

Mental harmony in daily life

An excerpt from SD 60.1e Delusion and Experience © Piya Tan, 2023b (forthcoming).

1.3.5.1 The gradual progress on the Buddhist path of training clearly shows that it is defined by the cultivation of mindfulness and awareness, working in tandem with moral conduct, the very foundation of Dharma-spirited life. Although we speak of the path of “the 3 trainings” as comprising moral virtue, concentration and wisdom [1.3.3.4], this triad is, in practice, **not always sequential**: they are attended to naturally, as necessary. They are more like the 3 wires of a power-cable working together to relay electrical power.

While it is true that we need a strong foundation of **moral virtue**, it is not something that we can perfect overnight, nor is it a status that we attain through some kind of ritual, empowerment or franchise. We need to constantly strengthen ourselves morally with mental cultivation and wisdom. Further, for our **meditation** to progress, it needs the support of our moral virtue—mindfulness and awareness are empowered by moral virtue; moral virtue is enhanced by mindfulness and awareness.

Moral virtue and mental cultivation help us cultivate **wisdom**. Wisdom, in its turn, keeps our mind free from mental hindrances, and enhances our moral strength by keeping us above any sense-distractions. Hence, moral virtue, mental training and wisdom work and grow together *pari passu*,¹ in step, as our developing mind gains greater capacity to see and pierce into true reality more broadly and more deeply. The focuses of mindfulness (*satipaṭṭhāna*) become more established with the help of moral virtue on one side and mindfulness and awareness on the other. In this way, moral conduct becomes natural, which conduces to mindfulness-awareness in all our waking actions.

1.3.5.2 The arhat remains unshakeably impartial with whatever he is experiencing through the senses, due to being established in mindfulness and awareness. In the case of visual experience, for example, it is described as follows in **the Vappa Sutta** (A 4.195):

Having seen a form with **the eye**, one is neither joyful nor sad, dwelling in equanimity with mindfulness and awareness.² (The same situation with the other sense-faculties.) (A 4.195/2:198), SD 77.12

An awakened mind naturally embraces mindfulness and awareness, and invariably remains aloof from reacting with desire or aversion. Even joy is seen with equanimity, with the mind harmonious towards all sense-objects. This equanimity supports mindfulness and awareness, and is in turn supported by them. This awakened level of equanimity, and that

¹ The idea that atolls were formed *pari passu* with the rise of ocean level was first outlined by Charles Darwin, though the idea is now dated (but still quoted): *Quarterly Journal of the Geological Soc of London, President's address*, 1889:78 = 1890:108. “Ecologically”: R Maino & D Emrullahu, “Climate change in Sub-Saharan Africa fragile states,” IMF working paper, 2022: <https://www.elibrary.imf.org/view/journals/001/2022/054/article-A001-en.xml>. The Latin term *pari passu* (“on equal footing,” ie at an equal rate) was widely used in numerous other learned writings on physical geography. *Pari passu* is today a well-known legal term in accounting and finance. I use *pari passu* in a developmental sense, to reflect *an equal or compatible growth* in the 3 trainings to correct a proofreader's view that *pari passu* is used only in the legal sense. I first learned the term in my A Levels geography class.

² *Cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā n'eva sumano hoti na dummano, upekkhako viharati sato sampajāno.* (A 4.195)

of the path saints, are clearly different from mere indifference. While the supermundane equanimity is rooted in wisdom, mere indifference is the result of ignorance.

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