



Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center

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Emotions

In Pāli there isn't a single word that exactly matches the modern English category "emotion." Instead, several terms are used depending on what aspect of emotion is meant.

- Feeling (vedanā) is the felt tone, the hedonic tone of experience: pleasant (sukha), unpleasant (dukkha), and neutral (adukkham-asukha), and arises with every sensory contact. Feeling does not mean complex emotions like anger or joy, but the raw feeling-quality that underlies them. See the July 2025 Newsletter - Feelings for a comprehensive discussion on feelings.
- Mental Factors (cetasikā) are emotions arising in the mind, for example: hatred (dosa), attachment (rāga), greed (lobha), delusion (moha), joy (pīti), and happiness (somanassa).

Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines by Nyanatiloka Thera

cetasika: 'mental things, mental factors', are those mental concomitants which are bound up with the simultaneously arising consciousness (citta = viññāṇa) and conditioned by its presence. Whereas in the Suttas all phenomena of existence are summed up under the aspect of five groups—corporeality, feeling, perception, mental formations, consciousness (see khandha)—the Abhidhamma as a rule treats them under the more philosophical three aspects: consciousness, mental factors and corporeality (citta, cetasika, rūpa). Thus, of these three aspects, the mental factors (cetasika) comprise feeling, perception and the fifty mental formations, altogether fifty-two mental concomitants. Of these, twenty-five are lofty qualities (either karmically wholesome or neutral), fourteen karmically unwholesome, while thirteen are as such karmically neutral, their karmic quality depending on whether they are associated with wholesome, unwholesome or neutral consciousness.

- Volitional, Intentional or Mental Formations (saṅkhāra) refers to all conditioned things, phenomena, or processes that are subject to change, and are dependent on causes and conditions. Volitional formations shape experience and mental states, and while they are not emotions themselves, they condition, sustain, and express emotions. Emotions may be included here as conditioned mental activities. Volitional formations include: intentions (cetanā), the core of kamma; habits, tendencies, and reactions; mental activities that shape how feelings turn into emotions and actions.

Feelings and mental factors are volitional formations. For example: unpleasant feelings condition intention (cetanā) "I want this to stop", volition creates the emotional story from the feeling; the resultant mental state are emotions such as anger, resentment, and fear.

Applied thought (vitakka) and sustained thought (vicāra) are volitional formations that produce mental directing and discursive thinking respectively. For example: repeated thinking about an insult is mental replay that produces justification for the emotion of anger and may lead to hatred. Applied thought and sustained thought condition and trigger emotions through rumination. The practice of meditation calms these volitional formations which leads to the settling of emotions.

Intentional attitudes (saṅkappa) are volitional formations which may be right or wrong intentions. Right Intentions (sammā-saṅkappa) are intention of renunciation (nekkhamma-saṅkappa), intention of non-ill will (abyāpāda-saṅkappa), and intention of harmlessness (avihiṃsā-saṅkappa). Wrong Intentions (asammā-saṅkappa) are intention of sensual desire (kāma-saṅkappa), intention of ill will (vyāpāda-saṅkappa), and intention of cruelty/harming (vihimsā-saṅkappa). For example: choosing patience instead of retaliation, and when emotion shifts from anger to compassion. Intentional attitudes redirect emotional energy. See the May

2023 Newsletter - The Noble Truth of the Path Leading to the Cessation of Suffering for a discussion on Right Intention.

Latent tendencies (anusaya) or habitual reactions are underlying tendencies located in the subconscious mind, and conditions emotion. Seven Latent Tendencies, Dispositions or Inclinations (anusaya) are the following:

1. lust for sensual pleasures (kāmarāga),
2. aversion (paṭigha),
3. conceit (māna),
4. views (ditthi),
5. doubt (vicikicchā),
6. craving for continued existence or becoming (bhavarāga),
7. ignorance (avijjā).

- Pleasant feelings triggers the tendency towards lust (kāmarāga anusaya).
- Unpleasant feelings triggers the tendency towards aversion (paṭigha anusaya).
- Neutral feelings triggers the tendency towards ignorance (avijjā anusaya).

These volitional formations make emotions feel automatic and personal. See the November 2024 Newsletter - Rebirth (punabbhava or paccājata) and a Brief Survey of Evidence for Rebirth for a discussion on latent tendencies.

Volitional formations are not emotions but are the forces that shape emotions. Emotions persist, intensify, or cease depending on: intention, thought patterns and habitual tendencies.

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saṅkhāra: this term has, according to its context, different shades of meaning, which should be carefully distinguished.

- (I) To its most frequent usages (1–4, following) the general term ‘formation’ may be applied, with the qualifications required by the context. This term may refer either to the act of ‘forming’ or to the passive state of ‘having been formed’ or to both.
- (1) As the second link of the formula of dependent origination, (paṭicca-samuppāda, q.v.), saṅkhāra has the active aspect, ‘forming’, and signifies ‘karma’ (q.v.), i.e., wholesome or unwholesome volitional activity (cetanā) of body (kāya-saṅkhāra), speech (vacī-saṅkhāra) or mind (citta- or mano-saṅkhāra). This definition occurs, e.g. at SN 12:2, 27. For saṅkhāra in this sense, the word ‘karma-formation’ has been coined by the author. In other passages, in the same context, saṅkhāra is defined by reference to (a) meritorious karma-formations (puññ’ābhisāṅkhāra), (b) demeritorious saṅkhāra (apuññ’ābhisāṅkhāra), (c) imperturbable saṅkhāra (āneñj’ābhisāṅkhāra), e.g. in SN 12:51; DN 33. This threefold division covers karmic activity in all spheres of existence: the meritorious karma-formations extend to the sensuous and the fine-material sphere, the demeritorious ones only to the sensuous sphere, and the ‘imperturbable’ only to the immaterial sphere.
 - (2) The aforementioned three terms, kāya-, vacī- and citta-saṅkhāra are sometimes used in quite a different sense, namely as: (1) bodily function, i.e., in-and-out-breathing (e.g., MN 10); (2) verbal function, i.e., thought-conception and discursive thinking; (3) mental-function, i.e., feeling and perception (e.g., MN 44). See nirodha-samāpatti.
 - (3) It also denotes the fourth group of existence (saṅkhāra-kkhandha), and includes all ‘mental formations’ whether they belong to ‘karmically forming’ consciousness or not. See khandha, Appendix: Table II and SN 22:56, 79.
 - (4) It occurs further in the sense of anything formed (saṅkhata, q.v.) and conditioned, and includes all things whatever in the world, all phenomena of existence. This meaning applies, e.g. to the well-known passage: “All formations are impermanent... subject to suffering” (sabbe saṅkhāra aniccā... dukkhā). In that context, however, saṅkhāra is subordinate to the still wider and all-embracing term dhamma (thing); for dhamma includes also the Unformed or Unconditioned Element (asaṅkhata-dhātu), i.e., Nibbāna (e.g. in sabbe dhammā anattā, “all things are without a self”).
- (II) saṅkhāra also means sometimes ‘volitional effort’, e.g., in the formula of the roads to power (iddhipāda, q.v.); in sasaṅkhāra- and asaṅkhāra-parinibbāyī (anāgāmī, q.v.); and in the Abhidhamma terms asaṅkhārika- (q.v.) and sasaṅkhārika-citta, i.e., without effort, spontaneously, and with effort, prompted.

- Mind (citta) is the fundamental quality of knowing present in all sentient beings, sometimes translated as heart. Emotions are often described as states of mind, e.g., “a mind with anger,” and “a mind with joy.”

Early Buddhism analyzes experience phenomenologically in terms of feeling tone (vedanā), mental factors (cetasikā), and mental states (citta). The term phenomenological relates to the

science of phenomena as distinct from that of the nature of being, and denoting or relating to an approach that concentrates on the study of consciousness and the objects of direct experience: the phenomenological approach's reliance solely on personal experience.

The difference between feelings and emotions are distinguished in the following way:

1. Feelings (*vedanā*) refer to the raw, subjective, and experiential quality of an experience. There are three primary types of feelings:

- Pleasant feelings (*sukha vedanā*): the experience of something enjoyable or pleasant.
- Unpleasant feelings (*dukkha vedanā*): the experience of something undesirable or unpleasant.
- Neutral feelings (*adukkhamasukha vedanā*): feelings that are neither pleasant nor unpleasant, often associated with neutral experiences.

These feelings are fundamental aspects of our experience, and they play an important role in the arising of craving (*taṇhā*) and attachment (*rāga*).

2. Emotions are part of a broader category known as mental factors or mental states (*cetasika*).

Emotions arise in conjunction with thoughts and feelings and are more complex than basic feelings. Emotions can include states such as love, compassion, anger, hatred, joy, and others. Feelings are immediate direct experiences. Emotions are a combination of various mental factors, thoughts, and attitudes; and are conditioned by mental formations (*saṅkhārā*).

Feelings refer to the basic experiential qualities of an encounter, categorized into pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, while emotions are more complex mental states that involve a combination of feelings, thoughts, and attitudes.

Announcements

- Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center has a presence on Meet-Up social media, and we ask that you please sign up for every event that you are planning to attend at www.MeetUp.com. Some people are intimidated by a small number of attendees, and a larger number will be encouraging.
- Please help advertise Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center by providing a review at www.google.com/maps.

Activities of the Meditation Center

- Group sitting meditation practice for one hour is held Monday through Friday at 6:30 a.m. and every day at 5:30 p.m. After meditation, Ajahn Kumāro is available to answer questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com on the days and time you would like to participate.
- Group sitting meditation practice for two hours is held every Saturday and Sunday at 6:30 a.m.
- The days of the full moon, new moon, and the two half moons are called in Pali: The Uposatha, and is a Buddhist day of observance. A lunar calendar is available at <https://cal.forestsangha.org>. Ajahn Kumāro will perform the ceremony of giving the five precepts on the full and new moon days after the 5:30 p.m. meditation. You may elect to keep the precepts as long as you see fit (one night, a week, a lifetime, etc.).
- Meditation Workshop is held on the first Sunday of each month between 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m. The workshop will provide instruction and practice for sitting and walking meditation. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the Dhamma. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- A recording of a Dhamma Talk from an experienced Thai Forest Teacher will be played on the third Sunday of each month. Sitting meditation starts at 4:30 p.m. and the Dhamma Talk will be played afterwards. Please sign up on Meet-Up or send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com if you are planning to participate.
- Every Saturday at 4:15 p.m. the Meditation Center will be cleaned. Please join us in maintaining a clean space for practicing and discussing the Dhamma.

- There is a library at the Meditation Center. You may browse for books to borrow at 5:00 p.m. and check out the books for three weeks.
- Everyday at 8:40AM Ajahn Kumāro leaves for alms-round in order to give residents of Asheville the opportunity to earn merit by practicing generosity of giving food and placing it into the alms bowl. Ajahn does not accept or handle money. Ajahn usually arrives at the Whole Foods Market, 70 Merrimon Ave., just before 9:00 a.m. and stands in front of the store for alms.
- Ajahn is available at other times during the day to meet with individuals or groups when requested.
- For more additional information, please send an email to mittameditation@gmail.com. We also have a presence on Facebook and Meet-Up social media.

Request for Support

The Meditation Center is in need of support in order to accomplish its mission and vision. The support may take various forms. You will support the Meditation Center by:

- Being present at the Meditation Center for group meditation.
- Giving alms during alms-round.
- Bringing to the Meditation Center items that are listed on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com.
- Volunteering your skills, energy, and time at the Meditation Center.
- Informing your family and friends about the Meditation Center and encouraging them to participate in the activities.
- Donating financial contributions for the Meditation Center's expenses. Kalyāṇa-Mitta Meditation Center is recognized as a tax-exempt organization by the IRS under section 501(c)(3). Donations are deductible in accordance with IRS regulations. Financial contributions may be made on the support page of the website www.mittameditation.com, and additional means for making financial donations may be discussed with Elisha Buhler at (910) 922-1549.