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(Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta

The (Saḷāyatana) Discourse on Hāliddakāni | S 35.130
or, Hāliddaka Sutta, The Turmeric Discourse

Theme: The basic nature of feelings

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2021

1 Sutta summary and significance

1.1 SUMMARY

The (Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta (S 35.130) is a discourse of how we should simply observe feelings just as they are. We should simply see those feelings as they arise whether they are agreeable, disagreeable or neutral: for each we note: “So it is!” Then, we will not go on to like it, dislike it, or ignore it.

All feelings arise and pass away. It is our mind that likes or dislikes them. We thus see them as being mind-made. Since they are mind-made, they are impermanent. This is our basic practice of the **perception of impermanence**.¹

1.2 SIGNIFICANCE

1.2.1 TAKING FEELINGS AS THEY ARE

1.2.1.1 The (Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta (S 35.130) instructs us that on how feeling arises in us, and how to simply observe them for what they really are. First, there is simply sensation or “bare feeling,” arising from the contact (*phassa*) of a sense-faculty + sense-object + sense-consciousness, such as, the eye sees a form (a shape, image or colour).

The verb “sees” here refers to the *attention* we direct to the object. Dependent on the meeting of these 3—the eye, form and eye-consciousness—is *contact*, that is, the sensation of seeing a form. Then, we perceive or recognize this: we recall a similar experience, and project that memory onto what we see now. We have projected the past onto this present form: we then find it agreeable or disagreeable (depending on the past experience).

1.2.1.2 The Sutta instructs us to stop here, as it were. Simply take this *as it is*: “So it is!” (*iṭṭh’etaṃ*). We recognize the recognition! This is reflexive consciousness at work: a mirror-like wisdom on a simple practical level. To this extent, we have a vision of a situation *as it is*. In other words, we do not react to this projection or recognition, and feel: “I like it,” attracted to its projected agreeableness, or “I don’t like it,” rejecting its projected disagreeableness. **Feeling** has arisen here.

1.2.1.3 Now, when we take this experience a stage further: We do react to this projection or recognition of agreeableness, and think (intend): “I like it,” attracted to its projected agreeableness, or *think*, “I don’t like it,” rejecting (hating) its projected disagreeableness. Then, **formations** have arisen; karma is created. When we desire, we will desire *again*; when we hate, we will hate *again*—we are feeding the latent tendencies (*anusaya*).

¹ Some sources (such as Sutta Central) claim that S 35.130 has a Chin parallel in SĀ 553 (T2.145a8), but this is clearly not so.

1.2.2 NEUTRAL FEELING

1.2.2.1 When there is *neither* the agreeable *nor* the disagreeable in our **perception**, then, we take this “as the basis for equanimity” (*upekkhā-ṭṭhāniya*). We simply note this: “So it is,” a **neutral feeling** (that is neither painful nor pleasant).² This is, of course, to simplify the process, but it’s vital to understand this so that we are able to then act on it with wholesome mindfulness.

1.2.2.2 Under normal circumstances, we do not perceive a **neutral feeling**. We infer this as *the absence* of both the agreeable and the disagreeable. This *inference* is that of a “a neutral feeling” (*aduk-kham-asukhā vedanā*, a feeling that is neither pleasant nor painful). Since this reality is an inference, it is actually something from the *past*. We have projected this, too: it is **mind-made**. We are merely looking at a memory or at a view of a memory.

Since our perception of the neutral feeling is an image of the past (based on a memory, if you like), we see it as being **impermanent**. This is seeing it just as it is: a vision of true reality. In all simplicity, this is practical “**insight**” (*vipassana*), which we should be cultivating in our mindfulness and meditation practices.

1.2.2.3 How we, the unawakened, should properly respond to each of these 3 kinds of feelings [1.2], and how an arhat does so, are explained in **the Indriya, bhāvanā Sutta** (M 152).³ For our present purposes, the teaching of the (Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta suffices.⁴

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(Saḷāyatana) Hāliddakāni Sutta The (Saḷāyatana) Discourse on Hāliddakāni

S 35.130

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the venerable **Mahā Kaccāna** was dwelling on Mount Papāta at Kurara,ghara, among the people of Avantī.⁵

2 Then, the houselord Haliddakāni⁶ approached the venerable Mahā Kaccāna. Having approached the venerable Mahā Kaccāna, he saluted him and sat down at one side.

3 Sitting at one side, the houselord Haliddakāni said to the venerable Mahā Kaccāna:⁷

“Bhante, it was said by the Blessed One:

‘It is in dependence on **the diversity of elements** that there arises the diversity of contacts; in dependence on *the diversity of contacts* that there arises **the diversity of feelings**.’⁸

² S 35.130/3:115 f (SD 58.9).

³ M 152/3:298-301 (SD 17.13).

⁴ **Sabb’āsava S** (M 2) gives only this basic instruction on sense-restraint: “A monk dwells wisely restrained” in each of the sense-faculties (M 2,12), SD 30.3; fuller instructions are given in **Kūṭa, danta S** (D 5,64/1:70), SD 22.8. See SD 30.3 (2.2.2.1 n).

⁵ Avantī was located NE of Bombay in the Vindhya mountains.

⁶ His name comes from *halidda*, turmeric. He was probably a turmeric dyer. See SD 10.12 (1.1).

⁷ The houselord meets elder again in **Haliddakāni S 1** (S 22.3), SD 10.12, and **Haliddakāni S 2** (S 22.4), SD 70.15.

How is this so, bhante?”

4 (1) “Here, houselord, having *seen a form with the eye*, a monk understands that it is *agreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’⁹

There is eye-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.¹⁰

Then, having seen **a form** with the eye,

a monk understands that it is *disagreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is eye-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.

Then, having seen **a form** with the eye,

a monk understands it as a basis for equanimity,¹¹ thus: ‘So it is!’

There is eye-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is neither painful nor pleasant to experience, there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

5 (2) Further, houselord, having *heard a sound with the ear*, a monk understands that it is *agreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is ear-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.

Then, having heard **a sound** with the ear,

a monk understands that it is *disagreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is ear-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.

Then, having heard **a sound** with the ear,

a monk understands that it is a basis for equanimity, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is ear-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is neither painful nor pleasant to experience, there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

6 (3) Further, houselord, having *smelt a smell with the nose*, a monk understands that it is *agreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is nose-consciousness;

dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.

Then, having smelt **a smell** with the nose,

a monk understands it is *disagreeable*, thus: ‘So it is!’

There is nose-consciousness;

⁸ From **Vedanā, nānatta S 1** (S 14.4/2:141 f), SD 58.8a.

⁹ *Manāpaṃ itth’etan’ti pajanāti*. Comy: He understands the agreeable form seen by him, thus, “Such it is” (*itth’etan’ti*), that is, “This is just an agreeable one.” (SA 2:396,24)

¹⁰ This and prec lines: Be Ce, *cakkhu, viññāṇaṃ sukha, vedaniyañ ca phassaṃ paṭicca ...* which seems preferable to Ee, *cakkhu, viññāṇaṃ sukha, vedaniyaṃ. Sukha, vedaniyaṃ phassaṃ paṭicca ...*. It is unclear whether *cakkhu, viññāṇaṃ* is being listed as an additional element or is intended merely as a condition for the feeling. Comy takes it in the former sense: “(There is) eye-consciousness, and a contact which is a condition for pleasant feeling under the heading of decisive support, proximity, contiguity, or association [Vism 17.66-100/532-541]. In dependence on that contact to be experienced as pleasant, there arises a pleasant feeling.” (SA 2:396,25-32)

¹¹ The phrase “as a basis for equanimity” (*upekkhā-ṭṭhāniyaṃ*) describes the nature of a neutral object, ie, the absence of both the painful and the pleasant. See SD 7.9 (4.2.2).

dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.
Then, having smelt **a smell** with the nose,
a monk understands it as a basis for equanimity, thus: 'So it is!'
There is nose-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is neither -painful-nor-pleasant to experience,
there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

7 (4) Further, householder, having *tasted a taste* with the tongue,
a monk understands that it is agreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is **tongue-consciousness**;
dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.
Then, having tasted **a taste** with the tongue,
a monk understands it is disagreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is tongue-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.
Then, having tasted **a taste** with the tongue,
a monk understands it as a basis for equanimity, thus: 'So it is!'
There is tongue-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is neither painful nor pleasant to experience,
there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

8 (5) Further, householder, having *felt a touch* with the body,
a monk understands that it is agreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is **body-consciousness**;
dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.
Then, having felt **a touch** with the body,
a monk understands it is disagreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is body-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.
Then, having felt **a touch** with the body,
a monk understands it as a basis for equanimity, thus: 'So it is!'
There is body-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is neither painful nor pleasant to experience,
there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

9 (6) Further, householder, having *known a mental state* with the mind,
a monk understands that it is agreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is **mind-consciousness**;
dependent on a contact that is pleasant to experience, there arises a *pleasant* feeling.
Then, having known **a mental state** with the mind,
a monk understands it is disagreeable, thus: 'So it is!'
There is mind-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is painful to experience, there arises a *painful* feeling.
Then, having known **a mental state** with the mind,
a monk understands it as a basis for equanimity, thus: 'So it is!' [116]
There is mind-consciousness;
dependent on a contact that is neither painful nor pleasant to experience,
there arises a *neither-painful-nor-pleasant* feeling.

10 It is in this way, houselord, that dependent on the diversity of elements there arises the diversity of contacts; dependent on the diversity of contacts there arises the diversity of feelings.”

— evaṃ —

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