



Mental States arise due to the Law of Conditionality. They are not fixed but are subject to change upon changing their dependent conditions. For more - check out www.mahabodhi.org.uk and see *Correlations Book* or *Satipatthana Model*

* beings want to be well ** beings are 'objects'

If Citta is the 'overall shape to our heart / consciousness', faith (sradhha), also known as confidence / trust, represents a positive (open and expansive) shape to our mind when faced with difficult experiences (injuries, difficult feelings). In the Sutta of the Dart the Buddha says that the unenlightened person only sees escape in sensory experience. To the extent that we don't respond to sensory experience as if it is the only thing (and so with craving or aversion) means in some way we have faith. We have faith there is 'another way'. In buddhism faith arises on the basis of three grounds: experience, intuition and reason. It may be in our intuition it feels wrong somehow to just chase sensory experience. Or in the long run it doesn't make sense to us, or just doesn't work in experience.

I don't think though faith is exclusive to humans. We could use as an example behaviours in the animal world that look like faith. There is a small fish that cleans around the spines of a poisonous anemone but it does not get stung or eaten. It is a symbiotic relationship where both benefit, but the fish is exhibiting a kind of primitive faith. On some primitive level both are seeing the benefits of cooperation (perhaps this is a primitive level of ethics). The fish's faith is justified in experience, but if it had been eaten its faith would not have been justified.

Faith is always faith in something, usually a belief system, like buddhism, which recommends certain mental states and behaviours (ie. ethics) to have faith in. To the extent that 6 billion people on the planet cooperate to the extent they do means they must collectively have faith (in various brands of ethics, humanism, whatever). Traditionally faith in buddhism is in the Three Jewels - Buddha, Dharma and Sangha which largely involves showing faith in awareness, ethical states of mind like metta, and insight based on experience. So if we show faith in patience we have faith that patience will give us a positive outcome. Faith is a factor in every positive mental state.

Faith needs to be balanced with wisdom. We could say the capacity to learn from experience and adjust behaviour accordingly is wisdom. We learn wisdom when we commit faith to something that turns out not to be justified. Those who lack wisdom we might say are gullible (a word whose root is an inexperienced fledgling) and unable to learn from experience. Wisdom is about making assessment (cf. mental objects) that turn out to be in line with reality.

Pleasures and Ethical Mental States

We get pleasure from ethical states of mind, but it is worth being clear how this might work. Suppose we begin with a painful bodily experience (kayika vedana). We have a choice of response. We can respond with aversion - a negative state of mind. From that will be conditioned worldly feeling (samisa vedana) - further pain but now mental - which will tend to drive us away from the experience. Alternatively we might have faith in patience and so chose to practice it, and with it awareness. The fact that we are not now just allowing our mind to be dominated by the pain, the fact that we are also keeping up an open expansive awareness (rather than a shrinking one), both of these considerations will be a source of pleasure to us (spiritual feeling - niramisa vedana). And if in being patient a change happens in our actual experience of pain, perhaps because we are relaxing more, the fact that our faith in patience was justified will also be a source of pleasure.

In terms of metta, if we are suffering physically and instead of focussing on the physical pain we focus on being sensitive to ourselves as a person (ethical sensitivity - again spiritual feeling, probably here painful) and through that we practice metta towards ourselves, the metta, once established, will condition pleasant spiritual feeling as we 'warm up' towards ourselves, and that will offset our bodily pain.

So we can simultaneously be experiencing different types of (pleasureable or painful) feeling on the levels of the bodily (kayika) and the mental (either worldly or spiritual) contribute to our total level of feeling, that is we can experience mental bliss even when quite severely physically suffering (as evidenced in the Buddha entering into the bliss of deep states of meditation to offset his bodily pain as an old man).

