

Vibhaṅga Sutta

(Saṃyutta Nikāya)

Analysis of Mindfulness

The main purpose of all beings is to be happy. Although they do all things in the name of happiness, unfortunately, they mostly live with unsatisfactoriness, or their hopes end with sorrow. The main reason for this situation is even though we do something to overcome illness, death and separation, those things themselves cause us to create suffering again. Here, the supreme Buddha always preaches us how to overcome suffering truly and live with real happiness. If we can listen to his message and practice it in our lives, we can get rid of suffering and achieve real happiness in this life itself. Every word that the Buddha says guides us how to overcome unsatisfactoriness or suffering. Among Buddhist teachings, mindfulness which is highly praised by many times is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.

In the discourse of Vibhaṅga, the Buddha explains three parts of mindfulness.

Sati-paṭṭhā-nañca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi sati-paṭṭhā-na-bhāva-nañca sati-paṭṭhā-na-bhā-va-nāgā-mi-niñca paṭipadam.

Here the Buddha says 1. mindfulness, 2. mindful meditation, and 3. the path of mindful meditation. According to this explanation, mindfulness describes fourfold mindfulness. Mindful meditation means contemplating on arising and ceasing of body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations. The path of mindful meditation means practicing the noble eightfold path.

1. Mindfulness:

Mindfulness guides us how to live in the present moment. When we spend our life, we mostly live in the past or future. Unfortunately, we don't know that we live in the past or future because of ignorance and un-mindfulness. We have lost the chance of seeing the beauty of the present experience. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind not to go to the past or future without awareness and how to live in the present moment seeing the world reality. Our success or happiness and how far we have overcome suffering depend on how much we have practiced mindfulness. By practicing mindfulness, we train our mind to be aware of our mind and body. Mindfulness is the best friend who brings the real happiness. Mind with mindfulness is the best friend, otherwise mind without mindfulness is the worst enemy. We should be clever to live with best friend getting rid of the worst enemy.

The importance of practicing mindfulness is always assigned among Buddhist doctrines. Mindfulness is the seventh factor of the Noble Eightfold Path; it is the third faculty (or *indriya*) of The Five Spiritual Faculties; and it is also the first faculty of The Seven Enlightenment

Faculties. According to this, we can think how important it is in Buddhism. Mindfulness in Buddhism relates to wisdom which is the understanding of impermanence.

All Buddhist teachings can be included into one topic that is mindfulness. Our spiritual success and real happiness depend on how far we have practiced mindfulness in our lives. Practicing Buddhism means practicing mental culture. Practicing mental culture means practicing mindfulness. Also, practicing mindfulness means practicing happiness. Finally, we can say very clearly practicing of all teachings of the Buddha means practicing mindfulness. The entire dispensation of the Buddha depends on practicing mindfulness.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattanam visuddhiya*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavanam samatikkhamaya*),

for the destruction of pain and grief (*dukkhadomanassanam attamgamaya*),

for the gaining of knowledge (*nayassa adhigamaya*)

for the attaining or realization of nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbanassa sacchikiriya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

The *Satipatthana Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of 'Sati', mindfulness and 'Patthana', establishment or practice. So 'Satipatthana' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate what happens to our mind and body and finally understanding whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings that we worry in our day to day life and in whole *sansaric* journey.

Here it is said the four types of areas where we practice mindfulness. They are;

- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of the body (*Kāyānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of sensation or feelings (*Vedanānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind (*Cittānupassanā*)
- The Contemplation (or mindfulness) of mind-objects (*Dhammanupassanā*)

According to practicing mindfulness in these four areas, we develop our attention and awareness about our body and mind. And we practice our attention to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes here the importance of developing mindfulness.

- **The Contemplation of body**

When we practice mindfulness in the field of body, we develop it in six areas. They are;

- Mindfulness of breathing (*Ānāpāna*).
When someone breathes, he does it consciously.
- Mindfulness of the four postures (*Iriyāpatha*)
When someone is walking, he knows he is walking. When someone is standing, he knows he is standing. When someone is sitting, he knows, he is sitting. When someone is lying down, he knows he is lying down.
- Mindfulness and clear awareness (*Sampajanna*)
When someone does everything from waking up to going to bed, he does all of them mindfully and wisely.
- Mindfulness or reflection on the repulsive: Parts of the body (*Patikkulamanasikāra*)
Here, meditator considers his all (32) parts of body such as hair, nail, teeth, skin are impure.
- Mindfulness of the four elements (*Dhātumanasikāra*)
Here, meditator further pays attention to four elements like earth (*Pathavi*), water (*Āpo*), fire (*Tejo*) and air (*Vāyo*).⁰¹
- Mindfulness of the Nine Charnel- Ground (*Navasivatika*)
Here, meditator considers a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from the moment of death until the skeleton). While he is investigating his whole body according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of the body.

- **The Contemplation of feelings (sensation)**

Here, someone feeling a pleasant feeling knows that he feels a pleasant feeling, feeling a painful feeling he knows that he feels a painful feeling, feeling a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant he knows that he feels a feeling that is neither painful nor pleasant.

While he is investigating his whole feelings according to above information, he sees arising and ceasing of all feelings.

- **The Contemplation of mind**

Here, the meditator contemplates on his own mind whether it is lustful or not, hating or not, deluded or undeluded, contracted or distracted, developed or undeveloped, surpassed or unsurpassed, concentrated or unconcentrated, liberated or unliberated.

While he is investigating his mind process according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of mind.

• The Contemplation of mind-objects

- The five hindrances (sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, restlessness and scruples, skeptical doubt)
- The five aggregates (form, feeling, perception, mental formation, consciousness)
- The six internal and external sense bases (eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind – sight, sound, smell, taste, touching, mind-objects)
- The seven factors of enlightenment
(Mindfulness, keen investigation, energy, rapture, tranquility, concentration, equanimity)
- The four Noble truths
 1. The unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha Sacca*),
 2. The cause of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca*),
 3. The cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca*),
 4. The path that leads to cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*)

While he is investigating his whole mind objects according to above areas as unwholesome and wholesome, he reflects arising and ceasing of his mind objects.

2. Mindful Meditation:

As the result of practicing mindfulness by using Buddhist teachings, we don't stop only with concentrating the mind. With concentrated mind, we reflect on the world reality as impermanent seeing arising and ceasing of our mind and body.

If we have any experience through our senses, five aggregates arise together. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සංකල්පනා), mental formations (*Sankhāra*-සංඛාර) and mind (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාන). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they cease instantly when the conditions separate. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and have to be known with insight. The nature of these five aggregates is arising and ceasing. At the moment of ceasing everything ceases without leaving anything remaining. The most valuable and interesting explanation in Buddhism is impermanence. It is said in Buddhism; **Not being occurred (in the past) comes to an occurrence. Being occurred (at the present) will not come to (the future) occurrence** (අනුන්වා සම්භවං නුත්වා න භවිස්සති). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates.

When we see this reality, we understand, there is nothing to grasp or reject. We understand our life as a process happens according to the causes and effects. There is no particular being or person, it is only a process which always arises and ceases. With this true understanding we can gradually overcome suffering. Little by little we go forward on the path of liberation from suffering and unsatisfactoriness. By practicing tranquility (*Samatha*) and insight (*Vipassanā*) meditation with discipline (*Seela*) in speech and behavior, we reach the final bliss of liberation, full enlightenment.

3. The path of mindful meditation:

With the full understanding of arising and ceasing of suffering, the Buddha's disciple realizes the real path to get rid of suffering. The Buddha emphasized the real path as the noble eightfold path with his experience. As the result of listening to the Buddha's message, our view becomes clear. It is said in Buddhism as 'Right Understanding'. When we have 'Right Understanding', we don't stop since we have to practice other seven steps too. Then we meet a path to follow 'The Noble Eightfold Path' –

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| 1. Right Understanding | (<i>Sammā Ditthi</i>) |
| 2. Right Intention/ Thoughts | (<i>Sammā Samkappa</i>) |
| 3. Right Speech | (<i>Sammā Vācā</i>) |
| 4. Right Action | (<i>Sammā Kammantha</i>) |
| 5. Right Livelihood | (<i>Sammā Ājiva</i>) |
| 6. Right Effort | (<i>Sammā Vāyāma</i>) |
| 7. Right Mindfulness | (<i>Sammā Sathi</i>) |
| 8. Right Concentration | (<i>Sammā Samādhi</i>) |

Here the most important thing that we are compulsory to do is to develop mindfulness. At the very beginning of practicing mindfulness, we have to identify 'the sign of mindfulness' (*Sati Nimitta*). Not only breathing meditation by focusing our attention on the tip of our nose or upper lip, we try to do all our daily activities mindfully. Our success of meditation depends on how much we practice this sign of mindfulness. Every day we have to try to increase the time that we practice mindfulness. When we practice this, we can see the result that is happiness. The very important thing of practicing of mindfulness is visible results. Seeing the results, we can go forward on the path getting rid of suffering towards the purification of mind in this short life itself. That is one of the qualities of the Dhamma which is with immediate results (*Akālika*). If we can put this knowledge into practice and get the results, we are the most fortunate people in the world. The reason is that this is the happiest thing among everything in our life such as money, relatives, education, properties, etc. For that we have to be diligent. We should dedicate our time for that than we do for other things.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

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May All Beings Be Well, Happy & Peaceful!

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