

Two kinds of pain

The Buddha's teachings began in the depths of human mind. The Buddha, in his quest to understand the nature and ending of suffering, discovered that there are two kinds of pain: bodily pain and mental pain.

Bodily pains arise due to the physical nature of the body. Just as the body is impermanent, bodily pain, too, is impermanent. Mental pain, on the other hand, is a projected pain. We magnified and colour the dissatisfactions and unsatisfactoriness that we experience through our physical senses.

In other words, we do not only perceive (experience) through our physical senses and feel pain and pleasure, but we also conceive (give rise to) notions of pain and pleasure. In simple terms, the Buddha discovered that he can simply leave bodily pains at the body level, and not allowing them to reach his mind.

This vital wisdom is crystallized in his teaching to the infirm elder Nakula, pita, that he should constantly reflect thus:

“My body may be sick; let not my mind be sick.” (S 22.1)

This brief teaching was elaborated to Nakula, pita as the practice of the four focusses of mindfulness. Here I shall restate them in simple terms:

(1) **THE RECOLLECTION OF THE BODY.** Find time to simply be aware of your body. Notice that there are solid earth-like parts of our body. It mostly comprises of the water element. This body produces heat; it is actually burning, on fire: in other words, decaying! Our body is constantly moving in some way, tiny movements, great movements: yet it is like a life-size balloon that is rising and falling with air. The more you learn to watch this air, this breath, the more peaceful it becomes.

(2) **THE RECOLLECTION OF FEELING.** Our body is physical: it is resistant in some ways. If we sit too long, we feel discomfort; so too if we stand too long, or walk too long, or lie down too long. So we constantly change our postures. We experience feelings, that is, pleasure, pain and neutral feelings. We feel pleasure when we like something, but when we have it too long, we become bored with it: pleasure becomes pain. Or when we miss that pleasure, we feel pain. Hence pleasure is the cause of pain. Neutral feeling is like what your body is feeling as you read this (the body feels neither pleasure nor pain). But this neutral feeling, too, is impermanent.

(3) **THE RECOLLECTION OF MIND.** As your mind becomes more calm and clear, you begin to understand how words and thoughts, even good ones, are really distracting. How beautifully peaceful it is when the mind is totally free from words and thought, even for a moment. The unawakened mind can never be totally empty; it is like a monkey swinging from tree to tree, always looking for a branch to cling to and move around. The best way to still our minds is to FEEL the joy and peace as they arise in our mind, that is, to experience them directly without any words or thought. This is easier done than said!

(4) THE RECOLLECTION OF DHARMAS. Silent mind, holy mind. As the mind become more calm and clear, we begin to catch glimpses of true reality. We begin to understand who or what we really are. We begin to understand better how our mind is distracted, and how to let go of distractions and defilements. And as we keep these four spiritual exercises, we become better at it, working ourselves to self-liberation.

Meantime, let us remind ourselves with these practices:

See less,	look more.
Hear less,	listen more.
Smell less,	breathe more.
Eat less,	taste more.
Touch less,	feel more.
Think less,	mind more.

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