

# THE LIVING WORD OF THE BUDDHA

The Buddha's Teachings in the Oldest Texts

*Celebrating 20 years of full-time sutta translation and teaching, 2002-2022*

## Handbook of Meditation in Society 4

### *Sutta Discovery Vol 60.1d*

#### **Theme: *An Evolutionary Psychology of Mindfulness***

Buddhist experience: The individual and society

©TAN Beng Sin (Piya Tan) 2023a

For conventions (textual and technical) and bibliography, see **SD Guide**.

[PDF] To move around the book, click the BOOKMARK icon  on the far left panel; click the HEADINGS.

#### Page

- 7 [Detailed table of contents](#)
- 12 (1) [Mindfulness in daily life.](#)
- 42 (2) [The body-mind process.](#)
- 61 (3) [The social construct of Buddhism.](#)
- 77 (4) [Buddhist: religion or path?](#)
- 113 (5) [Approaches to Buddhism: the scholar and the practitioner.](#)
- 161 (6) [Teacher-constructed Buddhisms.](#)
- 196 (7) [A moral psychology of self-deception.](#)

***Mindfulness is knowing oneself so that we awaken to true freedom***

Sutta translations & study website: <http://dharmafarer.org>

Courses and messaging:

<http://themindingcentre.org>;

[t.me/suttasangha](https://t.me/suttasangha) (Global Sutta Community telegram)

ISBN 978-981-18-6493-3 (Physical)

ISBN 978-981-18-6494-0 (Digital)

©2023a TAN Beng Sin

All rights reserved  
Printed in Singapore

**THE MINDING CENTRE**, based in Singapore, is part of Piya Tan’s Dharma ministry. It was founded in 2006 to provide non-religious Dharma-based services to those in need of counsel and solace. It also serves as a haven and hub for those seeking Dharma by way of critical thinking, creative feeling, meditation, sutta translation and study, spiritual experience, and sharing that light and joy. The Centre also supports and promotes Piya Tan in his full-time Buddhist and related work.

**Courses:** <http://themindingcentre.org>

**THE SUTTA DISCOVERY SERIES** is part of the Living Word of the Buddha project which aspires to present and encourage an exploration of early Buddhism, both in a Dharma-inspired and academic manner for personal development as well as outreach work on a local and global scale. The Minding Centre and the Living Word of the Buddha project are motivated and guided by a quest for the historical Buddha and a vision of mere Buddhism.

**Suttas:** <http://dharmafarer.org>

**THE MERE BUDDHIST VISION.** We aspire to learn, teach and practise mere Buddha Dharma, or “non-religious Buddhism,” that is, Buddhism as simple as possible, as the teaching of the historical Buddha, so that it is open to all who seek true stillness and liberating wisdom. We aspire to compassionately and joyfully proclaim the possibility, necessity and urgency of gaining spiritual liberation in this life itself—at least as streamwinners, with or without dhyana—in keeping with the spirit of the Okkanta Samyutta (S 25). ***Mere Buddhism is easy: live it and be free.***

Piya Tan (TAN Beng Sin), 1949-

Title: Sutta Discovery 60.1d.

Theme: An evolutionary psychology of mindfulness: Buddhist experience – the individual and society

Series: The living word of the Buddha (2002- )

First published 2023; publisher: the author

ISBN 978-981-18-6493-3 (physical)

ISBN 978-981-18-6494-0 (digital)

### YOU can help Buddhism grow

Your pledge & support bring Dharma to others:

- Print Dharma and related books, and Internet Dharma
- Support our sutta translation: <http://dharmafarer.org>
- Sponsor our full-time Dharma work and global ministry

*WE GIVE*

*for the sake of a beautiful mind,  
as a support for the mind (in inner peace).*

(Aṭṭha Dāna Sutta, A 8.31/4:236)

The essay, **SD 60.1d**, *An Evolutionary Psychology of Mindfulness*, is part of the multi-volume SD 60 Handbook of meditation in Society, comprising (to date):

- SD 60.1a** Character Analysis
- SD 60.1b** Samatha, Vipassana, Kammatṭhāna
- SD 60.1c** The Rhetoric of Buddhist Experience
- SD 60.1d** An Evolutionary Psychology of Mindfulness
- SD 60.1e** Delusion and Experience
- SD 60.1f** Psychopathology of Mindfulness

## Detailed Table of Contents

<b>SUTTA DISCOVERY VOL 60.1D</b> .....	I
<b>THEME: AN EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY OF MINDFULNESS</b> .....	I
<b>IMPRINT PAGE</b> ii	
<b>THE MINDING CENTRE: CONTACTS AND SUPPORT</b> .....	iii
<b>LEARNING THE SUTTAS &amp; PIYA TAN</b> .....	iv
<b>SOME SELECTED BOOKS BY PIYA TAN</b> .....	v
<b>SUTTA DISCOVERY SERIES</b> .....	vi
<b>DETAILED TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	7
<b>1 MINDFULNESS IN DAILY LIFE</b> .....	12
<b>1.0 What is “evolutionary psychology”?</b> .....	12
<b>1.1 What is experience in early Buddhism?</b> .....	12
1.1.1 Body and mind .....	12
<b>Table 1.1.1.6</b> The 7 aspects of the mind. Cf SD 60.1e (Table 7.4) The 4 ultimates, sense-bases, and elements. ....	16
1.1.2 Experience and knowledge .....	18
<b>1.2 The nature of experience</b> .....	20
1.2.1 Experience and its objects .....	20
1.2.2 Supports for Buddhist experience .....	21
1.2.3 How do we know what we are experiencing? .....	25
1.2.4 How do we know it is a <i>Buddhist</i> experience? .....	25
1.2.5 Active and passive aspects of experience .....	26
<b>1.2.5.1</b> The difference between experience and consciousness .....	26
<b>1.2.5.2</b> A strong mind can grow in even a disabled body .....	27
<b>1.2.5.3</b> How our body is connected with the mind.....	28
<b>1.2.5.4</b> How we think .....	28
<b>1.2.5.5</b> The 3 aspects of our mind: <i>Citta mano viññāṇa</i> .....	29
1.2.6 How our thinking process evolves .....	30
1.2.7 Vitakka, vicāra .....	31
<b>Table 1.2.7.3.</b> <i>Vitakka</i> and <i>vicāra</i> .....	33

1.2.8 Perception and conception.....	33
1.2.9 How does the mind construct our experiences? .....	36
1.2.10 The suffering pericope .....	38
<b>1.3 Cognition: distributed and asymmetrical.....</b>	<b>39</b>
1.3.1 The “arising-of-mind” pericope .....	39
1.3.2 Cognitive binding .....	40
1.3.3 Cognition: a structural symmetry .....	41
<b>2 THE BODY-MIND PROCESS .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.1 Body-mind in Buddhist meditation.....</b>	<b>42</b>
2.1.1 The conscious body.....	42
<b>2.1.1.3</b> Mental object ( <i>dhamma</i> ).....	43
<b>2.1.1.8</b> The body-based mind .....	45
<b>2.1.1.9</b> The physical base of mind and mind-consciousness .....	46
2.1.2 What is the purpose of all this? .....	47
<b>2.2 “All the elements” .....</b>	<b>48</b>
2.2.0 Investigating reality.....	48
2.2.1 Form: Our conscious body; the 6 elements; the 18 elements.....	49
2.2.2 Feelings: The 6 elements .....	50
2.2.3 Formations: the 6 elements.....	52
2.2.4 Consciousness: The 3 elements .....	53
2.2.5 Samsara and nirvana: The 2 elements.....	54
2.2.6 Dependent arising as a conditioned element.....	55
2.2.7 Nirvana: the unconditioned element.....	58
2.2.8 Speaking of nirvana.....	60
<b>3 THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF BUDDHISM .....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>3.1 Buddhism and religion.....</b>	<b>61</b>
3.1.1 Buddhism as self-development.....	61
3.1.2 Who invented religion?.....	63
<b>3.2 Buddhism and its developments .....</b>	<b>66</b>
3.2.1 What’s wrong with Buddhist modernism? .....	66
3.2.2 Buddhism before religion, as a non-religious “path” .....	67
3.2.3 Buddhism and the Axial Age .....	69
<b>3.3 Buddhism as lay practice .....</b>	<b>70</b>
3.3.1 The lay discipline ( <i>gihī.vinaya</i> ).....	70
3.3.2 The laity and moral training.....	72
3.3.3 Evolution of the 5 precepts.....	72
<b>Table 3.3.3.2</b> The 10 courses of action [karma] .....	74
3.3.4 Laity as saints .....	75

4 BUDDHISM: RELIGION OR PATH? .....	77
<b>4.1 Buddhism as a religion</b> .....	<b>77</b>
4.1.1 Minding our own Buddhism.....	77
4.1.2 Out of the Buddha’s hands? .....	80
4.1.3 Buddhism as a path.....	82
<b>Table 4.1.3.1</b> The 3 trainings (basic practice) for laity and renunciants.....	82
4.1.4 The dynamics of Buddhist moral ethics .....	82
4.1.5 Buddhist spiritual psychology as mental health .....	85
<b>4.2 McM mindfulness [SD 60.1c (1.9.2)]</b> .....	<b>85</b>
4.2.1 Marketing mindfulness .....	85
4.2.2 Why McM mindfulness is so successful.....	86
4.2.3 What’s wrong with McM mindfulness? .....	86
<b>4.3 Aspects of modern lay Buddhism</b> .....	<b>89</b>
4.3.1 Modern Buddhism in the US.....	89
4.3.2 Our real task as lay Buddhists .....	90
<b>4.4 Buddhism and modern science</b> .....	<b>91</b>
4.4.1 Is Buddhism scientific? .....	91
4.4.2 The Chicago World Fair: Race and religion .....	94
4.4.3 The doctrine of evolution .....	95
4.4.4 Protestant Buddhism? .....	97
4.4.5 Meditation and science.....	98
4.4.6 Where Buddhism and science may meet .....	100
4.4.7 Non-duality in early Buddhism .....	102
4.4.8 The teacher or the teaching?.....	104
4.4.9 Being <i>a</i> Buddhist, <i>being</i> Buddhist .....	105
<b>4.5 Modern Buddhism in Malaysia</b> .....	<b>108</b>
4.5.1 How other religions and cultures influence local Buddhism .....	108
4.5.2 Priestly politics .....	111
4.5.3 Buddhism and Buddha Dharma .....	112
<b>5 APPROACHES TO BUDDHISM: THE SCHOLAR AND THE PRACTITIONER</b> .....	<b>113</b>
<b>5.1 Early Buddhism and cultural Buddhisms</b> .....	<b>113</b>
5.1.1 Early Buddhism .....	113
5.1.2 Cultural Buddhisms .....	120
5.1.3 Textual Buddhisms .....	122
<b>Figure 5.1.3.4</b> The development of later Buddhisms .....	124
<b>5.2 Evolution of modern Buddhism</b> .....	<b>124</b>
5.2.1 Texts and contexts: Historians and ethnographers .....	124
5.2.2 The vital role and need for textual Buddhism .....	126

5.2.3 Socio-karma (Group karma).....	129
<b>5.3 Scholars' Buddhisms.....</b>	<b>132</b>
5.3.0 Reynolds' 4 modes of scholarship.....	132
5.3.1 Mode I scholarship: The Pali Text Society and Max Weber.....	133
5.3.2 Mode II scholarship: Spiro in Burma.....	136
5.3.3 Mode III scholarship: Gombrich in Sri Lanka.....	138
5.3.4 Mode IV scholarship: Tambiah in Thailand.....	141
5.3.5 Professional courtesy and academic honesty.....	149
5.3.6 Schopen's Buddhism.....	151
5.3.7 The 2 duties of a practitioner.....	154
5.3.8 Practitioners and professors of Buddhism.....	157
<b>5.4 Overview and recap.....</b>	<b>158</b>
5.4.1 Early Buddhist Texts.....	158
5.4.2 Modern Buddhist studies.....	159
<b>6 TEACHER-CONSTRUCTED BUDDHISMS.....</b>	<b>161</b>
<b>6.1 Privatization and certification.....</b>	<b>161</b>
6.1.1 Measuring meditation.....	161
6.1.2 Measuring sainthood.....	163
6.1.3 The middle of the middle way.....	166
<b>6.2 Measuring the breath (A modern account of the awakening process).....</b>	<b>167</b>
6.2.1 Sunlun Sayadaw (1878-1952).....	167
6.2.2 Theinngu Sayadaw (1913-1973).....	170
6.2.3 Sunlun Sayadaw's meditation practice and experience.....	172
6.2.4 Theinngu Sayadaw's meditation practice and experience.....	175
6.2.5 Authority and controversy.....	182
6.2.6 So, you're an arhat! Charisma and Dharma.....	186
<b>6.3 Whose Buddhism?.....</b>	<b>188</b>
6.3.1 Make my Buddhism.....	188
6.3.2 My Buddhism, your Buddhism.....	188
6.3.3 Creative teachers, creative misreadings.....	194
6.3.4 Buddhism as a conversation.....	196
<b>7 A MORAL PSYCHOLOGY OF SELF-DECEPTION.....</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>7.1 Self-deception in Buddhism.....</b>	<b>197</b>
7.1.1 How we deceive ourselves.....	197
7.1.2 Religious belief formation.....	199
<b>7.2 Unwholesome religious belief formation process.....</b>	<b>201</b>
7.2.1 Unwholesome religious beliefs.....	201
7.2.2 Religious belief and faith.....	201

7.2.3 Defence mechanisms and self-deception .....	203
7.2.4 All that we know is provisional .....	203
<b>7.3 Developments in self-deception studies .....</b>	<b>205</b>
7.3.1 Divided minds: Psychological definitions, philosophical difficulties.....	205
7.3.2 Robert Trivers’ theory .....	207
7.3.3 Evolutionary aspect of self-deception .....	209
<b>7.4 Deception and delusion .....</b>	<b>209</b>
7.4.1 Delusion or self-deception? .....	209
7.4.2 Belief, delusion and beyond.....	213
<b>7.5 Self-deception in modern Buddhism .....</b>	<b>216</b>
7.5.1 Notions of Self and Soul .....	216
7.5.2 Self-view: The root of self-deception.....	218
<b>7.6 The 3 fetters of self-deception .....</b>	<b>219</b>
7.6.1 Why 3 fetters?.....	219
7.6.2 Self-identity view: The status is not the state.....	221
7.6.3 Historical and social bases for self-identity view .....	222
7.6.4 Attachment to rituals and vows: Seeking answers outside of us .....	227
7.6.5 Rituals and “make believe” .....	229
7.6.6 The benefits of wholesome rituals .....	231
7.6.7 Doubt: Words as truth .....	232
<b>7.7 Resolving self-deception .....</b>	<b>235</b>
7.7.1 Healthy self-formation and streamwinning.....	235
7.7.2 “Seven at most”: The significance of the number 7 .....	236
7.7.3 Understanding the self.....	240
7.7.4 Seeing ourselves as we truly are.....	241
7.7.5 Understanding nonself.....	245
WHY SUPPORT OUR SUTTA TRANSLATION WORK: REASONS AND HISTORY .....	249