

Mindfulness – Sati-sampajanna

Despite their different emphases, mindfulness and clear comprehension of purpose often appear as a compound term in Pali, *sati-sampajanna*, and the two words can be considered to be so close in meaning as to be virtually interchangeable. There is no precise word in English for this kind of recollection, and it is difficult to come up with a definition that evokes its spirit. One might say that it is going about one's daily life without ever forgetting one's higher purpose, but that still doesn't quite bring out the full sense of *sampajanna*, because 'forgetting' refers to something you are trying to remember from the past rather than the future goal to which you aspire. *Sampajanna* has more of a sense of insight about it than the more psychological idea of memory. You know not only what you are doing but why you are doing it. It is in this twofold sense that the Buddha exhorts his followers to be aware - 'clearly comprehending and mindful' - of the four foundations of mindfulness.\

The subtle interplay between awareness and recollection has the effect of integrating one's whole experience and continually re- establishing a sense of harmony and direction. *Sati-sampajanna* has a balancing and integrating quality that permeates every area of experience, to bring about a whole way of life concentrated not so much on a future goal as on the dynamic, cumulative nature of the path itself. Once you have learned to recognize and cultivate this precious quality, you will never lose touch with the truth that our existence is not confined to the present, and that what we will become depends to a very great extent on what we do now.

Sangharakshita, *Living with Awareness*, p. 23-4

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