

What is the Third Satipatthana?

There seems to be quite some divergence of opinion about exactly what the third satipatthana, *Citta*, is, and maybe connected to that some reticence to 'unpack' the concept. Chapters in books on the *satipatthanas* covering *citta* tend to be short in comparison to chapters on the other *satipatthanas* (In *Analyo's Satipatthana* and Sangharakshita's *Living with Awareness* the chapters on *citta* are both 8 pages long). So it is possible the concept can be unpacked a little more, which is the aim of this article. Let's look then at a range of sources commenting on *citta*:

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- * The **Pali-English Dictionary** suggests that *citta* is heart / mind, emphasizing it is more the emotive side of mind as opposed to *manas* as intellect or mind-sense - in the sense of that aspect of mind that grasps mental objects (*dhammas*).
- * **Analyo** follows the PED: "*Citta...usually refers to "mind" in the conative and emotional sense, in the sense of one's mood or state of mind*" [*conation* - The exertion of willing that desire or aversion shall issue in action. From L. *conari* to try - *Concise OED*]
- * **Analyo's chapter on 'Mind' (*citta*)**:
"*the task of mindfulness is to remain receptively aware by clearly recognizing the state of mind that underlies a particular train of thoughts or reactions*",
..... he further refers to the "*...honest acknowledgement of the existence of hidden emotions, motives, and tendencies in the mind..*"
- * **Bhikkhu Bodhi**: "*Citta signifies mind as the centre of personal experience, as the subject of thought, volition and emotion*" [Note: subject of ..]
- * In the **Theravada**, meditation is sometimes known as *citta bhavana*, and *citta* is often rendered 'thought.'
- * Examples of *citta* listed in the **Satipatthana Sutta**: lustful, hateful, deluded, distracted, concentrated, liberated.

Commentary on the Third Satipatthana within in the FWBO

- * One person had *citta* as 'thought' on a poster for a day retreat on the *satipatthanas*. When questioned they said they thought more broadly it was 'mental events'. Another person in leading a retreat on the *Satipatthanas* introduced *citta* as 'emotion and thought'

* **Sangharakshita** in *Living with Awareness* has chapter headings for the sections on *citta* and *dhammas* (covering the hindrances section) to be respectively 'Understanding' and 'Reflecting'. He dismisses the Theravada translation of *bodhicitta* as 'thought of enlightenment' as inadequate, instead preferring 'will to enlightenment'. [which is in line with *conation* - willing, see **Analyo**]

* **Sangharakshita** covers reflexive self-consciousness in his chapter on *dhammas* in *Living with Awareness*, not in his chapter on *citta*:

The ability to make consciousness reflexive - to become aware that we are aware, to know that we know You don't just experience sensual desire, you know that you experience it

Citta and Dhammas

I started this exploration with a desire to make sense of these definitions as I try to write a book on mindfulness. I wasn't sure if some opinions on *citta* weren't conflicting, despite a lot of overlap. But what seemed definitely necessary was more clarity: a clearer schema including both *citta* and *dhammas* (mental objects). I haven't felt that satisfied at some of the explanations I have seen. It sometimes feels like the third and fourth satipatthanas get to a degree mixed up with each other. For instance I think reflexive self-consciousness belongs to the third satipatthana (*citte cittanupassi* - 'contemplating the mind in and of itself') rather than, as Sangharakshita expresses in *Living with Awareness*, the fourth satipatthana.

Some people might say 'So what, so long as the 'bases' get covered, what does it matter about having exact definitions'. In one way they may be right, after all what is important is that we *practice* the satipatthanas. Equally though I think it is also important we have a clear conceptual framework so that the dharma can be talked about convincingly. If we are not conceptually clear while explaining a topic, especially if we don't seem to have confidence in our clarity, then it is less likely people will have confidence in us, on the level of the intellect. I can't help but think it somehow does really matter how we categorise things. It is a question of lucidity. Perhaps it matters in terms of overcoming the three fetters that are broken at stream entry - in particular the one Sangharakshita calls the fetter of vagueness. It is interesting the 'doctrine follower' (to whom I presume lucidity is important) is 'ranked' below a stream entrant (who I presume also possesses lucidity) but 'above' a 'faith follower' (for whom I presume lucidity might be less of an issue). And this statement might amount to the same thing as saying that practice is fortified by insight (or at least by conceptual clarity about what you are doing). Or that perhaps that practice and insight are foundations for each other. I think for two basic reasons it is easy to see how confusion might arise when trying to sort out the third and fourth satipatthanas. The first is related to *praticca samutpada*.

Conditioned Coproduction

Growing up within the western philosophical tradition I think it is easy for westerners, when talking about the various 'phenomena' of existence, to slip unconsciously into materialistic world views. In this case it would be to unconsciously treat *citta* or *dhammas* as objects or 'things'. To ask: 'Is *citta* emotion, or thought?' Perhaps unconsciously assuming it has to be 'one thing' (one 'object') I think such a tendency to 'object-ify' what are essentially processes can get us into difficulty. With buddhism in particular it is important instead to see things

Fig. 1 Conditioning of Heart / Mind

from the Buddha's perspective. From what buddhism calls *Conditioned Coproduction*. If we look at *citta* and *dhammas* from the perspective of *Conditioned Coproduction*, we have to see them in terms of 'conditional relationships', like those expressed in the 12 links of the Wheel of Life:

- * conditioned by contact, feeling;
- * conditioned by feeling, craving

Taking 'feeling' arising because of certain conditions, it is possible to have different types of feeling arising in dependence on different types of conditions (as in the condition of having a body, or having 'mental contents'). If we apply the Conditioned Coproduction formula 'This being, that becomes' to feeling, the various types of feeling mentioned in the buddhist scriptures fall out:

- * mental activity being,
mental feeling becomes
-*cetasika vedana*
- * physicality being,
physical feeling becomes
-*kayika vedana*
- * unwholesome / wholesome state
of mind being,
worldly / spiritual feeling becomes
-*samisā / niramisā vedana*

Asking the question 'What is *Citta*?' we may be mistaken in looking for one thing because with 'feeling' we already have 3 or 4 things depending on how you look at it. In this way it is perfectly possible for *citta* to be both heart and mind. To accurately express the dharma conceptually we need

Fig. 1a Thought

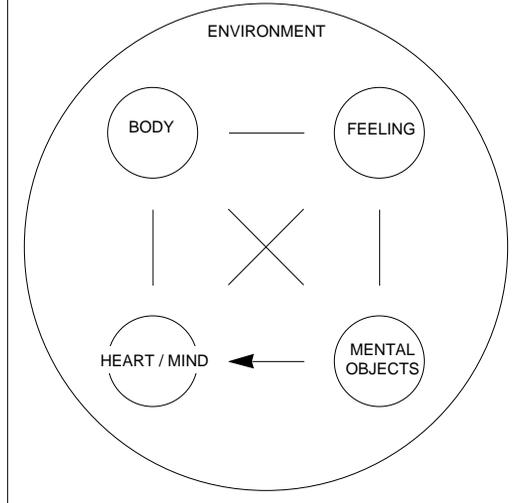


Fig. 1b Emotion

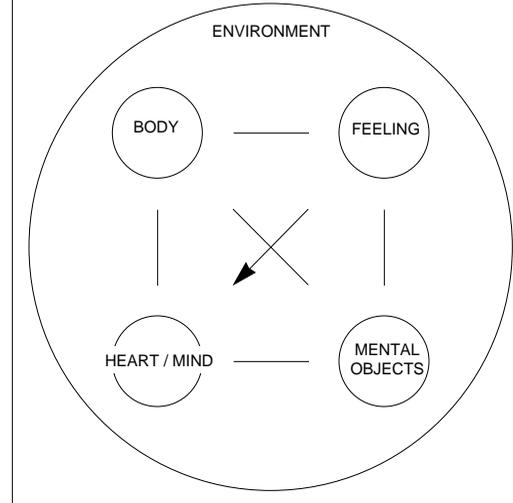
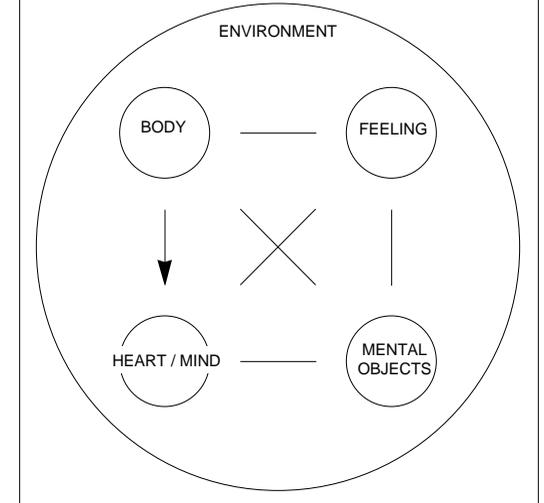


Fig. 1c Non-Discursive Awareness



to express it a way which reflects Conditioned Coproduction.

Applying the argument to *citta* then, different types of *citta* arise (different processes) in dependence on what it is being conditioned by. We might say *citta* takes up 'different shapes': sometimes the shape of a thought, sometimes the shape of an emotion, sometimes the shape of 'non-discursive awareness' (Fig.1)

The second reason for confusion is related to the first. Because of *praticca samutpada*, when we look at the texts of the different sections, they will contain some factors that condition ("This being") and some factors that are subject to that conditioning ("that becomes"). And it is vitally important in our conceptualisation to distinguish which is which: which is the conditioning being applied and which the 'object of application'. If the 'object of application' is a state of mind, as it is in the *fourth satipatthana* where the practitioner "contemplates the *dhammas* in the case of the five hindrances", it doesn't mean that a mental object equates to a state of mind, but that a state of mind is the 'object of application' that the operation 'mental object' applies to.

We might say the 'substance' of the hindrance is the 'shape' made by it in *citta*, and *dhamma* is the name 'hindrance' as applied to it. Listening, reflecting and meditating (*prajna*) is a process that takes place within *citta*, but the 'wise objectification of phenomena' as *anicca*, *anatta* and *dukkha* takes place within *dhammas* (the **content** going on in the heart - mind is *dhammas* but the **shape 'holding' that content is *citta***.) Something like that.

Let us take a thought (Fig.1a). Mental objects (*dhammas*) are concepts and images present in the mind. They are arranged in the mind in structures and associations, as in "The cat sat on the mat" - which represent perspectives or views. Suppose a person experiences having a clear perspective with no conflicting opinion within it. They would have nothing to think about. But if there were conflicting opinions among their 'mental objects' then that would condition some movement within the psyche, and what we call a thought would take place within *citta*. The combined contents of their mind would condition a certain psychological movement, which would be experienced as a thought. **So thinking is *citta* under the influence of**

mental content. It is a similar process with emotion (Fig.1b) but instead of *dhammas* being involved it is now *vedana* that is involved.. Feeling (*vedana*) is the original stimulus. However emotion - being the psychological response to feeling - takes place within *citta*. Emotion is the movement within the psyche when it is conditioned by feeling. In terms of *praticca samutpada*, *vedana* and *citta* arise together. *Vedana* conditions *citta*, and then *citta* conditions *vedana*. **So emotion is *citta* under the influence of feeling**.

Emotion can be skilful - *metta* or unskilful - craving. A third process is where *citta* is conditioned by *kaya* - body. The effect produced is neither discursive nor emotional (Fig.1c) but of the nature of feeling either grounded or ungrounded, collected or uncollected, concentrated or distracted, and so on. It represents a kind of movement within the psyche that is visceral, tangible. For example, when we pay attention in meditation to bodily posture and bodily relaxation, it has an effect on our consciousness in creating *samattha* (calm and concentration). By doing that we create a 'container' within

The above is an interactive model based on the four satipatthana. The arrow represents a dominant conditioning link. For instance in Fig.1a the arrow represents *heart / mind* being conditioned by *mental objects*. For introduction to this model see *article shabda* May 2007.

which we can work steadily on our thoughts and emotions. We are creating a kind of non-discursive awareness. Alternatively, if our mind is not grounded in the bodily awareness but floating instead over a range of objects, then we are creating distraction - a kind of non-discursive unawareness. **So non-discursive awareness is *citta* under the influence of bodily awareness** (/ unawareness.) This explanation of *citta* then allows for all the variations of *citta* mentioned in the sutta.

* consciousness with or without lust; with or without hate; with or without ignorance; shrunken state; distracted state; developed state; undeveloped state; state with some other mental state superior to it; state with no other mental state superior to it; concentrated state; unconcentrated state; freed state; and unfreed state of consciousness.

I began by trying to work out which 'view' about *citta* was correct. But it seems that within the conception *citta*, each of emotion, thought and non-discursive awareness - or a combination of all three - must be included. This way of looking at *citta* helps us see how thinking, emotion, and bodily awareness work together in meditation. It helps us be clear how say thought works in the *metta bhavana* (Fig.2.) We stimulate the production of *metta* by a mixture of creating a good basis of awareness through attention to posture and bodily awareness, cultivating an ethical sensitivity (spiritual feeling - *samisa vedana*), and by supportive reflections, such as "All beings desire happiness." All of this together will condition the state of *metta* in the heart / mind.

Mental Objects as Images and Symbols

It is obvious that not all mental objects are conceptual - we use images in the *metta bhavana* to stimulate *metta*, and in *sadhana* we certainly use them to stimulate faith in our *yidam* and through that the three jewels, and what about poetic imagery in general? Where a purely conceptual mental object - like the notion of "impermanence" - may not stimulate much feeling, a poetic image like the *yidam* in the blue sky, or a text like a *puja*, has the

Fig. 2 Metta Bhavana

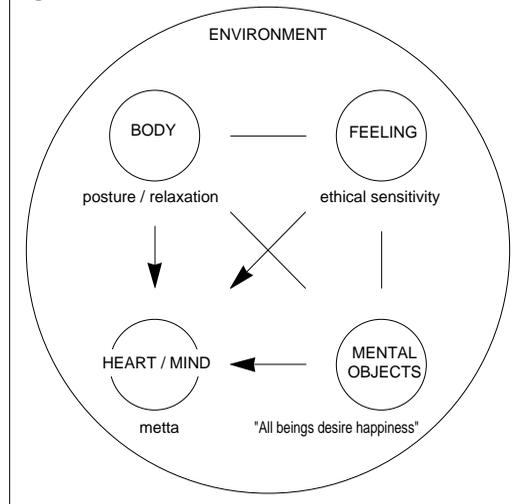
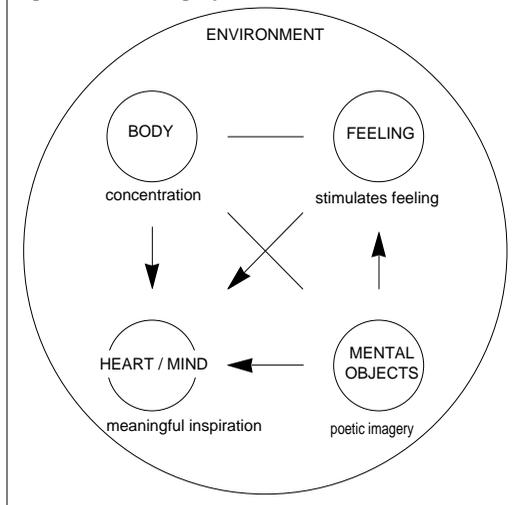


Fig. 3 Poetic Imagery



advantage of stimulating our emotions as well as our thoughts - of 'getting the emotions on board'. The conceptual content of the *puja* is as important as the poetry, and in the greatest poetry our reflective and emotive faculties are strongly stimulated at the same time. If we can reflect on such poetry while concentrated in meditation then even better (Fig.3). Then we are really maximising the effect of changing the heart / mind through thought, emotion and awareness.

Summary

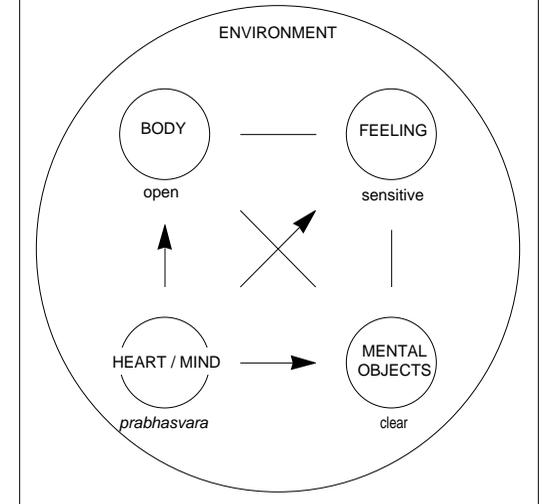
Like the potter moulding his pot in the Wheel of Life, *citta* is like the 'shaping' of the mind in terms of consciousness awareness (being conscious or distracted), emotion (being positive, defiled, expansive) and conscious reflection (being thoughtful). The scarcity of commentary on *citta* maybe reflects the fact that contemplation of heart-mind - *cittanupassi* - is actually hard to talk about precisely because it is largely meditational, it is learned through practice, and it is very much a question of developing sensitivity through experience, which, as with other activities involving sensitivity - such as the Arts - make it difficult to talk about conceptually and do justice.

Citta and Pure Awareness

Part of the conceptual contradiction that comes with the 'non-developmental' pure awareness / 'opening to pure awareness' approach is that *citta* - being what the heart-mind is doing at any time - is in itself an **action - it is developmental!** The *citta* of an enlightened being is pure in that it is free of defilements. Being on the transcendental path, they no longer need to make any effort to be aware, emotionally positive or clear. This is reflected in the phrase '*citta* is *prabhasvara* (meaning clear light)', which expresses that the pure awareness of an arahant has the characteristics of being naturally open (unfixed, empty-natured), clear (knowing, luminous, radiant) and sensitive (compassionate, responsive, free, creative).

We can see in Fig.4 how this might relate to what I have been talking about earlier. The characteristics of *prabhasvara* relate to the 'body', 'feeling' and 'mental objects' satipatthanas in that they describe the aspects of open awareness, emotionality and lucidity in enlightened *citta*. These characteristics can therefore be conceptualised within the four satipatthanas. The problem for a 'non-developmental model' of pure awareness is that, as a description of enlightened *citta*, it does not exist in isolation from the other satipatthanas. Even at the level of enlightenment conditionality still operates. That implies the other satipatthanas must also be fully developed. Clear light - *prabhasvara* - is in fact a doing which appears effortless because of the conditions supporting it.

Fig. 4 Citta is *prabhasvara*



I imagine 'pure' citta must be supported by unwavering insight as well as by perfect ethical sensitivity (there are no worldly feelings due to craving or aversion) and by constant mindfulness in the present moment. In fact all these elements support and maintain each other (Fig.5). It is difficult to see how one can 'open up to pure awareness' except by developing these other satipatthanas. A different way of looking at this comes if we approach it from the angle of the five spiritual faculties, which I think are reasonably correlated with the four satipatthanas (Fig.6)

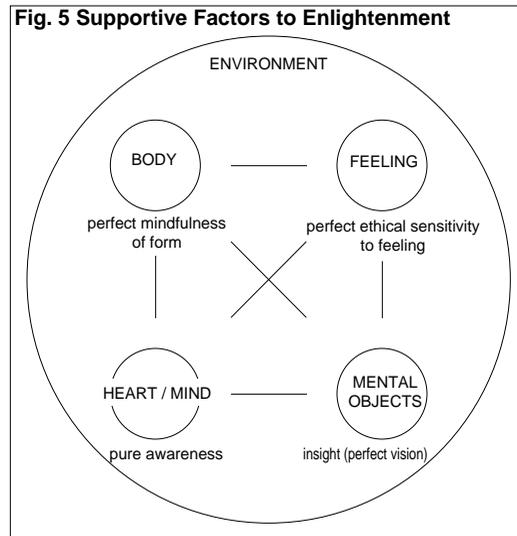


Fig. 6 Correlation with the Foundations of Mindfulness

Spiritual Faculty	Foundation of Mindfulness
Concentration	Body
Energy in Pursuit of the Good	Feeling
Confidence / Trust	Heart / Mind
Wisdom	Mental Objects

Mindfulness, as *Perfect Mindfulness (samma sati)*, is one of the eight limbs in the Noble Eightfold Path and one of five 'spiritual faculties' (*panca-indriya*), the others being faith (*saddha*), wisdom (*panna*), energy in pursuit of the good (*viriya*) and concentration (*samadhi*). If these five faculties are completely developed, *buddhahood* is attained (Sn V 48 2.2). When these five spiritual faculties are developed but not as completely developed as in an enlightened person, problems can arise in dealing with the faculties. The stream entrant understands some of the problems.

They 'understand as they really are the gratification, the danger and the escape in the case of these five faculties' (Sn V 48 1.2). They understand the importance of mindfulness as a balancing factor (Fig.7), through which the practitioner aims for *indriya-samatta*, the equalization of the faculties (Sangharakshita - A Survey of Buddhism , p284).

Pure awareness in its full conception, if we accept this correlation, correlates with absolute faith in the three jewels (hence an arahant will have a mind of 'clear light' even in the face of death), but due to the inescapable completion of *indriya-samatta* that mind is inevitably accompanied by absolute wisdom (as well as by perfect *viriya* and *perfect samadhi*, and of course *perfect mindfulness*). Pure awareness as a doctrine then is perhaps imbalanced, if it doesn't focus on the development of these other faculties as well as on awareness and faith. Absolute faith is impossible without its correlate of absolute wisdom. So where might this all fit with formless meditation, just sitting, Sangharakshita's 'System of Meditation', and so on? I understand Sangharakshita's version of just sitting to be a person not making any effort to focus on an object of meditation whilst maintaining 'postural integrity'. One does

not do anything against the flow of ones instincts (as one might do in the mindfulness of breathing against an instinct to distraction, or in the metta bhavana against an instinct to ill will or indifference). And the point of this is to experience some fruits of our practice. When we have been making effort in a meditation within Sangharakshita's 'System of Meditation' we produce positive karma. By doing just sitting after that we experience some of the fruits of that karma in terms of a sense of togetherness or concentration (*kaya*) or a pleasureable uplifting feeling (*niramisa vedana*). We are essentially 'spending some of our merit', but that gives us a bit of encouragement in allowing us to enjoy some fruit of our practice. Awareness here is pure in the sense of being pure of making effort.

The second kind of pure awareness, being at the culmination of the Dzogchen / Mahamudra system, is obviously informed by insight. Perhaps we can relate this kind of pure awareness to Sangharakshita's just sitting in the way that the transcendental eightfold path relates to the mundane eightfold path. For a being on the transcendental eightfold path, ethics, meditation and wisdom naturally unfold without them having to make a conscious effort, on account of their transcendental insight. This kind of pure awareness like the first is pure of effort, but this time due to being supported by insight. One could call Sangharakshita's version of just sitting, mundane pure awareness - where one experiences a radiant positive state of mind as a result of temporarily reaping the fruits of ones karma, and the second transcendental pure awareness, pure because one is reaping the fruits of insight.

Strictly speaking, awareness is a *karma*, so it is more accurate to say in the case of mundane pure awareness that one experiences the fruits of effort as pleasant *niramisa vedana* which then supports a *citta* informed by mundane pure awareness. In the case of transcendental pure awareness, ones *citta* is pure because it is free of defilements, and that is mutually supported by insight (*jnana*), by the bliss of release (*niramisa niramisatara vedana*), and by direct tangible experience of enlightenment (*bodhi*), all of which perpetually support each other in the action of *praticca samutpada*.

Fig. 7 The Five Spiritual Faculties

