

Abhidhamma Senior

01/1997 What is feeling (vedana)? How is it classified in the summary of feeling (vedana sangaha)?

Vedana is one of the five aggregates that make up the so-called being. It is a mental state that is common to all types of consciousness. Feeling is its characteristic and is born of contact. It is one of the seven universal mental factors (sabbacitta sadharana).

Feeling is defined as a conscious, subjective impression which does not involve cognition or representation of an object. Vedana modifies the stream of consciousness and serves both as a life-promoting and life-preserving force. Pleasure or joy, for example, promotes life while pain impairs it. As such feeling (vedana) plays a very important part in the life of man.

In the summary of feeling (vedana sangaha), vedana is classified three-fold :

1. Pleasurable
2. Painful
3. That which is neither pleasurable nor painful

A wider classification has vedana five-fold :

1. Sukha (physical happiness)
2. Somanassa (mental pleasure)
3. Dukkha (physical pain)
4. Domanassa (mental displeasure)
5. Upekkha (indifference, equanimity or neutral feeling)

All feelings, from our ultimate standpoint, are mental because vedana is a cetasika. But a differentiation has been made with regard to sukha and dukkha.

Of all the 89 types of consciousness, only two are associated with either sukha or dukkha. One is the body-consciousness associated with happiness (kusala-vipaka ahetuka) and the other is body-consciousness associated with pain (akusala-vipaka ahetuka).

There are 62 kinds of consciousness accompanied by pleasure or joy, namely :

1. 18 types of kamavacara plane (sense-sphere) consciousness, such as 4 akusala citta rooted in attachment or greed, 12 types of beautiful consciousness and two types of rootless consciousness of investigating and smiling.
2. 44 types of sublime and supramundane consciousness pertaining to the first, second, third and fourth jhanas :
 - a) Sublime $4 \times 3 = 12$
 - b) Supramundane $4 \times 8 = 32$

Only two types of akusala consciousness associated with aversion are accompanied by displeasure.

All the remaining 55 types of consciousness ($121 - 2 - 62 - 2 = 55$) are accompanied by the vedana of equanimity or indifference.

