

Satipatthana and Profound Samadhi - Day 1 Talk 5

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January 24, 2026

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Hello, hello to those coming back. Any thoughts or comments? Leisha is going to come in shortly for his next presentation. We're getting ready for a big shift from the sensations, expansion of the sensations, and the realm that opens up with sensations. And we're going to move into the second foundation, which is a big turning point in this sutta.

Something really different and big emerges. This practice, the second foundation, is right in the middle of the 13 practices of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. And it's a very significant move. We're going deeper into our depths and looking at the depth that arises. That we grow, that then comes and supports us.

But before going into that, I thought I would invite Aleix to help us lay out some of the groundwork, linguistically speaking. Aleix, you ready? Sure, my pleasure.

Aleix Ruiz-Falqués

Hi, everyone, again. So we're going to move on into our journey through some *Pāli* words, some concepts that you have already heard from Francisco, and you have already put into practice, I believe. And this part of the presentation is about sensations precisely, and things related to them.

So as you know, in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* we talk about sensations. But especially observing sensations. And since we were discussing knowledge and what it means to know something before, maybe we could just pause for a couple of seconds and ask ourselves. Maybe, what does it mean to observe a sensation?

Usually observing is a means to see something. But how do we observe them? Do we have eyes that can see sensations? What does it mean exactly? Are we talking through metaphors when we practice?

Do we understand what we mean by observing sensations? Well, these are just some questions. But you can see already that the language, obviously, in English, in *Pāli* as well, is to a certain extent metaphorical. Because generally observing something means seeing something with our eyes.

But perhaps using our inner eyes, if that makes any sense, that would be the kind of organ that we use to observe sensations. Now, the word for sensation or sensations, it can be singular or plural actually, is *vedanā*. And this is a word whose verbal root you already know because we've seen it before in *sampativedeti*, *sampativit*.

That means to directly and completely experience or encounter something in our field or range of experience. The word *vedanā* is a bit simpler because it's just made out of the root *vit*. That means to know in the sense, in the phenomenological sense, of encountering or experiencing.

So the *vedanā* is sometimes translated as sensation, sometimes translated as feelings. For those who are familiar with Buddhist terminology, *vedanā* is one of the five *khandhas*, the five aggregates or constituents of what a being is or what a person is. And generally, although the text put it in a way that looks a little bit simple, like the *vedanā* or sensation, it can be *sukha*.

That means pleasure or pleasurable sensation or happy. Or it can be *dukkha*. That means painful or a suffering sensation. And then there is something in between that is a neutral sensation, not *sukha*, not *dukkha*.

These are the three terms. But generally, what we understand from the text is that there is a spectrum. Like in the same way that we have a spectrum of colors. So this is also part of the observation of *vedanā*.

So when one observes a pleasurable sensation, what kind of pleasure is it? Are all pleasures the same? Are all pains the same? How do they differ?

So because knowing pleasure or pain is something very much direct, we know whether we feel pleasure or pain or neither. But we don't know it in the same way that we know that two and two, two plus two is four. We all call it all knowledge, but it's not the same.

Or we know that the capital city of France is Paris. This is all we say, I know, I know. I'm experiencing pleasure or pain. But in the case of *vedanā*, this is a phenomenological knowledge. Something that happens that we know.

Like I can know your age, for instance. But I cannot know your *sukha* and *dukkha*. There's something very much personal, this direct knowledge that we encounter, that we *vid*, that we know through experience in *vedanā*. So that's one term that keeps coming.

And I just wanted to point out that it's connected to one word that we used as sensing. Remember? So we translated *sampativedati* as one is sensing, one I sense. So the word *vedanā* also means sensation. They are connected.

Then there are two terms that are used in describing sensations that are quite intriguing, mysterious. Of course, we have to translate them. You'll see them translated in various ways in many different translations. These are in *Pāli samisa* and *nirāmisā*.

Samisa and *nirāmisā*, as you can see right away, they are very similar. One part of the word is the same. The first part of the word is different. So the first one is *sa* plus *āmisā*.

Sa means with. And the second one, *nirāmisā*, is *nir*, that means without. And yes, it's the same *nir* as in *nirvāṇa*. Yeah, *nir* means without. And it's *nirāmisā*, without *āmisā*.

In our text, we have it translated as surface and deep. It's as opposed types of sensations. There are surface or superficial sensations. This is how we translate *samisa*. And there are deep sensations. This is how we translate *nirāmisā*.

And of course, there's nothing problematic with this translation that is very clear, I think. And in terms of practice, there is no problem at all. However, if you are interested in knowing a little bit more, maybe, about the etymology of these terms that are actually not very, very common in the Buddhist literature, they appear mostly in the context of meditation practice.

And the direct meaning or the first meaning of *āmisā*, this term, is flesh or food. But when I was looking into the word *āmisā*, at least to my knowledge, the context here with sensations would probably mean that it refers to flesh or food in the sense of bait or lure or reward. Or if we translate it into human experience, gratification.

So when we have these two types of sensations, we can call it, we can distinguish them and say surface versus deep. Or you can say mundane. Sometimes it is translated as mundane, worldly versus spiritual or non-worldly, supramundane, *nirāmisā*.

But another way, perhaps more direct, that has to do with the etymology would be to say that the *samisa* sensations are the ones that are baiting us. That are showing us something that we want to. It's a kind of bait that we want to bite. And they are going to carry us away.

Whereas the *nirāmisā*, they are many times, they can be painful *nirāmisā* sensations. But many times they can be pleasurable. But they are not taking us anywhere. It's not a kind of trap.

These are considered higher states of consciousness. And they are positive. So this is an important point because sometimes the understanding about *Theravāda* Buddhism or *Pāli* Buddhism or early Buddhism, however we call it, is that it's focused on the idea that everything is suffering and meditation is suffering.

It's very difficult and all pleasure is bad and desire is bad etc. And that is not exactly how the texts present the situation. It's just that there are mundane pleasures. And there are some other pleasures that are much more refined, subtle, and these are related to these deep sensations.

It doesn't mean that one needs to be attached to them. But they do exist. And they need to be acknowledged. But in any case, the etymology of *samisa* and *nirāmisā* really means with flesh or without flesh.

But probably that means there's probably a metaphor with the fishing or with the baits that are used with animals to catch animals. Then there is a very interesting expression in the sutta that is recited many times. *Kāyānupassī viharati*, and it goes on with *vedānānupassī viharati*, *cittānupassī viharati*, and *dharmānupassī viharati*.

These are the four satipaṭṭhānas. But the structure is the same. So we use the *kāyānupassī viharati* as

an example. And we generally translate it as one abides observing the body or observing sensations or whatever it is.

So this is a very clear and simple translation. But if we would look again into the etymology or what the *Pāli* is actually saying, the word *kāya* in the compound *kāyānupassī*. *Kāya* means body. You can also use *vedanā* etc.

So there are the four foundations of mindfulness. And then *anupassī* is a verb of knowledge. But this is yet another type of knowledge. This is the one that is connected with vision.

You know that the Buddha developed the *Dhamma*. The *Dhammacakku*. It's the eye of the *Dhamma*. It's another metaphor for knowledge. So in this case *passī* refers to the verb *passati*. That means to see, to watch.

And the preverb, this kind of particle that precedes the root, indicates an action that is done repeatedly or continuously. So the *kāyānupassī* means one who's watching or observing continuously the body. The body or sensations etc.

And again the verb in the sentence is *viharati*. That is probably a verb or a word that might ring a bell because it's very similar to the word that we use for monasteries. That is *vihāra*. Or by extension the state of Bihār in India. That is the same word, *vihāra*.

So what would be the relationship of abiding in monastery? Like initially we would say, well it's very clear because the monastery is a place to abide as a residence. But actually that is not the exact etymology of the word.

Because the monastery is a place, or the *vihāra* is a place, for monastics or religious practitioners or meditators to abide. And as you know, the early meditators, they didn't have a house. They left home, like the Buddha. They were homeless.

So technically they shouldn't have a *vihāra* or an abode. So their abode was basically the open air. But they had places to walk around or to roam around.

So if you check the verb *viharati* in a dictionary, in a Sanskrit dictionary, you'll see that one of the entries that is a pretty old one means to walk around, to go about, to move around. Because that's what the ancient practitioners, yogis and meditators did. They were moving around.

Then by extension, it means to abide. But what I want to point out is that in the expression, one abides observing, et cetera, this is a kind of dynamic abiding. It's not abide as settling down in an activity. It's a dynamic activity.

So just remember that *viharati* is not a static abiding. It's a dynamic abiding. Now, we've seen three different types of verbs for knowledge so far. And that will be it, basically.

But just to show you the different shades in the degradation of knowledge, we can use verbs that are connected to *jānāti*. That means to know. This is what we would call the rational knowledge.

If I know that two and two is four, that's *jānāmi*, I know. But if one experiences pain, if I go to the doctor and say, well, I have headache. How do you know that? Well, I just feel it. I experience it directly.

That's *vedeti* or *sampativedeti*. That's connected to *vedanā*. That's the phenomenological experience, or experiencing something that's manifesting to me, to myself. And we've also seen that verbs that mean to see, watching, they can also mean to know.

Actually, there are many sentences, many passages in the *Pāli* Canon where the Buddha says, I know and I see this. It says knowledge and vision. You've probably seen this, knowledge and vision, they go together.

So knowledge would be more rational. Vision would be more experiential. But the *passati* is maybe instead of ontological or phenomenological, that's something that is more, perhaps we could call it contemplative. And that's an active observation.

It's not a passive observation, but an active seeing something. As in when someone explains to you, solves a problem to you, and you say, oh, I see. I see. Now I see. Now I understand. I see. I actively understand it by seeing.

And finally, as a kind of trivia note, again, on the theme, whether the teachings of the historical Buddha were pessimistic or not, or if there's any happiness and pleasure in the practice, the answer of the tradition, at least in the *Theravāda* tradition, is that yes, the practice is happy.

It's not true that practicing Buddhism is something that is painful. And we have all we have to be kind of sad and kind of depressed all the time. It's not like that. It has to be joyful and happy. Even experiencing happy sensations and feelings.

And there's the record of one early school of Buddhism that goes down with the name sometimes Kukulikas or sometimes Gokulikas. I've just chosen this one because it's found in a text called the *Kathāvatthu*. That is an old Buddhist text that records some discussions or debates among different Buddhist schools around the 3rd century or the 2nd century before the Common Era.

So these Gokulikas are on the record for saying they were Buddhists. They were very much pessimistic. And they thought that the world is a cinder heap, it's all ashes, and that everything is suffering.

So they took it very literally, that all is *dukkha*, everything is suffering. And the Theravadians, the *Theravāda* school, or the Theriyya school, the elders, they thought it was proper to correct them and to say, well, no, we disagree with that. Because there exists a form of sublime happiness.

And this reference to sublime happiness, among other things, refers to the *nirāmiṣa vedanā*. The *nirāmiṣa* sensations and experiences that we know through the practice of meditation. So that will be all from my side. I hope it was useful to some extent.

And I have shared the slides if you need to keep them. And I will also share my email in the chat, just in case if anyone is interested in or has questions about *Pāli* words, et cetera. Thank you so much. It

was a real pleasure to be here. Thank you so much to Francisco as well. Thank you.

Francisco Morillo Gable

No, thank you, Aleix. Thank you, everyone.