1 Introduction

1.1 Sutta summaries and significance

All the 3 (Sukh’indriya) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Suttas (S 48.31, S 48.34+35), translated in this chapter, deal with the 5 feeling faculties—those of pleasure, pain, joy, displeasure and equanimity. While the 1st sutta here is the basic text on the 5 feeling faculties, the 2nd presents these faculties in terms of specific people, and the 3rd in terms of specific practice.

The 1st, the (Sukh’indriya) Suddhika Sutta (S 48.31), SD 56.20a, as its title suggests, only gives the basic list of the 5 feeling faculties. This text serves as a reminder for beginners, and based on which other suttas dealing with these feeling faculties develop.

The 2nd, the (Sukh’indriya) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 1 (S 48.34), SD 36.18b, states that recluses and brahmins should have fully mastered these 5 feeling faculties. If they fail to do so, they are not worth their respective titles. A true religionist or spiritual person should fully understand the nature of feelings.

The 3rd, the (Sukh’indriya) Samaṇa,brāhmaṇa Sutta 2 (S 48.35), SD 36.18c, is laid out in a full template cycle, with the samudaya pentad applied to each of the 5 feelings. In other words, this is a sutta for reflection, that is, one that may be reflectively read during a puja, or as a preamble to meditation.

1.2 Related suttas

The suttas of the Sukh’indriya Vagga (S 48) each deals with the 5 feeling faculties in different ways. The Vagga contains the following titles (the SD numbers in bold refer to translations found in this volume, SD 56):

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On the template cycle, see SD 56.16 (2.1.2).

= SD 17.3(4.4), where see other details.
2 Feeling: An overview

2.1 Definition of feeling

2.1.1 Feeling (vedanā) is the mental factor (cetasika) that feels or tastes the flavour of the object. It is the affective mode in which the object is experienced. Since some sort of feeling accompanies every consciousness (citta), feeling is an important variable in helping us to categorize different types of consciousness.

The Pali word, vedanā, does not signify “emotion” (which appears to be a complex phenomenon involving a variety of concomitant mental factors, called formations, saṅkhārā). Vedanā are the bare affective quality of an experience, which may be either a pleasant, painful or neutral feeling before the onset of emotion (saṅkhāra).

Hence, “feeling” is synonymous with basic “experience,” the verb of which is patisaṁvedetī, from paṭi (a directional prefix referring to “self”) + saṁ (a prefix meaning “(putting) together”; here inserted as an infix) +√VIDI, to know + aṁ3 + a + ti (3rd person singular). [2.3.2]

2.1.2 Feeling is said to have the characteristic of being felt (vedayita), showing its passive quality. Its function is experiencing or, better, “feeling,” or its function is to enjoy the desirable aspect of the object. Its manifestation is the relishing of the associated mental factors. Its proximate cause is tranquillity.4

While the other mental factors experience the object only derivatively, feeling experiences it directly and fully: it feels. In this respect, the other factors are compared to a cook who prepares a dish for a king, and only samples the food while preparing it, while feeling is compared to the king who enjoys the meal as much as he likes.

2.2 Kinds of feelings

2.2.1 The 1 feeling, the 2 feelings

2.2.1.1 In the Raha,gata Sutta (S 36.11), the Buddha famously declares that whatever is felt is included in suffering (yam kiñci vedayitam tāṁ dukkhasmīṁ).5 In this statement, the word dukkha does not bear the narrow meaning of “painful feeling,” but the broader meaning of the suffering inherent in all conditioned things by reason of their impermanence. This is the “one feeling”, the universal reality and experience of all living beings.

2.2.1.2 In the suttas, the Buddha sometimes speaks of feelings as twofold, that is, pleasure (sukha) and pain (dukkha). This is a figurative or simplified manner of analysis (pariyāyena), arrived at by merging the blameless neutral feeling in pleasure and the blameworthy neutral feeling in pain. In other words, there are many different ways of looking as feelings, depending on how we can best understand them, and how to go from there.

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3 The nasal augment (āgama) saṁ is prefixed to the roots of the 2nd conjugation (rudh’ādi gaṇa) with another augment e. See S Collins, A Pali Grammar for Students, 2006:76-78 (ch 3.1).

4 Tranquillity (passaddhi) is apparently the proximate cause only for the joyful feeling that arises in meditation practice.

5 See S 36.11/4:216 (SD 33.6).
2.2.1 The 3 kinds of feelings, bodily and mental

The suttas analyse feeling either as threefold or as fivefold. When it is analysed simply in terms of its affective quality, it is threefold: the pleasant (sukha, vedanā), the painful (dukkha, vedanā), and the neither painful nor pleasant (adukkha-m-asukha vedanā). In this threefold classification, pleasant feeling includes both bodily pleasure and mental pleasure or joy, and painful feeling includes both bodily pain and mental pain or displeasure. Neutral feeling, however, does not arise bodily, but occurs only mentally.

2.2.2 The 5 kinds of feelings

2.2.2.0 When feeling is analysed by way of the controlling faculty (indriya), it becomes fivefold. These 5 types of feelings are called “faculties” (indriya) because they exercise lordship (indra) or control over their associated states with respect to the affective mode of experiencing the object. Broadly, then, we have these 5 classes of feelings:

(1) bodily pleasant feeling; kāyikā sukhā vedanā = sukhā
(2) bodily unpleasant feeling; kāyikā dukkha vedanā = dukkha
(3) mentally pleasant feeling; cetasikā sukhā vedanā = somanassa
(4) mentally unpleasant feeling; cetasikā dukkha vedanā = domanassa
(5) indifferent or neutral. adukkha-m-asukhā vedanā = upekkhā

2.2.2.1 Pleasure (sukha) has the characteristic of experiencing a desirable tangible object, the function of intensifying associated states, manifestation as bodily enjoyment, and its proximate cause is the body faculty. In simple terms, this means pleasure arises when we feel the touch of something pleasant (warmth, coolness, hardness, softness, the touch of something we like or love). This pleasant feeling is intensified when, for example, we recall some desirable or happy thought associated with it. This feeling or experience arises from the body, and is felt in the conscious body itself.

2.2.2.2 Pain (dukkha) has the characteristic of experiencing an undesirable tangible object, the function of withering or weakening associated states, manifestation as bodily affliction, and its proximate cause is (as in pleasure) also the body faculty. Early Buddhism seems to see pain as arising from undesirable or unpleasant stimuli affecting the body.

Such pain may be in the form of discomfort arising in our posture or an inclement climate, or from injury or disease. Although not getting what we desire, or having to deal with the undesired are more often mental pain, they do bring on physical painful results. All such pains are terms “physical pain” (dukkha, dukkha).

Early Buddhism uses the same word, dukkha, for suffering, which is how we see pain and is affected by it. Hence, we may suffer the undesirable states, such as the loss of a beloved one or of things that we value (such as wealth or health). This is called pain due to change (viparināma, dukkha).

We should, however, properly understand the pervasive suffering that is inherent in our being itself, that is, the 5 aggregates that cause us to cling (pañca-k, khandha) to form, feeling, perception, formations and consciousness. This is called the suffering that is formations (saṅkhāra, dukkha).\(^7\)

\(^6\) S 48.35/5:208 f), SD 56.20c = SD 17.3(4.4). On the 5 kinds of feelings, see SD 17.3 (4.4).
\(^7\) On the 3 kinds of pain, see Dhamma, cakka Pavattana S (S 56.11,5), esp SD 1.1 (4); (Sāriputta) Dukkha S (S 38.-14); SD 1.1 (6). See also SD 55.7 (1.2.3).
2.2.3 Joy (somanassa) has the characteristic of experiencing a desirable object, the function of partaking of the object, manifestation as mental enjoyment, and its proximate cause is tranquility [2.1.2]. Simply, this means that the mind enjoys this feeling that arises from any of the 5 physical senses and also from itself (arising in the mind).

The mention of tranquility is interesting, since we may understand it as what modern psychology and medicine understand as “resolution.” Tranquility is an emotional resolution in the sense of the convergence of all positive elements and/or the taking of a novel, workable perspective. This definition broadly applies to problem-solving, decision-making and psychotherapy, but it can simply refer to a state of being “just right” or better, that gives us a sense of satisfaction and joy.

2.2.4 Displeasure (domanassa) has the characteristic of experiencing an undesirable object, the function of partaking of the undesirable aspect of the object, manifestation as mental affliction, and its proximate cause is the heart-base. This is a non-canonical term (not found in the suttas, Abhidhamma or the Vinaya) that is popularized by the Commentaries. It is used the way we would understand “mind” today. Indeed, we may say that the idea of the heart-base or “cardiac theory” presages this modern convenient term, but which is not without its problems.

The heart-base (hadaya, vatthu) is the heart as the “physical base” of mental life. The heart, according to the Commentaries and accepted by traditional Buddhists, forms the physical base (vatthu) of consciousness. In the Pali canon, even in the Abhidhamma, however, “the mind” is never localized. Indeed, the mind, it seems, pervades our whole body, our being.

In the canonical Abhidhamma, only the Paṭṭhāna (the last book of the Abhidhamma Piṭaka), merely hints at some kind of “base” by simply alluding to “that matter in dependence on which the mind element and the mind-conscious element occur.” The Commentaries subsequently specify “that matter” (taṁ rūpaṁ) to be the “heart-base,” in the cavity of the physical heart itself. They see the heart as the physical support for all cittas other than the 2 sets of fivefold sense-consciousness which take their respective sensitivities as their bases.

2.2.5 Equanimity (upekkhā) has the characteristic of being felt as neutral, the function of neither intensifying nor weakening associated states, and manifestation as peacefulness. Its proximate cause is consciousness without zest.

When the fivefold analysis of feeling is considered, the pleasant feeling of the threefold scheme becomes divided into physical pleasure and mental joy; and neither-pleasant-nor-painful feeling becomes identified with equanimity or neutral feeling.

Hence, according to the Abhidhamma, all bodily feelings, that is, feelings arising through bodily sensitivity (kāya-p, pasāda), are either pleasant or painful, but there is no neutral feeling based on bodily sensitivity. As such, the Sutta Commentary explains “bodily equanimity” as arising based on the other 4 senses (the eye, ear, nose and tongue) (SA 3:241).

2.2.3 The 6 kinds and the 18 kinds of feelings

8 Pat [below]; VbhA 240; PatA:Be 347, 349, 351.
9 See important n by Shwe Zan Aung, 1910: Abhs:SR 277-279. See also SD 17.2a (9.6.2).
10 Yam rūpaṁ nissāya mano, dhatu ca mano, viññāna, dhatu ca vattanti, taṁ rūpaṁ mano, dhātuyā ca mano, viññāna, dhātuyā ca taṁ, sampayuttakānaṁ ca dhammānam avigata, paccayaena paccayo (Paṭ:Be 1:4, 7, 9, 10).
11 See SD 17.8c (7.2.2.4); Vism 8.111/256.
12 See SD 26.2 (3.1.3.6).
13 These defs of the 5 feelings are found at Vism 14.128/461.
14 See S:B 1934 n212.
15 See (Sukh’indriya) Vibhaṅga S 1 (S 48.36,3+7) + nn, + SD 56.21a (2).
2.2.3.1 Regarding the 6 senses, there are 6 kinds of feelings: those associated with or arising from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and thinking. Technically—such texts as the Mahā, nidāna Sutta (D 15), the Sammā, diṭṭhi Sutta (M 9) the Udāna Sutta (S 22.55), the Aṭṭha, sata Sutta (S 36.22), and the Vibhaṅga (Vbh 15)16—speak of them in the following 6 kinds of feelings:

- sight-based feeling “feeling arisen through eye-contact” cakkhu, samphassa, jāvedanā
- sound-based feeling “feeling arisen through ear-contact” sota, samphassa, vedanā
- smell-based feeling “feeling arisen through nose-contact” ghāna, samphassajā vedanā
- taste-based feeling “feeling arisen through tongue-contact” jivhā, samphassa, vedanā
- touch-based feeling “feeling arisen through body-contact” kāya, samphassa, vedanā
- mind-based feeling “feeling arisen through mind-contact” mano, samphassa, jāvedanā

2.2.3.2 In terms of hedonic quality, it is possible for each of the 6 sense-based feelings to be felt as pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, giving a total of 18 kinds of feelings (atthārasa vedanā). The Saḷāyatanā Vibhaṅga Sutta (M 137), SD 29.5, and the Aṭṭha, sata Sutta (S 36.22)17 list such a set, which is explained as follows: “6 explorations accompanied by joy, 6 explorations accompanied by displeasure, 6 examination explorations accompanied by equanimity. These are called the 18 kinds of feelings.”18

In other words, each sense-based feeling becomes sixfold by arising in relation to the 6 sense-objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts. The Aṭṭha, sata Sutta (S 36.22), in fact, lists the following sets of feelings:

- 2 kinds—bodily and mental
- 3 kinds—pleasant, painful and neither-painful-nor-pleasant
- 5 kinds—pleasure faculty, pain faculty, the joy faculty, the displeasure faculty, the equanimity faculty
- 6 kinds—arising from eye-contact, from ear-contact, from nose-contact, from tongue-contact, from body-contact, from mind-contact
- 18 kinds—6 mental explorations accompanied by joy, 6 explorations accompanied by displeasure, 6 explorations accompanied by equanimity
- 36 kinds—6 types of joy based on the household life, 6 types of joy based on renunciation, 6 types of displeasure based on the household life, 6 types of displeasure based on renunciation, 6 types of equanimity based on the household life, 6 types of equanimity based on renunciation
- 108 kinds—the 36 kinds of feelings in the past, the same 36 in the future, the same 36 in the present

2.3 Other roles of feelings

2.3.1 “Signs” and “details”

Feeling is one of the 7 mental factors inseparably associated with all consciousness whatever.20 In the formula of the dependent arising (paticca, samuppāda), feeling is the condition for the arising of craving.

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16 Respectively: D 15,8/2:58 (SD 5.17); M 9,42/1:51 (SD 11.14); S 22.55/3:56-58 (SD 17,16); S 36.22/4:231-233; Vbh 15,13-17. Vibhaṅga lists feelings in 10 ways, i.e., a set of 1 to a set of 10.
17 Respectively: M 137,8/3:216 f (SD 29.5), S 36.22/4:232.
18 Katamā ca bhikkhave atthārassu vedanā? Cha somanassūpavicārā, cha domanassūpavicārā, cha upekkhūpavicārā. Imā vuccasnti bhikkhave atthārassu vedanā.
19 On these 5 kinds of feelings, see the 10 suttas of Sukh'indriya Vagga (S 48), such as (Sukh'indriya) Suddhika S (S 48.31), SD 56.20a; (Sukh'indriya) Arahanta S (S 48.33), SD 56.16d.
20 See BDict: nāma.
(tanah). This understanding is crucial in mindful practice, so that we will be able to nip any distraction in the bud.

As soon as we notice a negative “sign” (nimitta), that is, an unwholesome thought or mental object, we should immediately turn away from it. Ideally, this should be done even before any feeling—liking, disliking or neutral—arises. On the other hand, when we do go on to examine the “details” (anuvayañjana) of the negative mental object—with the arising of feelings—unwholesomeness will grow and flood the mind.

Even then, it is still possible to simply observe the feelings as they are and then let them go. Up to this stage, we may still turn back before negative karma-formations arise. Still, any negative mental object should be avoided immediately or as soon as possible.

2.3.2 Other roles of feelings and the 22 faculties

The above-mentioned 5 kinds of feelings [2.2.3.2] are enumerated amongst the 22 faculties. The most prominent role of feelings is, however, as the 2nd of the 5 aggregates (pañca-k, khandha). In summary, according to early Buddhism, feelings (vedanā) are the most significant of our experience. Basically, “feelings” should be understood as what we basically mean by experience, and this should be properly understood so that we are in full charge of our mind, keeping it wholesome.

In early Buddhist psychology, feelings and emotions are 2 distinct conditions. In a sense, we can say that we should work to keep our emotions, that is, karma-formations (saṅkhāra), wholesome, or seeing them for what they really are without being entrammelled in any of them. This is best done at the “feeling” phase. By the “formations” phase, usually this feeling will go on to become a habit. Then, and we need to work harder to reverse the negative process, or rise above and beyond the negative emotion through mindfulness (sati) and meditation (samādhi).

SD 56.20a

(Sukh’indriya) Suddhika Sutta

The (Joy Faculty) Basic Discourse | S 48.31/5:207

Theme: The 5 feeling faculties

2 "Bhikshus, there are these 5 (feeling) faculties. What are the five?

(1) The pleasure faculty; sukh’indriya
(2) the pain faculty; dukkh’indriya
(3) the joy faculty; somanass’indriya
(4) the displeasure faculty; domanass’indriya
(5) the equanimity faculty. upekkh’indriya

3 These, bhikshus, are the 5 faculties.

Paṭhamaṁ

21 On this vital mental technique, see Nimitta and anuvayañjana, SD 19.14.
22 On the 22 faculties, see SD 56.8 (1.1.2.2).
23 On feeling as an aggregate, see SD 17.3.
24 For an overview on feelings, see Bahu Vedanīya S (M 59), SD 30.4. See also Nyanaponika, Contemplation of Feeling (Vedanā Samyutta), Wheel 303/304, Kandy, 1995: https://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/nyanaponika/wheel303.html.
2 “Bhikshus, there are these 5 faculties. What are the five?

(1) The pleasure faculty; \(\text{sukh’indriya}\)
(2) the pain faculty; \(\text{dukkh’indriya}\)
(3) the joy faculty; \(\text{somanass’indriya}\)
(4) the displeasure faculty; \(\text{domanass’indriya}\)
(5) the equanimity faculty. \(\text{upekkh’indriya}\)

THE SAMUDAYA PENTAD

3 Those recluses or brahmins, bhikshus, who do not understand, as they really are, the arising and ceasing, the gratification, the danger and the escape regarding these 5 faculties:
I do not consider them to be recluses among recluses or brahmins among brahmins, and these venerable ones do not, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, in this very life, enter and dwell in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.

4 But, bhikshus, those recluses and brahmins who do understand, as they really are, the arising and ceasing, the gratification, the danger and the escape regarding these 5 faculties—they I consider to be recluses among recluses and brahmins among brahmins, and these venerable ones, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, in this very life, enter and dwell in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.”

\(\text{Catuttham}\)

2 “Bhikshus, there are these 5 faculties. What are the five?

(1) The pleasure faculty; \(\text{sukh’indriya}\)
(2) the pain faculty; \(\text{dukkh’indriya}\)
(3) the joy faculty; \(\text{somanass’indriya}\)
(4) the displeasure faculty; \(\text{domanass’indriya}\)
(5) the equanimity faculty. \(\text{upekkh’indriya}\)
3 Those recluses or brahmins, bhikshus,
(1) who do not understand the pleasure faculty,
   do not understand the arising of the pleasure faculty,
   do not understand the ceasing of the pleasure faculty,
   do not understand the way to the ceasing of the pleasure faculty;
(2) who do not understand the pain faculty,
   do not understand the arising of the pain faculty,
   do not understand the ceasing of the pain faculty,
   do not understand the way to the ceasing of the pain faculty;
(3) who do not understand the joy faculty,
   do not understand the arising of the joy faculty,
   do not understand the ceasing of the joy faculty,
   do not understand the way to the ceasing of the joy faculty;
(4) who do not understand the displeasure faculty,
   do not understand the arising of the displeasure faculty,
   do not understand the ceasing of the displeasure faculty,
   do not understand the way to the ceasing of the displeasure faculty;
(5) who do not understand [209] the equanimity faculty,
   do not understand the arising of the equanimity faculty,
   do not understand the ceasing of the equanimity faculty,
   do not understand the way to the ceasing of the equanimity faculty—

3.2 I do not consider them to be recluses among recluses or brahmins among brahmins,
and these venerable ones do not, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge,
in this very life, enter and dwell in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.

4 But, bhikshus, those recluses or brahmins
(1) who do understand the pleasure faculty,
   understand the arising of the pleasure faculty,
   understand the ceasing of the pleasure faculty,
   understand the way to the ceasing of the pleasure faculty;
(2) who do understand the pain faculty,
   understand the arising of the pain faculty,
   understand the ceasing of the pain faculty,
   understand the way to the ceasing of the pain faculty;
(3) who do understand the joy faculty,
   understand the arising of the joy faculty,
   understand the ceasing of the joy faculty,
   understand the way to the ceasing of the joy faculty;
(4) who do understand the displeasure faculty,
   understand the arising of the displeasure faculty,
   understand the ceasing of the displeasure faculty,
   understand the way to the ceasing of the displeasure faculty;
(5) who do understand [209] the equanimity faculty,
   understand the arising of the equanimity faculty,
   understand the ceasing of the equanimity faculty,
   understand the way to the ceasing of the equanimity faculty—
4.2 they I consider to be recluses among recluses or brahmins among brahmins, and these venerable ones do not, by realizing it for themselves with direct knowledge, in this very life, enter and dwell in the goal of recluseship or the goal of brahminhood.

— Pañcamaṁ —

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