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and thus further underline the close relationship of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* passage with mindfulness practice. Through contemplation undertaken in this way, the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* discourse concludes, a wise practitioner will thoroughly comprehend feelings and reach freedom from the influxes, *tato so vedanā sabbā parijānāti paṇḍito, so vedanā pariññāya, diṭṭhe dhamme anāsavo*.

The need to direct awareness to the additional distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings, introduced in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, is required in order to detect which pleasant, unpleasant or neutral feelings are related to the underlying tendencies. The *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* explains that the joy and equanimity of deep concentration, as well as the sadness of not having reached liberation, are experiences of feelings that do not activate the underlying tendencies to lust, aversion, or ignorance (*M. I, 303*).

The distinction between worldly and unworldly feelings recurs in the *Saḷāyanavibhaṅga Sutta* under the heading of feelings related to the household life, *gehasita*, and feelings related to renunciation, *nekkhamasita*. (*M. III, 217*). The *Saḷāyanavibhaṅga Sutta* explains that in the case of feelings of joy, *somanassa*, the type of joy that is related to the household life arises due to the pleasing and agreeable features of sense-objects. Joy related to renunciation, however, arises when contemplating the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of sense-objects. In the case of feelings of displeasure or sadness, *domanassa*, those related to the household life manifest when hankering for unobtainable sense-objects, whereas sadness related to renunciation occurs when generating longing for liberation. Finally neutral feelings related to the household life are merely the outcome of the bland features of sense-objects, whose nature is such that it does not call up any particular interest or reaction. Neutral feelings related to renunciation, in contrast, are the result of equanimity gained through

insight into the impermanent and unsatisfactory nature of sense-objects. Hence the type of feeling that is related to the household life is due to the nature of the objects of the senses, whereas a feeling related to renunciation goes beyond and transcends the limitations of the object it experiences.

The *Chachakka Sutta* explains that it is impossible to make an end of *dukkha* unless the underlying tendencies in relation to each of the three types of feeling are overcome (*M. III, 285*). One engaged in practicing accordingly, by not allowing the mind to delight and attach to pleasant feelings, or to sorrow and grieve when unpleasant feelings arise, and by developing clear knowledge and understanding of the true nature of neutral feelings, will reach final liberation. The discourse concludes by reporting that sixty monks reached liberation while this instruction was being given, a telling testimony to the efficacy of developing detachment towards feelings.

The potential of contemplation of feelings is also highlighted in a discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya*, which points out that one who develops full detachment in regard to the three types of feeling will make an end of *dukkha* here and now (*A. V, 51*). This potential is perhaps not surprising in view of the relation of feeling to craving in the account of the conditioned genesis of *dukkha* given in the twelve-link presentation of dependent arising, *paṭicca samuppāda*. If one were to combine the perspective offered by this crucial conditioning link between feelings and craving with the beginning section of the same twelve-link series, according to which the perpetuation of the *samsāric* predicament is due to *sañkhāras* that are rooted in ignorance, *avijjā*,<sup>2</sup> it becomes unmistakably clear that the presence of mindfulness and equanimity in regard to the impending reaction towards the experience of feeling is of outstanding significance for progress on the path to liberation.

The theme of remaining aloof from reacting to feelings recurs in the *Mahāsaḷāyatānīka Sutta* in the context of an exposition of six sense-door experience. This discourse proclaims that to stay aloof from infatuation with any of the sense-organs, its respective sense-objects, and the feelings that arise in dependence on the organ and its objects, corresponds to undertaking the noble eightfold path. The discourse explains that the view, intention, effort, mindfulness

and concentration of one who practices like this, by dint of this mode of practice, become right view, right intention, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration (*M. III, 289*). The *Mahāsaḷāyatānīka Sutta* adds that the remaining three path factors - speech, action and livelihood - would have to have been purified earlier. According to the same discourse, one who develops the noble eightfold path in this way thereby also covers all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, as well as the other *bodhipakkhiya dhammas*, and develops *samatha* and *vipassanā* in conjunction. This development will result in knowledge and liberation, *vijjā* and *vimutti*. Hence all the central aspects of the early Buddhist path to liberation can be covered and developed through this particular mode of practice.

According to the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, once mindfulness has been directed to a clear recognition of the basic triad of feeling types and to their distinction into worldly and unworldly types, actual contemplation requires directing awareness to any kind of feelings, be these internal or external, from the perspective of their arising and passing away. This introduces the perhaps most crucial insight perspective on feelings, namely clear awareness of their impermanent nature. A discourse in the *Aṅguttara Nikāya* treats contemplation of the impermanent nature of feelings under the heading of the maxim that 'all things are not worth adhering to', *sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāya* (*A. IV, 88*). According to its explanation, one intent on practising in this way should contemplate any of the three types of feelings as impermanent, fading away, ceasing, and as [something to be] relinquished, *anicca, virāga, nirodha, paṭinissagga*. This points to a progression of the practice, which proceeds from contemplating impermanence to awareness of the disappearance of feelings in particular, in terms of their passing away and cessation. This slight shift of perspective during contemplation, by emphasizing the disappearance facet of the experience of impermanence, brings about a deepening of the process of letting go and relinquishing any attachment to feelings.<sup>3</sup> As this discourse indicates, one who practices in this way will not grasp at anything in this world, *na ca kiñci loke upādiyati*, an expression that links the present description to the instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

The need to avoid any grasping would also be implicit in the detailed examination of feelings in the

*Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta*, which highlights that the impermanent, unsatisfactory and changing nature of feelings are their main disadvantage, *ādīnava* (M. I, 90). Feelings do provide satisfaction, undeniably, and the joy and pleasure one may feel is the gratification, *assāda*, that can be derived from them. Yet, in view of their impermanent nature the only true escape in relation to feeling, *nissarana*, is to give up all desire and lust for them. In this way one will be able to dwell independently, in accordance with the *satipaṭṭhāna* instructions, without grasping at anything in the world.

A detailed perspective on the implications of the changing nature of each of the three types of feeling comes to the fore in the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, which indicates that pleasant feeling is pleasant as long as it lasts, but causes displeasure when it changes, *sukkhā vedanā tītisukkhā vipariṇāmadukkhā* (M. I, 303). Unpleasant feeling is displeasing as long as it lasts, but its change is experienced as pleasant, *dukkhā vedanā tītidukkhā vipariṇāmasukhā*; while neutral feeling is pleasurable when known, but unpleasant when not known, *adukkhamasukhā vedanā nāpasukhā aññāpa-dukkhā*. The last case indicates that neutral feelings, though in themselves hedonically neutral, during actual contemplation can be experienced as a pleasurable object of meditation, a pleasure derived from the presence of knowledge. Outside of a meditative contexts, however, neutral feelings may be experienced by someone without awareness as simply 'boring', and the displeasure caused by such boredom is a major activating force for the search after sensual diversion.

Another and rather crucial aspect of the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta's* presentation is that not only will pleasant feelings eventually cause the experience of unpleasantness, once they have changed and become otherwise, but unpleasant feelings can cause the pleasure of relief once they change and disappear. This perspective is noteworthy in so far as it provides a necessary background to the statement that whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*, *yaṃ kiñci vedayitam taṃ dukkhamiṃ* (S. II, 53). Much hinges on a proper translation of the term *dukkha* in such a context. If one were to opt for the most commonly used translation of *dukkha* as "suffering", this passage would propose that all felt experience is to be included under the heading of 'suffering'. In the light of the above passage from the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta*, such a conclusion would meet with difficulties, since though

the presence of unpleasant feelings may be experienced as 'suffering', the presence of pleasant feelings is certainly not experienced as 'suffering', and the two are, according to the dictum of the *Mahānidāna Sutta*, mutually exclusive experiences. When the future change of both feelings is considered, one could attribute the qualification 'suffering' to pleasant feeling, as its change leads to displeasure, yet in order to appropriately treat the effects of future change one would also have to take into consideration the change of unpleasant feeling, and such a change, as the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta* clarifies, is experienced as pleasant and not as 'suffering'.

Hence the *Cūḷavedalla Sutta's* presentation reveals the limitations of the translation 'suffering', making it advisable to adopt a different translation of the term *dukkha* in such a context. An alternative would be, for example, the term "unsatisfactory". Though pleasant feeling is pleasant while it lasts, it is still at the same time unsatisfactory, precisely because it does not last forever. According to another passage, this is in fact the implication of the dictum that whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*, namely that all felt experience is unsatisfactory, however pleasant it may be at present, because it does not last (S. IV, 216).

According to an instruction given in the *Itivuttaka*, the unsatisfactory nature of feelings needs to be contemplated in particular in relation to pleasant feelings, whereas in the case of unpleasant feeling it is their afflictive nature that should be given attention, and for contemplation of neutral feelings their impermanence should be given importance (*It.* 47; cf. also S. IV, 207). Due to their affectively bland nature, neutral feelings are the most difficult to contemplate of the three types of feeling and may easily be mistaken for a continuously present background against which pleasant and unpleasant feelings manifest. Closer inspection, however, reveals that even the comparatively subtle experience of neutral feelings is marked by the characteristic of impermanence and change. Comprehensive practice undertaken in this manner has an outstanding potential to issue in liberating insight.

One who has reached liberation will be thoroughly detached in regard to any feeling, endowed with the clear understanding that whatever is felt is impermanent and not worth being delighted in (M. III, 244). He or she clearly understands that the feelings

that are felt are limited to the body, and with the dissolution of the body all feeling will just become cool, *kāyassa bheda sabbavedayitānisūbhavissanti*.

#### Anālayo

#### References

- 1 Nāṇaponika: "Contemplation of Feeling", Kandy 1983: 5 speaks of the possibility of "breaking the chain of suffering at its weakest link" through *vedanānupassanā*.
- 2 Such a combination is made at S. III, 96, which explains the arising of a particular *saṅkhāra* by describing how craving arises in an uninstructed worldlying who is touched by feeling and the contact of ignorance, *saṅkhāro kiṃ nidāno kiṃ samudayo ... avijjāsamphassajena vedayitena phūṭhassa assutavato puthujanassa uppannā taṅhā, tatojo so saṅkhāro*.
- 3 Nāṇaponika op. cit.: 5 explains that "when in insight meditation the vanishing moment of feelings becomes more strongly marked, the impermanent nature of the feelings will impress itself very deeply on the meditator's mind. This experience ... will gradually mature into the Insight Knowledge of Dissolution (*bhāṅga-ñāṇa*). On reaching that stage, the meditator will find himself well on the road to further progress".

**VELUVANA:** The Bamboo Grove ( Bdst.Skt. Veṇuvana, rarely also Veḷuvana) near Rājagaha, the capital city of the kingdom of Magadha, donated to the Buddha and the Saṅgha by king Bimbisara on the Buddha's first visit to his city. This was also the first such donation of a park made to the Buddha and accepted by Him. In making this donation to the Buddha the king is said to have considered the following facts in its favour. "Now this Bamboo Grove of ours, a pleasure park, is neither too far from a village nor too near, suitable for coming and going, accessible for people whenever they want, not crowded by day, having little noise at night, little sound, without folk's breath, haunts of privacy, suitable for seclusion"1. He gifted the park to the Order of the monks headed by the Awakened One with a golden ceremonial vessel (*soṇṇamayaṃ bhikkhāraṃ*), probably by pouring water from it on to the Buddha's right hand. After accepting the park the Buddha, addressing

his disciples, declared that they can now accept a park (*ārāma*) donated to them (*Vin.1.38 f.*)

Unlike in the case of the donation of the Jetavana at Sāvatti by the rich merchant Anāthapiṇḍika, where he had put up monastic buildings, King Bimbisāra did not put up any building in Veḷuvana before gifting it to the Buddha. The Vinaya *Cullavagga* (Vin II.146 f) describes the forenoon scenario at Rajagaha with regard to the life of the Buddhist monks at the time in the following words. "Now at that time lodgings had not been permitted to monks by the Lord. So these monks stayed here and there: in a forest, at the root of a tree, on a hillside, in a glen, in a mountain cave, in a cemetery, in a forest glade, in the open air, on a heap of straw. Early in the morning these monks went out from this and that place, pleasing when approaching and when receding, when looking before, when looking back, when bending back (their arms), when stretching them out, their eyes cast down and possessed of pleasant behaviour"2. A rich merchant of Rajagaha who witnessed this scenario conceived an idea of constructing dwelling places for the monks and inquired whether he can do so. But he was told that the Buddha has not allowed dwelling places for them. When the Buddha was told of this inquiry he of the merchant he allowed the monks the use of five kinds of dwellings. Following this, the merchant built sixty dwelling-places for the monks just within one day and, on the advice of the Buddha, gifted them to the "Order of the four quarters, present and to come". This very first donation of dwellings to the Order of the Buddhist monks was made at a time the Buddha was staying at Veluvaṇa, the first extensive piece of land come to be possessed by the Saṅgha. Although neither the text nor the commentary speak of the location of the sixty dwellings put up by the great merchant of Rajagaha, one cannot completely ignore the possibility that they were the very first constructions put up in Veluvaṇa, the Bamboo Grove.

A word often found used along with the name Veḷuvana or Veṇuvana is *Kalandakanivāpa*, rendered into English as 'the Squirrel's Feeding-place'. A problem which arises with this word is whether it was used in apposition to Veḷuvana or whether it refers to a particular place within the Bamboo Grove. The Dictionary of Pali Proper Names (s.v. *Kalandakanivāpa*), for instance, calls it "a woodland in Veḷuvana evidently a favourite resort of

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