

A Compilation on Smṛtī (Sanskrit) or Satī (the Pālī Form)

... what is wrong with translating sati as mindfulness? Well for one, the word does mean something different, as almost any pali dictionary would show:

“**Sati (f.)** [Vedic smṛti: see etym. under sarati2] **memory, recognition, consciousness**, D i.180; ii.292; Miln 77 — 80; intentness of mind, wakefulness of mind, mindfulness, alertness, lucidity of mind, self — possession, conscience, self — consciousness D i.19; iii.31, 49, 213, 230, 270 sq.; A i.95; Dhs 14; Nd1 7; Tikp 61; VbhA 91; DhsA 121; Miln 37; etc.” [\[link\]](#)

and under sarati we find:

“**Sarati2** [smṛ, cp. smṛti=sati; Dhṭp 248 "cintā"; Lat memor, memoria=memory; Gr. me/rimna care, ma/rtu **witness**, martyr; Goth. maúrnan=E. mourn to care, etc.] **to remember** D ii.234; Vin i.28; ii.79; J ii.29. — Caus. sāreti **to remind** Vin ii.3 sq., 276; iii.221; sārayamāna, **reminding** J i.50; ppr. pass. sāriyamāna Vin iii.221; w. acc. D ii.234; w. gen. Dh 324; J vi.496; with foll. fut. II. (in °tā) Vinii.125, 4; iii.44, 9, etc. — Caus. II. sarāpeti Vin iii.44; Miln 37 (with double acc.), 79.” [\[link\]](#)

Well, what the heck does remembering (->**sati**, nominalized from the verb **sarati**, to remember) or remembrance have to do with mindfulness?

<http://theravadin.wordpress.com/2009/02/13/mindfulness-is-not-sati/>

The literal translation of the Pali word *sati* is not 'mindfulness', but 'memory'. It implies a recollection of purpose, a constant

affirmation and renewal of direction. It is viewing *dharma* [objects of perception] in light of *Dharma* [Truth]. Through continuous attention to bodily acts and mental attitudes which are normally unconscious and automatic, one realizes first-hand the impermanent and selfless nature of existence. Through long, unbroken practice, this understanding is assimilated by the Buddhist and begins to permeate every aspect of his experience, becoming the authentic basis for his thoughts and actions. The line between sitting in quiet introspection and one's daily activity in the world blurs, and all becomes meditation.

<http://emergentdharma.blogspot.com/2008/12/treading-on-tigers-tail.html>

The [Sutra of Mindfulness](#) says, “When walking, the practitioner must be conscious that he is walking. When sitting, the practitioner must be conscious that he is sitting. When lying down, the practitioner must be conscious that he is lying down..... No matter what position one's body is in, the practitioner must be conscious of that position. Practicing thus, the practitioner lives in direct and constant mindfulness of the body” The mindfulness of the positions of one's body is not enough, however. We must be conscious of each breath, each movement, every thought and feeling, everything which has any relation to ourselves.

Thich Nhat Hanh, [The Miracle of Mindfulness](#). Translated by Mobi Ho. Pages 7-8.

The Pali word for "mindfulness" is *sati* (in Sanskrit, *smriti*). *Sati* can also mean "retention," "recollection," or "alertness." Mindfulness is a whole-body-and-mind awareness of the present

moment. To be mindful is to be fully present, not lost in daydreams, anticipation, indulgences, or worry.

Barbara O'Brien, [Right Mindfulness: A Foundation of Buddhist Practice](#).

The Pali language scholar [Thomas William Rhys Davids](#) (1881) first translated *sati* as English *mindfulness* in *sammā-sati* "Right Mindfulness; the active, watchful mind". Noting that Daniel John Gogerly (1845) initially rendered *sammā-sati* as "Correct meditation", Davids explained, "*sati* is literally 'memory' but is used with reference to the constantly repeated phrase 'mindful and thoughtful' (*sato sampagāno*); and means that activity of mind and constant presence of mind which is one of the duties most frequently inculcated on the good Buddhist."

John D. Dunne, an associate professor at the University of Emory whose current research focuses especially on the concept of "mindfulness" in both theoretical and practical contexts, asserts that the translation of *sati* and *smṛti* as mindfulness is confusing and that a number of Buddhist scholars are trying to establish "retention" as the preferred alternative.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mindfulness>