

Mindfulness

The practice of mindfulness is outlined in the Pali canon and is contained within a Buddhist teaching entitled: Satipatthana, which is described as the direct path to realization. The English scholar Thomas William Rhys Davids first translated sati as mindfulness in 1881.

Thus, the English translation that we have used for Satipatthana is mindfulness. If we break the term into its roots, we will find two very important ideas:

1. Sati- the ability to remember, to recognize and to see clearly.
2. Thana- a ground or foundation.

Satipatthana- To remember, to recognize and to see clearly this ground, namely the impermanent, unreliable, stressful and self-less nature of experience itself. Learning to navigate with skill, the groundless ground of lived experience. This is accomplished by developing the four foundations of mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta: The Foundations of Mindfulness

*Thus have I heard. On one occasion the tathagata was living in the Kuru country where there was a town of the Kurus named Kammāsadhamma. There he addressed the bhikkhus thus:
“Bhikkhus.”—“Venerable sir,” they replied. The tathagata said this:*

“Bhikkhus, this is the direct path for the liberation of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of stress and grief, for the attainment of the true way, for the realization of Nibbāna—namely, the four foundations of mindfulness.

*“What are the four? Here, bhikkhus, a bhikkhu abides contemplating the **(1.) body** as a body, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away desire and discontent in regards to the world. He abides contemplating **(2.) feelings** as feelings, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away desire and discontent in regards to the world. He abides contemplating **(3.) mental states** as mental states, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away desire and discontent in regards to the world. He abides contemplating **(4.) mind-objects** as **mind-objects**, ardent, fully aware, and mindful, having put away desire and discontent in regards to the world.*

The Four Foundations of Mindfulness:

1. Mindfulness of body/breath: sensations
2. Mindfulness of feeling tone: impressions
3. Mindfulness of mind states: attitudes
4. Mindfulness of mind objects: activities

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:

- (1) the noble truth that is suffering (dukkha),
- (2) the noble truth that is the arising of suffering (dukkha,samudaya),
- (3) the noble truth that is the ending of suffering (dukkha,nirodha), and
- (4) the noble truth that is the way leading to the ending of suffering
(dukkha,nirodha,gaminī patipadā).

In the nature of a doctor giving a prognosis and treatment plan the Buddha expounds upon a foundational truth in this world - the nature of Dukkha. Sometimes translated as suffering, it has more of a flexible spectrum ranging from discontent, to dissatisfaction to great distress; the overall ‘unsatisfactoriness’ that is inherent in this human experience. Next he states the prognosis that Dukkha has a ‘causation’ which needs to be understood. The cure is that one needs to understand the ‘cessation’ of dukkha. The treatment plan comes in the form of the 8 fold path. Often the discussions are around the nature of Dukkha, often described as caused by craving and clinging to things that are impermanent and thus unsatisfactory. While this is true in the larger consideration of Dharma theory, often there is a glossing over of this tendency to cling. The second and third Truth are what would be regarded as ‘telescoped’ versions of a longer and deeper teaching, namely Dependent origination (PaticcaSamuppāda). This is the teaching of how suffering comes to be, and how we repeatedly are ‘reborn’ into samsara, a worldly wandering.

As Buddha meditated on the nature of dukkha he discerned that it co-occured with a ‘becoming’ of self. This points to certain patterns, habitual, conditioned states of mind. Obsessive, compulsive tendencies that grip on thoughts and emotions. The Buddha aimed to understand the causation of stress via cultivating a state of mind where he was not inclined to cling to the causes of suffering, while at the same time observe his innate tendencies to do so. Thus the practice of meditation, the understanding of ‘becoming’ as tied to suffering all interweave as Buddha moved towards awakening and his formulation of the 4 Noble Truths.

“Develop (bhavetha) concentration, monks. A concentrated monk discerns things as they have come to be. And what does he discern as it has come to be?

“‘This is stress,’ he discerns as it has come to be. ‘This is the origination of stress ... This is the cessation of stress ... This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress,’ he discerns as it has come to be.” — SN 56:

The 12 Links of Dependent Origination

1.2 THE PALI TERM PAṬICCA,SAMUPP DA

Compound resolved as paticca (because of) + sam,uppāda (com + arising).

- Paticca from the verb pacceti (pati + i, to return to, ie to fall back on)
means “on account of, conditioned by, dependent upon, because of.”
- The prefix sam- (together) is cognate with the Latin com- or con- (as in communicate, connect);
- uppāda (arising) is a noun from the verb uppajjati, meaning “it arises”; as a compound, samuppāda therefore means “arising together.”

As such, paticca,samuppāda is sometimes rendered as “dependent co-arising” or “conditioned co-production.”

Past Causes > condition> Present Effects > Present Causes > condition> Future Effects.

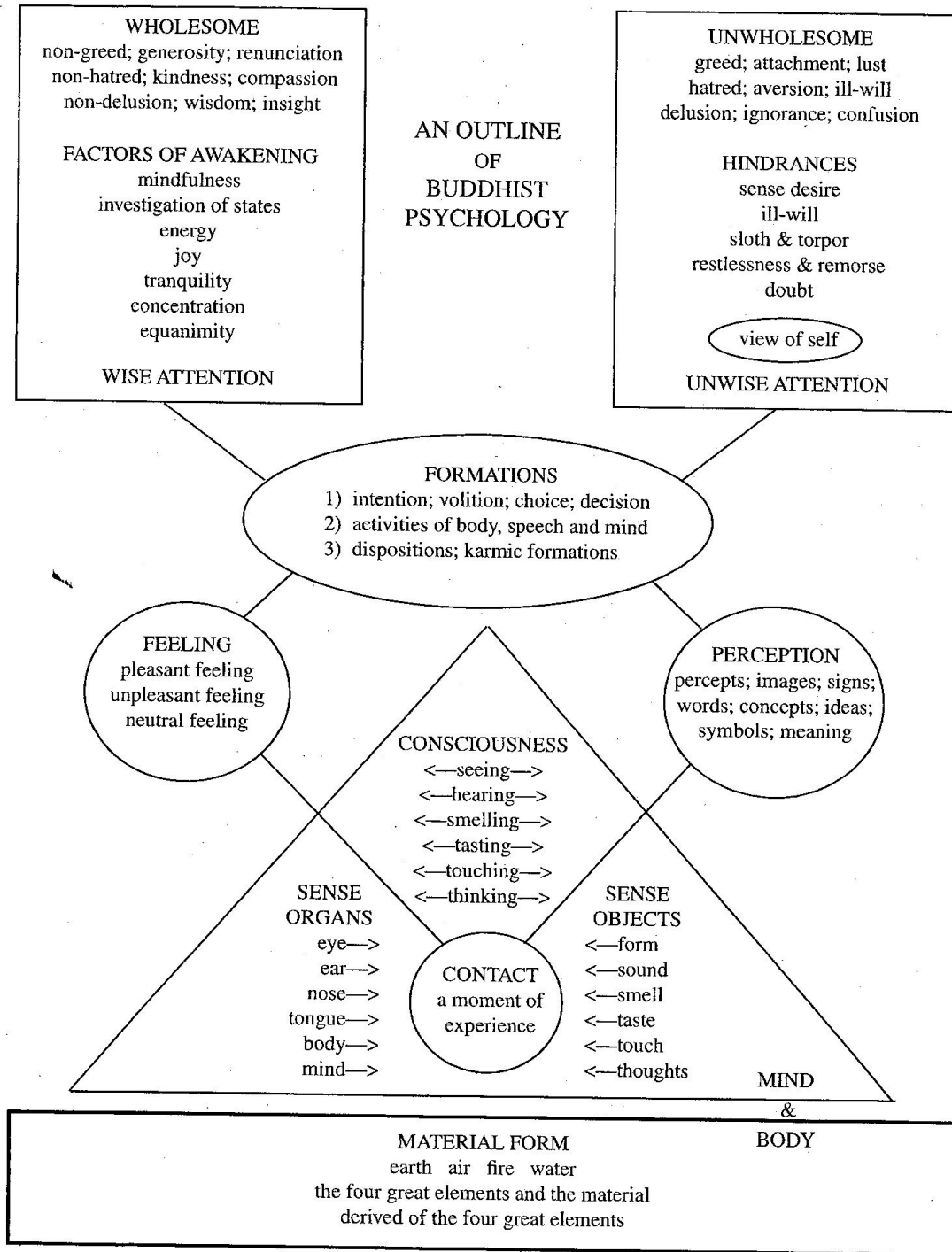
Sometimes taught as Three Lives Model - literal interpretation of rebirth as reincarnation.

Less often taught as ‘Single Thought Moment’(eka,citta-k,khnikā) where all these factors come in to play influencing how we organize a sense of self and its tendency towards suffering. In the Vibhāṅga of the Tipitaka, the section which describes the lifetime-to-lifetime interpretation contains only five pages of material. The section which describes the principle of dependent arising in one mind moment contains seventy-two pages.¹⁴

Each pair of stages intertwines in a mutually vitalizing bond wherein the lower, antecedent member nurtures its successor by serving as its generative base, and the higher, consequent member completes its predecessor by absorbing its energies and directing them on to the next phase in the series. Each link thus performs a double function: while rewarding the efforts expended in the accomplishment of the antecedent stage, it provides the incentive for the commencement of the consequent stage. In this way the graduated training unfolds organically in a fluid progression in which, as the Buddha says, "stage flows over into stage, stage fulfills stage, for crossing over from the hither shore to the beyond." (Bhikkhu Bodhi, 1995)

The 12 Links of Dependent Origination

1. Ignorance (avijja): not understanding the full meaning and implication of the four noble truths.
2. Formations (sankara): habitual activities of body, speech, and mind.
3. Consciousness (vinnyana): the five aggregates arising with the sense spheres. Forms, feeling, perception, inclination/impulses, and consciousness itself.
4. Name and form (nama-rupa): contact, feeling, perception, inclination/impulses, attention.
5. 6 sense doors (salayatana): eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind.
6. Contact (phasso): the mental impression of an object which arise with feeling and perception.
7. Feeling (vedana): pleasant, unpleasant, or neither/neutral. Mental, emotional, physical.
8. Craving/thirst (tanha): Desires rooted in greed, hatred, and delusion.
9. Grasping/clinging (upadana): Feeding and grasping at mental and physical experiences.
10. Becoming (bhavana): solidifying awareness into a fixed state of mind. Also, means to cultivate.
11. Birth (jati): The experience of being a separate entity, a self.
12. Aging, death pain, grief and despair: The breaking up of the psychological foundation of the self.



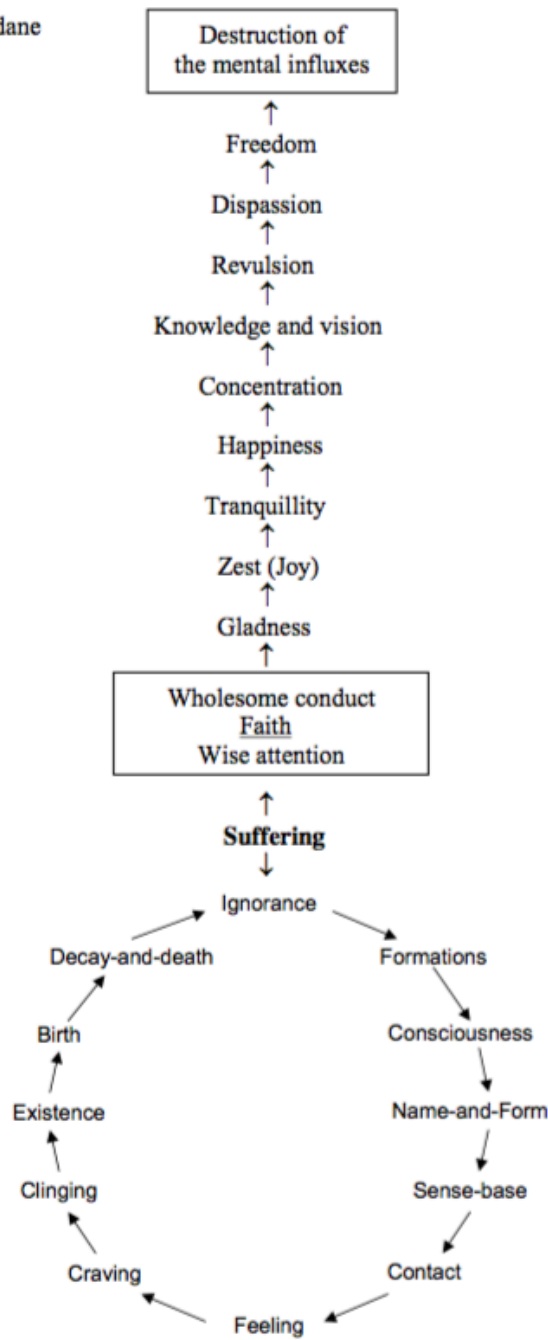
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Saṃyutta 2, Nidāna Vagga 1, Nidāna Saṃyutta 3, Dasabala Vagga 3

Diagram 2
Mundane and supermundane dependent arisings



[Source: Payutto, 1994:97]

Transcendent Dependent Arising

The Upanissa Sutta teaches what can be referred to as ‘Transcendental Dependent Arising’. It is a part of a larger family of suttas that explore dependent origination, but this particular teaching is largely ignored, despite its tremendous doctrinal importance, mostly as it has a significant feature that individuates it from the rest of the teachings. It contains within it the causal progression of how Dhukka arises (forward sequence, *Anuloma*) as well as the cessation of suffering (reverse sequence, *Patiloma*). However rather than the point of ‘death and decay’ the Upanissa Sutta replaces it with the position of Dukkha or Suffering. This then adds a new attribute, akin to an alternate train track a locomotive can switch for a new course. In this way the Upanissa sutra shows the basic round and round venture of Samsaric rebirth, but with the option to switch onto the path towards liberation.

In this way the teaching shows both the entire worldly cycle as well as one’s spiritual development towards ultimate freedom. Both sequences, one’s involvement with the world and one’s disengagement from it, are governed by one principle of Dependent Origination.

As time passes and maturity grows we become aware that suffering is not just a chance experience, a random occurrence, nor is it something that lies outside of us, but is a result of choices made by us, and within the cultivation of unwholesome mind states. This suffering can cause us to reevaluate our values and choices and turn our attention and effort towards the Dharma. In this way suffering becomes the door by which we enter the Dharma. We fortify our minds, build up resilience and tolerance to the core of suffering and with that a reflective awareness that allows us to choose to move in different experience.

Transcendental Order of Dependent Origination towards Liberation aligned with Threefold Training of the Dharma

Higher Virtue (*adhisīla-sikkhā*)

Faith (*saddha*)/Wholesome Conduct (*sīla*), Wise Attention (*Manasikara*)]

Higher Mind (*adhicitta-sikkhā*)

Joy (*pamojja*)

Rapture (*pīti*)

Tranquillity (*passaddhi*)

Happiness (*sukha*)

Concentration (*samadhi*)

Higher Wisdom (*adhipaññā-sikkhā*)

Knowledge and vision of things as they are (*yathabhutañānadassana*)

Disenchantment (*nibbida*)

Dispassion (*viraga*)

Emancipation (vimutti)

Knowledge of destruction of the cankers (asavakkhaye ñāna)

We see a list of factors in the Upanissa Sutta that stem from Suffering towards Liberation. They are qualities of mind that can be grouped together under the categories of the Three Trainings. Here we see what starts off with opening up and turning towards suffering with wise attention, while practicing restraint from indulging in creating conditions for sustained suffering. The next batch of mind states are conducive for higher concentrated states of mind. With sustained concentration deeper insights begin to emerge giving rise to mindset that support Wisdom functions which are inclined to not become overclouded with Ignorance (Avijja) and result in the ‘destruction of cankers’ or sometimes put ‘destruction of mental influxes’. Between both expressions there is a sense of an uprooting of the hindrances and how they add to and influence the creation of more negative sankharas.

In short We begin the practice with the cultivation of wholesome mind states, replacing impulse for greed, ill will and willingness to do harm and replace them with training for wholesome mind states. In the Dvedavitakka Sutta Buddha reflects upon his time as a spiritual aspirant. He says that he put his thoughts ‘in two baskets’ one that contained thoughts of craving, ill will and harm, the other basket contained thoughts of good will (Metta), renunciation and compassion (Karuna). This practice he said led to increased discernment, decreased vexation and led to unbinding. He then elucidated upon how wholesome mind states lead to spontaneous states of higher concentration. These states of higher concentration lead to increased discernment and insight which ultimately lead to his final Awakening. In this way we see how the spiritual path is also Dependently Arisen as each link is supported by the preceding link by carrying on

Threefold Partition	Eightfold Path	Method of Practice
VIRTUE	Right Speech	Five Laymen Vows
	Right Action	
	Right Livelihood	
MIND	Right Effort	Dwelling in the four jhanas (meditation)
	Right Mindfulness	
	Right Concentration	
WISDOM	Right View	Knowing Four Noble Truths
	Right Intention	

the momentum of its ethical trajectory and competing it towards the next link onwards.

Heart Practices: Cultivating Positive Emotions

What are heart practice meditations?

Heart practices are divided into four sets. We incline the mind and heart towards qualities that act as appropriate responses to the various and nuanced conditions we face in our lives. Classically these four sets are defined as loving-kindness (metta), compassion (karuna), sympathetic joy (mudita) and equanimity (upekkha).

Kind-Friendliness (Metta)

The word metta is derived from the Pali word, mita. Mita, literally means friend. The most accurate translation of the term metta would be kind-friendliness. Metta has the mode of friendliness for its characteristic. Its natural function is to promote good intention. It is manifested as the disappearance of ill-will. Its footing is “to see” with kindness. When it succeeds, it eliminates ill-will. When it fails, it degenerates into greed, self-centered craving and attachment.

Kind-friendliness is the first foundation of metta practices. Metta is a beneficial attitude in every situation. It is always appropriate. It holds ease, peace, and contentment as a baseline attitude and promotes its increase. It seeks to further cooperation and understanding even in the presence of difficulty.

Compassion (Karuna)

Compassion is the second aspect of heart practices and has the specific aim of being directed toward pain and suffering. It is often defined as a movement of the heart when we meet pain and anguish. Compassion is the ability to both feel and to respond in a way that reduces or holds the suffering of another. Within the context of empathy, compassion is our greatest skill. It is also a skill that we need to learn and maintain through practice. As a quality of mind, it is only appropriate and necessary during moments of distress, sadness, pain or suffering. It simply intends to help or hold that which hurts.

With compassion comes the inability to express hatred. Its expression is the manifestation of non-violence. It has the ability to uproot any intention to cause harm. It can be brought about by seeing and understanding the difficulties and pains of others while holding a sincere desire to alleviate that suffering. It succeeds when it causes violence and ill-will to descend. It fails when it produces depression, grief and sorrow. Compassion isn't self-pity or pity for others, but when wrongly understood it may manifest in this way. It's ultimately about feeling one's own pain and recognizing the pain of others. When we can see, and experience the suffering of this

world that we are all subject to, we may become kinder and more compassionate to one another.

Forgiveness

There is no official Pali translation for the word forgiveness but the idea of forgiveness is expressed wholeheartedly throughout the teachings. Forgiveness practice plays a critical role in the development of compassion and empathy because if we can't forgive, we limit our ability for true connection and empathy. Forgiveness is the antidote to resentment. It allows us to learn how to put aside and ultimately abandon our tendency toward blaming. There is no lasting sense of well-being or happiness associated with the common and often seemingly justified habit of finding fault in others.

At times, it will be important for us to acknowledge the harm we have caused, and it is helpful to experience an appropriate amount of regret. Understanding that blaming is only a source of harm to others and ourselves, we set the intention to hold forgiveness as a quality that we aim to embody.

Appreciation (Mudita)

The most common translation for mudita is sympathetic joy. This encourages us to be able to sympathize with or participate in the happiness of others. It is the antidote to jealousy and envy.

Mudita has the ability and characteristic of gladdening. It helps us to overcome the common attitude of "how come them and not me." We may find that we often become jealous or self-conscious when we are faced with the good fortune of others. This creates the experience of separation and we become disconnected and self-centered. We may consider how unfortunate it is to be unable to participate in the happiness and success of others, especially when the person is somebody we care about. Whether it is a good friend, colleague, or family member, wouldn't we want to be able to appreciate his or her good fortune? We want to develop a specific practice to evoke and embody this quality of appreciation.

Such a practice gives us the ability to participate in all the happiness, joy, success, and pleasure of this world without the need for it to be our own. If we restrict our experience of gratitude to our own gains and successes, we severely limit our potential joy and happiness. We create a mind that compares and contrasts. We may become competitive, bitter, and even resentful. If we can bring awareness and appreciation to the good fortune of others, it allows us to keep from closing off from the world and revel in happiness and connection.

Equanimity (Upekkha)

Equanimity is the practice that holds everything together. We simply acknowledge the truth that our happiness and our freedom is dependent on our actions, not on our wishes.

Equanimity balances compassion with wisdom. It allows us to experience the full range of mindfulness.