The Benefits Of Perfecting Equanimity

The remaining Parami for discussion is Equanimity. There are two ways to understand this mental quality: *upekkha*, which is typically translated as *neutrality*, and *tatramajjhattata*, typically translated as *balance*. This concept is a core aspect of the Buddhist process for awakening. It is one of the seven awakening factors, and also one of the four divine abidings (along with lovingkindness, compassion and sympathetic joy). In both cases, equanimity is essential for the proper functioning of the other associated mental factors.

In the classical Buddhist rendering, upekkha is the ability of the mind to be free from attachment to outcome, free from what are called “eight worldly conditions”: Loss and gain, good-repute and ill-repute, praise and censure, and sorrow and happiness. I personally find tatramajjhattata to be more useful, seeing this quality the most suitable balancing of mental factors in a particular situation. The origination of the word offers some insight into this (Quoted from an article by Gil Fronsdal entitled “Equanimity”):

“a compound made of simple Pali words. Tatra, meaning “there,” sometimes refers to “all these things.” Majjha means “middle,” and tata means “to stand or to pose.” Put together, the word becomes “to stand in the middle of all this.”

Let me use a graphic illustration to demonstrate this:

Sati-mindfulness

Monitors the four functions

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***Equanimity =***

***Dynamic balance of factors***

Saddha-faith/confidence

Too much supports rigidity, piety

Viriya-energy/effort

Too much supports agitation

Samadhi-tranquility/stability

Too much supports dullness

Scattered attention

supports skepticism

The middle-balance function of tatramajjhattata, with the ongoing support of mindful investigation, monitors the interactions between energy and tranquility to avoid too much agitation or sloth/torpor, and monitors the balance between the interaction between investigation and confidence to avoid skepticism or mental rigidity. These interactions are dynamic, constantly changing; when they are out of balance there is a lack of equanimity.

In other talks, “The Perfections Leading to Enlightenment *by Sujin Boriharnwanaket, t*ranslated by Nina van Gorkom” has been quoted relative to the Parami being discussed. Here is today’s quote:

“Equanimity has the characteristic of promoting the aspect of neutrality; its function is to see things impartially; its manifestation is the subsiding of attraction and repulsion; reflection upon the fact that all beings inherit the results of their own kamma is its proximate cause.”

Relating this quote to the graphic can be beneficial: as regards the characteristic, neutrality is the balance between energy and cognition; as regards to the function, it relates to the avoidance of too much investigation or too much confidence; as regards the manifestation, it relates to the maximum levels of energy between the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems in the body; as regards the proximate cause, it relates to the resulting benefits of maximizing wholesome karmic formations.

How does equanimity relate to the other Paramis? This topic will be explored in another talk about integrating the Paramis.