**SIX BEAUTIFUL PAIRS OF WHOLESOME CETASIKAS**

The next twelve cetasikas are clustered in pairs regarding six topics: *tranquility, lightness, pliancy, wieldiness, proficiency* and *uprightness*. The pairs are mental conditioning factors as reflected in states of consciousness. Buddhist psychology proposes that each moment of conscious awareness has three essential components: a stimulus (light, sound, flavor, odor, pressure, temperature, pleasure, pain, etc.), a system capable of stimulation (eye, ear, nose, tongue, etc.), and the reflective capacity of the mind (consciousness).

Within the mind, the categories that function to create meaningful self-states are divided for analytical reasons into the Universal conditioners, the Occasional conditioners, (Both are ethically malleable, that is influenced by accompanying conditioners that may be wholesome or unwholesome), the Unwholesome conditioners, and the Wholesome conditioners.

The Wholesome conditioners are subdivided; there are seven Wholesome conditioners that operate in every moment of consciousness unimpaired by greed, hatred or ignorance: Confidence, Mindfulness, Moral Shame (valuing virtue), Respect For Consequences (karma, the law of cause and effect), Non-Attachment, Non-Aversion and Equanimity.

When the Universal Wholesome Conditioners are operating effectively, the five hindrances are “disabled”, that is, there is no craving and clinging in the mind and one’s ability to be clearly aware and emotionally balanced is operating. In the Satipatthana Sutta, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness discourse, the third foundation is *cittanupassana*, *mindfulness of the mind* (consciousness). Here is a relevant quote from the third foundation:

"And how does a monk remain focused on the mind in & of itself? There is the case where a monk, when the mind has passion, discerns that the mind has passion. When the mind is without passion, he discerns that the mind is without passion. When the mind has aversion, he discerns that the mind has aversion. When the mind is without aversion, he discerns that the mind is without aversion. When the mind has delusion, he discerns that the mind has delusion. When the mind is without delusion, he discerns that the mind is without delusion.

"When the mind is constricted, he discerns that the mind is constricted. When the mind is scattered, he discerns that the mind is scattered. When the mind is enlarged, he discerns that the mind is enlarged. When the mind is not enlarged, he discerns that the mind is not enlarged. When the mind is surpassed, he discerns that the mind is surpassed. When the mind is unsurpassed, he discerns that the mind is unsurpassed. When the mind is concentrated, he discerns that the mind is concentrated. When the mind is not concentrated, he discerns that the mind is not concentrated. When the mind is released, he discerns that the mind is released. When the mind is not released, he discerns that the mind is not released.

"In this way he remains focused internally on the mind in & of itself, or externally on the mind in & of itself, or both internally & externally on the mind in & of itself. Or he remains focused on the phenomenon of origination with regard to the mind, on the phenomenon of passing away with regard to the mind, or on the phenomenon of origination & passing away with regard to the mind. Or his mindfulness that 'There is a mind' is maintained to the extent of knowledge & remembrance. And he remains independent, unsustained by (not clinging to) anything in the world. This is how a monk remains focused on the mind in & of itself. (Translated by Thanissaro)

In the fourth foundation, the hindrances are overcome in the following manner:

"There is the case where a monk remains focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the *five hindrances.* And how does a monk remain focused on mental qualities in & of themselves with reference to the five hindrances? There is the case where, there being sensual desire present within, a monk discerns that 'There is sensual desire present within me.' Or, there being no sensual desire present within, he discerns that 'There is no sensual desire present within me.' He discerns how there is the arising of unarisen sensual desire. And he discerns how there is the abandoning of sensual desire once it has arisen. And he discerns how there is no future arising of sensual desire that has been abandoned. (The same formula is repeated for the remaining hindrances: ill will, sloth & drowsiness, restlessness & anxiety, and uncertainty.) (Translated by Thanissaro)

The conditions then are such that the following twelve mind conditioners can manifest. In effect, the mind “wakes up” and operates at a much higher level of functioning. The twelve Wholesome Cetasikas listed below are listed as pairs to reflect the interactions between the higher quality of receptivity of the mind and the combined effect of the aggregation of the other Wholesome conditioners. Therefore, they are often called the Six Beautiful Pairs.

Consciousness has a binding effect and occurs during the “blending” that occurs when watching a motion picture projected on a screen—thousands and thousands of separate images briefly illuminate the screen, and the mind blends them all together. Each moment of self-state organization is conditioned by the cooperative functioning of the cetasikas, with each conditioned manifestation comparable to the individual photographic images on a film strip. The nature of the brain’s functioning involves a momentary “afterglow”, blending the previous moment into the emergence of the next momentary self-state organization—this streaming phenomenon is literally what happens when the flickering images projected on the screen are processed within the brain.

The manifestation of this blending process is investigated through the practice of vipassana, insight meditation. The primary means for cultivating vipassana involves mindfulness of breathing meditation. As investigation of the sensation of breathing becomes less intruded upon by the five hindrances, the ability to functionally “deconstruct” the process of selfing becomes stronger and more effective. One of the possible subjective experiences that can occur when the mind is operating at a heightened level of functioning is the ability to directly experience the flickering effect in consciousness, which would occur visually when a projector is operating slowly enough so the binding function is disabled.

I have frequently commented that, during retreats lasting one week or longer, providing intensive and ongoing cultivation of vipassana and the decreasing intrusiveness of the hindrances, we become much more mentally alert, internally balanced and clearly aware of the operation of the Wholesome Cetasikas. The mind “wakes up” and the results include the enhance functioning of the following conditioners:

1. **TRANQUILITY OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali term here is *kayapassadhi* (kah-yah-pah-sah-dee). The word *kaya* translates as *bod*y, in the way one describes *a body of water*, which is an accumulation of water molecules. It is a “body” as the accumulated effect of the cooperation of the other Wholesome conditioners. *Passadhi* translates as *tranquility* and represents one of the seven awakening factors, key elements of the fourth foundation of mindfulness. I have often talked of how important the development of samadhi/passadhi (sah-mah-dee/pah-sah-dee) is for the practice of vipassana. *Samadhi* is *stability of attention* (also one of the seven awakening factors), and *passadhi* is *the absence of emotional turbulence* regarding the flow of internal self-organization processes. Tranquility arises in a moment of self-organizing process that isn’t disturbed by craving and clinging. Along with tranquility of mind, this is the antidote for the Unwholesome cetasikas of desire, aversion/ill-will and restlessness. In my experience, there is a smoothness and quietude that persists, even when there are unpleasant moments in awareness—in this way tranquility is closely cooperative with equanimity, one of the Universal Wholesome Cetasikas and included in the seven awakening factors.
2. **TRANQUILITY OF MIND**: The Pali term here is *cittapassadhi* (chee-tah-pah-sah-dee). The word *citta* represents *the reflective capacity of the mind*, that is, the sequential accumulation of moments of “selfing” that appear in consciousness. The stability of attention manifested by samadhi/passadhi stabilizes and eliminates turbulence in the flow of attention, therefore the “flow” of recurring self-states becomes smooth and harmonious. A useful metaphor would be the tranquility in the surface of a pond; the absence of any ripples would be kayapassadhi.
3. **LIGHTNESS OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali term here is *kayalahuta* (kah-yah-lah-hoo-tah). The word *lahuta* is translated as *lightness, buoyancy* or *agility*. It is "…the capacity of the mind to turn very quickly to a wholesome object or to the contemplation of impermanence, etc." The agility comes about as the mind is less burdened by the hindrances associated with craving and clinging that occur due to the urgency of craving which disrupts the flow of attentional energy, and the enchantment of clinging which causes the energy of attention to “get stuck” and less buoyant. This mental factor particularly supports the other wholesome conditioners in overcoming the hindrance of sloth and torpor. In my experience attention becomes uplifting and fluid with a quality of heightened interest in the process of investigating what is happening in the mind.
4. **LIGHTNESS OF MIND**: The Pali term here is *cittalahuta* (chee-tah-lah-hoo-tah). As the Wholesome cetasikas condition the succession of moments of consciousness, the flow of experience becomes characterized by “unstuckness”. When practicing mindfulness of breathing, every time attention is diverted away from the “heaviness and stuckness” of craving and clinging, the practice of vipassana is supported, particularly through the function of *dhammavicaya* (dah-mah-vee-chah-yah), *the investigation of mental phenomena*, another of the seven awakening factors.
5. **PLIANCY OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali term here is *kayamuduta* (kah-yah-moo-doo-tah). The word *muduta* is translated as *pliancy* or *sensitivity*. This conditioner of consciousness is the specific antidote for the craving and clinging manifesting as mental rigidity, i.e., the unwholesome cetasikas of wrong view and conceit. It is open-mindedness as to what is good and wholesome. When thinking of this conditioner, I recall the substance called “Silly Putty”, which, when placed on a quarter, oozes down around the surface of the coin; when the substance is separated from the quarter, a reliable concave replication of that side of the coin is retained. When the practice of aiming and sustaining attention on the breath matures, the detailed “texture” of the breath sensation is revealed, and this cultivates the awakening factor of *dhammavicaya*. In my experience there is a quality of clarity and penetrating attention that clarifies what is happening in consciousness in an ongoing way that seems effortless.
6. **PLIANCY OF MIND**: The Pali term here is *cittamuduta* (chee-tah-moo-doo-tah). As the cooperative activity of the Wholesome mind conditioners manifest sequentially, reflected in consciousness, the consciousness becomes pliantly receptive to the next moment of experience. In this way, pliancy of mental factors/mind interacts beneficially in the practice of vipassana.
7. **WIELDINESS OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali word here is *kayakammannata* (kah-yah-kah-mah-nah-tah). The term *kammannata* is translated as *wieldiness* or *workability*. The classical Buddhist analogy is the workability of gold once the impurities of the raw ore are removed. I used to make gold jewelry, and I can attest that the purer the gold, the more easily it can be shaped. In this way, the conditioning function of wieldiness coordinates well with the pliancy conditioning function. Another analogy I have used is the ability to handle a tool. When I was a boy scout, we would have contests with an axe, involving the ability to aim the edge of the axe at a spot, and with a full overhead swing, be able to hit a predetermined target mark accurately. In this regard, wieldiness increases the persistent functioning of the awakening factors of *investigation of mental phenomena*, *stability of attention* and *energy/right effort*. This cetasika represents skillfulness in applying the antidotes for all five hindrances: sensual desire, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness/worry and skeptical doubt. In my experience with this cetasika I have more confidence in the ability to identify and make best use of the other wholesome cetasikas. To use a contemporary psychological term, this provides *self-efficacy*, which is *the ability to skillfully perform a particular function with confidence.*
8. **WIELDINESS OF MIND**: The Pali word here is *cittakammannata* (chee-tah-kah-mah-nah-tah). This represents the ability of consciousness to accept the operation of wholesome conditioning functions without disturbance and with clarity—the essential functions of vipassana and the seven awakening factors. This represents what we call self confidence.
9. **PROFICIENCY OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali word here is *kayapagunnata* (kah-yah-pah-goo-nah-tah). The term *pagunnata* is translated as *proficiency*, *effectiveness*, *reliability* or "*goodness of fit*" regarding the functioning of the cetasikas. Referring to the analogy regarding the wieldiness in hitting a target with an axe, it represents the confidence and consistency with which the axe hits the identified target. It is reportedly the manifestation of good mental health, what I call *self-state integration*. In my experience, this cetasika is closely cooperative with pliancy and wieldiness in the practice of vipassana.
10. **PROFICIENCY OF MIND**: The Pali word here is *cittapagunnata* (chee-tah-pah-goo-nah-tah). This process represents a consistently emerging series of sequential wholesome, coordinated mind-moments, free of disability and optimally functional. It is strongly associated with the wholesome conditioning function of confidence.
11. **UPRIGHTNESS OF MENTAL FACTORS**: The Pali word here is *kayujukata* (kah-yuh-joo-kah-tah). The term *ujukata* is translated as *undistorted and reliable accuracy in processing experience regarding the presence or absence of craving and clinging.* This supports personal integrity and is the antidote for delusion and ignorance conditioned by wrong view, conceit, desire and ill-will. It supports the cetasikas *moral shame* and *respect for consequences*. In my experience there is a quality of faith regarding Buddhist principles and practices.
12. **UPRIGHTNESS OF MIND**: The Pali word here is *citaujukata* (chee-tooh-joo-kah-tah). In this regard it represents the functioning of a clear conscience, fostered by wise attention. A person with these qualities instills trust in their judgment and reputation.

These qualities of attention, from my perspective, are the highest functioning of the mind’s capacity for self-awareness and create the conditions for realizing the full potential of the seven awakening factors, which are the next contemplations in the Fourth Foundation of Mindfulness.