Anālayo

References

1 Here it needs to be pointed out that the Buddha had not instructed them directly to undertake this meditation. A close reading of the passage show that he had only spoken in praise of such meditation in general, before retiring into solitary retreat. Thus possibly the monks had engaged on their own in this type of meditation, without having received proper instructions and without being supervised, which then let to the fatal results.

2 D. II, 106: sati sampajāno āyu-saṅkhāram ossaji


SUKHA is a Pāli term whose meaning ranges from ‘pleasant’ feeling to a ‘happy’ state of mind. As a qualification of feeling, sukha occurs frequently in the Pāli discourses, forming part of a distinction of feelings into three mutually exclusive types (M. I, 500): pleasant (sukha), painful (dukkha) and ‘neutral’ (adukkhamasukha).

Pleasant feelings can be of a ‘worldly’ (sāmīsa) or an ‘unworldly’ (nirāmīsa) nature. While ‘worldly’ manifestations of pleasant feelings arise in relation to sensual pleasure, ‘unworldly’ pleasant feelings arise during absorption (jhāna), and ‘more unworldly than unworldly’ pleasant feelings (nirāmīsa-nirāmīsaṭāra) stand for the pleasure experienced by arahants when reviewing their mental freedom from defilements (S. IV, 235).

This distinction of pleasant feelings into worldly and unworldly types reflects their potential relation to the underlying tendency to lust (rāgañusaya). This underlying tendency will be activated and strengthened by engaging in sensual types of pleasure (M. III, 285), whereas unworldly types of pleasant feelings do not activate this underlying tendency. The propensity of pleasant feelings to result in the arising of lust and craving may well be the reason why pleasant feeling, distinguished into worldly and unworldly types, features in the Saṅkatthīya Sutta as one of the objects recommended for the development of mindfulness (M. I, 59).

The distinction into worldly and unworldly manifestations is however not the only way of carrying out an analysis of pleasant feelings. Pleasant feelings can also be distinguished into bodily (kāya) and mental (cetasika) types. A discourse in the Saṅkuttīya Nikāya (S. V, 209) associates feelings of sukha arisen through bodily contact with the ‘faculty of pleasure’ (sukhindriya), and feelings of sukha arisen through mental contact with the ‘faculty of joy’ (somanassindriya). Though later developments of Buddhist philosophy show a growing tendency to use sukha predominantly for bodily feelings and to reserve somanassa for its mental counterparts, in its use in the discourses the term sukha comprises both bodily and mental feelings. The same usage can also be found in the Abhidhamma, the term sukha being used in the Dhammasaṅgīti and the Vibhaṅga to refer to mental feelings (Dhs. 17 and Vibh. 85).

The basic distinction between worldly and unworldly pleasant feelings recurs also in relation to the complementary usage of the term sukha as ‘happiness’. A recurring emphasis on this distinction can be seen in a set of analytical schemes applied to sukha, most of which revolve around the basic difference between worldly (sāmīsa) and unworldly (nirāmīsa) types of happiness, highlighting the same by contrasting the happiness of lay life (gītasukha) to the happiness of the life of one gone forth (pābbajitasukha), sensual happiness (kīmasukha) to non-sensual happiness (nekkhāmasukha), happiness related to attachment (upadhisukha) to happiness free from attachment (nirupadhisukha),
happiness related to the influxes (sūhasavasukha) to happiness not related to the influxes (anāsavasukha), and noble (ariyā) happiness to ignoble (anariyā) happiness (A. I, 80).

Other distinctions of happiness, occurring as part of the same discourse (A. I, 81), are related to the development of deeper levels of concentration, contrasting the happiness that arises together with bliss (sappīti) to that without bliss (nippīti), happiness associated with pleasure (sūhasukha) to happiness associated with equanimity (upekkhāsukha), happiness derived from concentration (samādhisukha) to happiness not derived from concentration (anamādhisukha), and happiness having a form as its object (āriyārammanasukha) to happiness with a formless object (arīyārammanasukha).

These analytical schemes highlight two aspects in relation to sukhā. In addition to the basic discrimination between wholesome and unwholesome types of happiness, they draw attention to the successive refinement of happiness during deeper stages of concentration. Both aspects are of central importance in relation to sukhā and build on each other, the first indicating what should be developed and avoided, while the second, depicts a progressive refinement of what is to be developed. These two complementary perspectives on sukhā, distinguishing between unwholesome and wholesome types and treating the development of its wholesome manifestations, run like a red thread through the entire compass of the Buddha's teaching, from his instructions on basic morality through the path of mental purification all the way up to full awakening.

If to develop and do what is wholesome were not possible and would not lead to sukhā, the Buddha proclaimed, he would not ask his disciples to develop it. But since it is possible and leads to sukhā, he kept on instructing his disciples to develop and do what is wholesome (A. I, 58). Moral restraint, such as abstaining from killing, theft etc., will lead to future happiness, whereas to indulge in immoral activities will inevitably result in future suffering. Hence to maintain moral conduct and to avoid evil is a fundamental condition for achieving sukhā (Dhp. 333).

Happiness, as the Buddha emphatically asserted, is not achieved by mere wishing. Who wants happiness has to undertake the path that leads to happiness (A. III, 48: sukhasamattatikā patīpadā). The path to happiness, however, requires a long-term perspective, a perspective based on the awareness that what yields happiness right away may be conducive to future happiness or to future suffering, depending on its ethical quality.

Who harms others, and thereby destroys their happiness, will himself subsequently not be able to achieve happiness (Dhp. 131). As Ananda once explained to king Pasenadi, conduct that does not harm oneself or others is conduct that results in happiness (M. II, 115; sukhavipāka). The wise person, who maintains moral conduct, will experience the happiness of blamelessness in the present life and happiness of a fortunate rebirth as a retribution for his wholesome conduct (M. III, 171 and It. 67). One who thus acts in accordance with the Dhamma, a dhammacārī, will fare happily in this world and the next (Dhp. 169).

In several discourses, the Buddha showed a very practical sense of happiness. Considering happiness from the perspective of a man in the world, the Buddha acknowledged that a householder can expect four types of happiness from rightfully undertaking his livelihood (A. II, 69): the happiness of acquiring wealth by his own effort (atthisukha), the happiness of using this wealth to give pleasure to himself and to do meritorious deeds (bhogasukha), the happiness of being free from debt (anānasukha), and the happiness of being free from blame (anavajasukha).

To use rightly gained wealth in a proper way brings happiness to oneself and others (A. II, 67). To support those worthy of support, in particular one’s mother and father, as well as recluses and brahmīna, is a source of happiness (Dhp. 332). By giving food to monks and recluses one gives happiness, and therefore will gain happiness in return (A. III, 42). Hence merit, the Buddha explained, is but another name for happiness.2

The main wellspring of happiness lies however in the training of the mind, which is the real source of happiness. No other thing is so conducive to happiness, the Buddha proclaimed, as a mind that is well trained and developed (A. I, 6). As the famous twin verses standing at the opening of the Dhammapada declare, mind is the forerunner of all things, hence who acts or
speaks with a pure mind will be followed by happiness just like a shadow (Dhp. 2).

To train the mind requires however a re-evaluation of happiness. The Buddha readily acknowledged that to indulge in sensuality does produce feelings of pleasure, which constitutes the aspect of gratification of sensual pleasures (M. I. 85: kāmānāsāsāsā). Yet against this gratification stand their multiple disadvantages. Though pleasant feelings may cause happiness as long as they last, their changing nature inevitably spells dissatisfaction. 3 Sensual happiness is not only ephemeral, but also has undesirable after-effects that outweigh the pleasure obtained. In the Mahādakkākkhandha Sutta the Buddha vividly depicted the multiform problems resulting from the pursuit of sensual pleasures, showing that criminality and warfare can, ultimately, be traced back to desire for sensual gratification (M. I. 87).

Another problem with the pursuit of sensual types of sukha is that gratification fuels ever stronger desires, a predicament the Buddha compared to a leper cauterising his wounds over a fire (M. I. 507). Though by cauterising his wounds the leper will experience momentary pleasure, the act of cauterisation causes the wounds to become more infected and thus inevitably leads to a deterioration of the leper’s condition. In a similar way, the more beings indulge in sensual pleasure, the more they will burn with sensual desire, a vicious circle turning into a bottomless vortex of ever greater desires clamouring for satisfaction.

Thus the happiness gained through sensual pleasures, if examined from a long-term perspective, turns out to be spurious. Beings indulging in sensuality suffer from a perceptual distortion (saṁvāpitīdā), which causes them to attribute sukha to what on proper examination turns out to be otherwise (A. II. 52). Such proper examination led the Buddha to call sensual pleasures a ‘filthy’ happiness (miṣṭhasukha), a ‘lowly’ happiness (pūthujjhasukha) and an ‘ignoble’ happiness (anāryyasukha), which should not be pursued (M. I. 454). This thorough re-assessment of the nature of sukha finds a succinct expression in the dictum that ‘what others call happiness, the noble ones call unsatisfactory’. 4

A motivation for a reorientation against the powerful pull of sensual desires can be found in the reflection that it is reasonable to give up a smaller happiness, if in this way a greater and superior happiness can be gained (Dhp. 290). Consequently the Buddha invited his disciples to find out what really constitutes true happiness and, based on this understanding, to pursue it. 5 He was well aware of the fact that all beings are desirous of happiness; 6 hence he skilfully redirected this natural tendency in such a way as to lead to real happiness. The Buddha’s injunction to find out what really constitutes happiness refers in particular to the happiness experienced with deeper states of concentration, a form of happiness far superior to sensual pleasures. Such happiness he explained to be a ‘divine’ happiness (dība sukha), with which all interest in the vulgar happiness of sensuality ceases (M. I. 504). Such divine happiness is moreover the happiness of renunciation (nekhammasukha) and of seclusion (pāvīvasukha), it is a peaceful type of happiness (upasamasukha) and therewith a type of happiness that leads to awakening (sambodhasukha), so that it should indeed be pursued and developed (M. I. 454).

The injunction to develop and pursue such happiness leads from the distinction between sukha to be avoided and sukha to be developed to the other major perspective on sukha found in the early discourses: its gradual refinement through the practice of the path. The function and importance of sukha as a means for progress on the path appears in fact to be a direct outcome of the Buddha’s own experience when still a bodhisatta in search of liberation.

Before his awakening, the Buddha himself had followed the ancient Indian belief that to gain liberation, all pleasure has to be shunned (M. II. 93). Once his ascetic practices had proved fruitless, the Buddha remembered the happiness of a deep state of concentration experienced during his youth. Reflecting on this experience, he asked himself: ‘why am I afraid of a happiness that is aloof from sensuality and unwholesomeness?’, and came to the conclusion: ‘I am not afraid of such a type of happiness!’ The realisation that sukha need not be avoided, since the type of sukha experienced during deeper states of concentration is a wholesome and recommendable type of happiness marked a decisive turning point in his quest for liberation.
The Buddha’s newly found attitude to *sukha* stood in stark contrast to his ascetic contemporaries, a contrast highlighted in the *Cūḍāmakkhaṇḍha Sutta*. This discourse reports the Buddha in discussion with other ascetics, who believed that future *sukha* requires undergoing self-inflicted suffering at present. Their discussion ended with the Buddha making the humorous point that, in contrast to the pain experienced through self-mortification, he was able to experience *sukha* continuously for up to seven days. Hence his experience of happiness was superior even to the happiness experienced by the king of the country (*M. I*, 94).

In a similar vein, the verses composed by awakened monks and nuns extol their experience of happiness achieved through successful practice of the path. The early Buddhist monks delighted in their way of life, as testified by a visiting king, who described them as ‘smiling and cheerful, sincerely joyful and plainly delighting, living at ease and unruffled’.

As the Buddha on another occasion indicated, one should not give up the happiness that accords with the *Dhamma*, if one wishes one’s efforts to bear fruit. The reason for the Buddha to make such a statement is not merely a higher form of hedonism, but the very reason that the development of wholesome happiness constitutes a crucially important factor for progress on the path. That is, spiritual happiness has a clearly delineated function in the early Buddhist path scheme.

From this perspective it becomes increasingly clear why the arising of a Buddha and his teaching of the *Dhamma* are quite literally a source of happiness (*Dhp*. 194), and why the motivation behind the teaching activity of a Buddha and his disciples is the happiness of men and gods (*S. I*, 105). Simply because teaching the *Dhamma* they teach the path to true happiness.

In several discourses the Buddha indicated that the development of wisdom and the achievement of realisation depend on developing *sukha*. These discourses depict a conditional sequence that begins with delight (*pānipoja*) and leads via bliss (*pīṭha*) and tranquillity to the arising of happiness (*sukha*). Based on the presence of happiness, concentration naturally arises, which in turn forms the basis for wisdom and realisation. The Buddha compared the dynamics of this causal sequence to the natural course of rain falling on a hilltop, gradually filling the rivulets and rivers, and finally flowing down to the sea (*S. II*, 32). Once spiritual happiness is present, he indicated, there is no need to wish for the mind to become concentrated and wisdom to arise, since this will naturally happen, as a matter of course (*A. V*, 3).

The *Kandaraka Sutta* reveals that during the gradual path of training a progressive refinement of spiritual happiness takes place (*M. I*, 346). The first stage of this ascending series is the happiness due to blamlessness (*anāvajjasukha*), a happiness that results from maintaining moral conduct. Such happiness due to blamlessness will grow and become stronger when a frugal life style and contentment become additional contributing facts. Contentment, according to a *Dhammapada* verse, is in itself a source of happiness (*Dhp*. 331).

The next stage of happiness envisaged in the *Kandaraka Sutta* comes from leaving sensual distractions behind through the practice of sense-restraint. This type of happiness is a happiness that is ‘unimpaired’ (*aṭṭhānasukha*). ‘Unimpaired’ since the bondage of sensuality has temporarily been left behind. According to another discourse (*It. 24*), to know measure with food and practise sense-restraint leads to both happiness of the body (*kāyasukha*) and happiness of the mind (*cetasukha*).

The *Kandaraka Sutta* continues from the unimpaired happiness through freedom from sensual distraction to the different types of happiness experienced with deeper levels of concentration, the ‘bliss and happiness of seclusion’ (*vivekajām pīṭhasukha*), the ‘bliss and happiness of concentration’ (*samādhiyajām pīṭhasukha*), and the ‘happy dwelling in equanimity and mindfulness’ (*upekkhako satimā sukhabhārī*) of the first, second and third jhāna respectively. These types of happiness corroborate that diligent practice of meditation is indeed a source of pure happiness (*Dhp*. 27).

This holds good not only for the development of tranquillity, but also for the practice of insight meditation. Contemplating with right wisdom the impermanent nature of phenomena is a source of joy (*M. III*, 217), and to see the rise and fall of the five aggregates can lead to delight and bliss (*Dhp*. 374). The rapture of rightly contemplating the *Dhamma*...
transcends worldly types of rapture (Dhp. 373), and
even fivefold music cannot compare with it (Thag.
398 and 1071).

In fact, though the Buddha’s teaching of the four
noble truths places much emphasis on dukkha, the
third and the fourth noble truths are actually concerned
with the positive values of freedom from dukkha and
the practical path leading to that freedom. As the
Buddha himself expressly proclaimed, insight into the
four noble truths is not a matter of sadness and despair,
since such insight will be accompanied by happiness
and joy (S. V., 441).

The further the path has been developed, the deeper
the happiness becomes. Hence it comes as no surprise
that the culmination point of the successive stages of
happiness described in the Kandaraka Sutta is the
happiness of complete freedom through liberation.11
The eradication of defilements and of ignorance are a
well-spring of happiness indeed (D. I. 196).

A complementary presentation of a progressive
series of types of happiness can be found in the
Bahuvedāṇīya Sutta, proceeding not only through the
four jhānas but also through the four immaterial
attainments. Notably the Buddha considered the four
immaterial attainments to be also types of happiness,
even though with such sublime levels of concentration,
‘feelings’ of happiness are left behind.

The culmination point of this progressive series in
the Bahuvedāṇīya Sutta is the attainment of the
cessation of perception and feeling (M. I. 400). This
the Buddha reckoned to be a happiness superior to
the other types of happiness he had mentioned earlier.
Here some might object that it seems contradictory to
speak of happiness when all feelings have ceased. In
reply to such objections, the Buddha explained that
his conception of sukha was not limited to the
experience of feeling.

A similar perspective on sukha recurs in those
discourses which declare Nibbāna to be the highest
form of happiness (M. I. 508 and Dhp. 203). When on
one occasion Sāriputta was asked how Nibbāna could
be considered as sukha, since with Nibbāna all feelings
cease, he readily replied that precisely the cessation
of feeling is what causes sukha (A. IV. 415).

With these presentations by the Buddha and
Sāriputta, the early Buddhist conception of sukha goes
beyond the sukha envisaged by their contemporaries.
At this point, the two main meanings of the term
sukha—‘pleasant’ feeling and a ‘happy’ state of mind,
no longer coexist. By presenting the cessation of
feeling as supreme forms of happiness, the culminating
point of the early Buddhist conception of sukha
transcends the entire range of felt experience.

From the lofty viewpoint of such transcendence,
the attitude to pleasant feeling changes. An arahant
no longer delights in pleasant feelings or clings to them,
but experiences them with detachment and wisdom
(S. II. 82). What attraction could they hold for one
who knows the destruction of craving, a happiness
superior to any mundane or divine form of happiness,
the happiness of liberation12?

Bibliography:

Premasiri, P.D.: “The Role of the Concept of
Happiness in the Early Buddhist Ethical
System”, in Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities

See also DELIGHT and HAPPINESS.

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References

1 Cf. e.g. M. I. 302: kāyikam vā cetasikam vā
sukham sānaṃ vedayitam ayam sukhvāvedanā
2 It. 15: sukhass’etam adhivacanam ... yadidam
puṇṇhīni.
3 M. I. 303: sukha vedanā dhitisukhā
vipariṣṭadhātukkhā.
4 Sn. 762: yaṁ Pare sukhato āyu, tad artyā āyu
dukkhoto.
5 M. III. 230: sukhavinicchayaṁ janāṁ,
sukhavinicchayaṁ ājīvatā ajjhattaṁ sukham
anuyattayaṁ.
6 D. II. 269: sukhakāṁ hi devi manussāṁ.
7 M. I. 246: kinnu kho ahāṁ tassa sukhassa
bhājīyīṁ, yam taṁ sukham ānātār’eva kānīhī
aṇātāra okusalehi dhāramehi?... Na kho ahāṁ
tassa sukhassas bhājīyīṁ.
SUKHĀVATĪ-VYŪHA SŪTRA: The most important text belonging to the devotional Buddhism of the Mahayana School, in which Sukhāvatī, the Buddha Land or paradise of the Divine Buddha Amitābha himself is glorified. It exists in two versions, a longer and a shorter which latter some scholars believe to be the earlier text.

The Sukhāvatī-vyūha, the larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha in particular, was one of the most popular books of the Buddhist Tripitaka and was widely studied, translated and commented upon in China and Japan from a very early age prior to the second century A.C. up to the tenth century. During this period at least twelve translations of the larger text were made in China, of which only five are now in existence. But unfortunately, not a single copy of the Sanskrit text on which these Chinese translations were based has not been found either in China or in Japan. However, there are five MSS. of the larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha now available all in libraries in Europe: one at the Royal Asiatic Society in London, one in the Bodleian Library, one at Cambridge and two in Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. All these five MSS. come from one and the same country, Nepal, and share the same corruption and omissions making it virtually impossible to restore a satisfactory text of the Sūtra.

According to the ancient catalogues of the Chinese Tripitaka, the following is a list of the twelve translations of the Larger Sukhāvatī-vyūha. It must however be mentioned that none of these Chinese titles corresponds to the exact meaning of the title of Sukhāvatī-vyūha. On the contrary, all of them contain the name Amitāyus-sūtra or Amitāyur-vyūha. The titles given below are the Sanskrit translations of the Chinese ones.

1. Amitāyus-sūtra, translated by An Shi-kao (148-170 A.C.)
2. Amita-buddha-samyaksambuddha-sūtra, by Lokārāja (147-189 A.C.)
3. Amita-sūtra, by C’Chien (223-253 A.C.)
4. Amitāyus-sūtra, by Saṅghavarman (252 A.C.)
5. Amita-buddha-samyaksambuddha-sūtra, by Po Yen (257 A.C.)
6. Amitāyus-sūtra, by Dharmarāja (266-313 A.C.)
7. New Amitāyus-sūtra, by Buddhahadra (398-421 A.C.)
10. New Amitāyus-sūtra, by Dharmamitra (424-453 A.C.)
11. Amitāyus-tathāgata-parśad (the Sūtra spoken by the Buddha on the Tathāgata Amitāyus at an assembly), by Bodhiruci (693-713 A.C.)
12. Mahāyāna Amitāyur-vyūha-sūtra, by Fa-hsien (982-1001 A.C.)

Of these Nos. 2, 3, 4, 11 and 12 are now available. The other translations appear to have perished before 730 A.C. when the catalogue title Khaiyen-li was compiled. While the five Chinese translations that have survived differ considerably from each other, none of them entirely agrees with the Sanskrit text as preserved in the Nepalese MSS. However, all the translations and the Sanskrit text agree with the following details:

(a). The dialogue takes place on the Gṛdhakūṭa Mountain near Rājaṛṣha
(b). The principal interlocutors are the Buddha (also referred to as Bhagavat), Ānanda and Maitreya.