

The Fourfold Mindfulness - *Satipaṭṭhāna*

The Path to Liberation & Purification of Beings

The Buddha, who attained enlightenment, discovered the world reality and explained it to the world kindly. The Buddha purified his mind completely eradicating all defilements in his mind. He is not a God or a God's messenger. There are no creations or God's messages in his teachings. The Buddha clearly says that whether a Buddha appears or not in the world this world reality is there forever. Therefore the Buddha's message is the truth that anyone can discover by his wisdom. The Buddha's main teaching is the way how to achieve real happiness. According to the Buddha's message, the real happiness depends on how far we have overcome the suffering of old age, death and rebirth. The main reasons, that we suffer, are greed, anger and delusion. Greed means attachment, craving or lustful desire. Anger means aversion or hatred. Delusion means the lack of understanding about the reason of suffering. When the world changes, and when the world is out of our control, we suffer because of three reasons. If we are wise to overcome delusion, severe attachments and anger, we gradually overcome suffering in this life itself. Simultaneously, our happiness gradually increases.

The Buddha's message that leads to getting rid of unsatisfactoriness and achieve real happiness is very clear and systematic. Listening to this message is a very rare chance. Today we have the chance to listen to it because of a lot of merits and blessings that we have done in previous lives. The sublime truth that the Buddha explained is well expounded (*Svākkhato*), directly visible (*Sanditthiko*), immediately effective (*Akāliko*), calling one to come and see (*Ehipassiko*), leading onwards (*Opanaiko*), to be personally realized by the wise (*Paccattam Veditabbo Viññuhi*). The Buddha's main purpose was to point out the path of liberation from suffering. If the Buddha has preached any teachings to get rid of suffering, nobody can prove that it doesn't cause to get rid of suffering. According to Buddhism, understanding of suffering and cessation from suffering depend on how we are wish. There are four causes (*Paññāvuddhi Kārānāni*) which help us to achieve wisdom.

They are;

1. Association of good friends who explain the Buddha's real message (*Sappurisa sansevo*)
2. Listening to the Buddha's Message (*Saddhamma savanam*)
3. Wise Reflection (*Yoniso manasikāro*)
4. Practice (*Dhammānudhamma patipatti*)

As much as we are able to receive these four things to our life, we can develop wisdom and, we are able to overcome suffering.

At the very beginning of the path of liberation, we should have a clear knowledge what we practice and where we are going to. That is why the Buddha said; I declare the cessation of suffering

for the one who knows and sees the Dhamma. Here understanding of the Dependent Origination (*Paticcasamuppāda*) is very important. Understanding Buddhism depends on understanding of the Dependent Origination.

He who sees the Dependent Origination sees the Dhamma.

(Yo paticcasamuppādam passati so dhammam passati)

He who sees the Dhamma sees the Dependent Origination.

(Yo dhammam passati so paticcasamuppādam passati)

Ho who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha.

(Yo dhammam passati so mam passati)

Ho who sees the Dhamma sees the Buddha

(Yo mam passati so dhammam passati)

This is the real path how to see the Dhamma and the Buddha as well. Hence the Dependent Origination is like the heart of Buddhism.

Understanding the Dependent Origination causes to understand suffering and understanding suffering helps to understand the Four Noble Truths which is the main teaching in Buddhism. Also, if someone understands one noble truth, he realizes other three truths too. In this situation, the Buddha sometimes has explained one truth, sometimes two truths, sometimes all four truths according to the audience. Understanding of the four noble truths especially helps to realize the nature of ignorance which is the main cause of suffering. If someone can realize the nature of ignorance, he diligently tries to overcome ignorance which helps to overcome other unwholesome roots too like greed and anger. With the understanding of the dependent origination and four noble truths, the path which is the fourfold mindfulness can be found.

All Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha has explained in his 45 years of life focus on how to achieve happiness. In the same way the Buddha explained the path of getting rid of suffering. The main purpose of all beings is to be happy. Although they do everything in the name of happiness, unfortunately, they mostly live unhappily, or their hopes end with sorrow. The main reason for this situation is though we do everything to overcome illness, death and separation, those things themselves cause us to create more and more suffering. 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. **Mindfulness which is praised and recommended in Buddhism many times is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.**

Buddhism explains the reasons we suffer. Birth is suffering. Decay is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering... Finally, Buddhism concludes all sufferings in five aggregates. In short, arising of the five aggregates is suffering (*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). The path of getting rid of suffering depends on understanding and releasing the grasping of the five aggregates. Practicing mindfulness is the path that leads to the liberation from the suffering of the five aggregates. Those five aggregates are;

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| i. Matter | (<i>Rupa</i> - රූප) |
| ii. Feelings | (<i>Vedanā</i> - වේදනා) |
| iii. Perception | (<i>Saññā</i> - සන්ද්ධා) |
| iv. Mental formations | (<i>Samkhāra</i> - සංඛාර) |
| v. Consciousness | (<i>Viññāna</i> - විඤ්ඤාණ) |

When we experience through our senses about the world, these five aggregates arise together. They can't be separated. As the result of arising of these five things, we have an experience. These five aggregates suddenly arise and also cease instantly. When we experience something, they have not only arisen but ceased also. When we experience something through our eyes, ears, nose, tongue or body, these five senses can't get pleasure or pain. Those experiences ceased instantly, we get pleasure or pain in sense of mind as a past experience. However, we think that we experience in the present because of ignorance. That is why we suffer. If we can understand that these five aggregates arise and cease at the moment with the conditions, we are able to understand its impermanence. Then we know we have nothing to desire or hate. It means we are on the path of cessation of suffering. As much as we have this understanding, we have liberated from unsatisfactoriness and suffering.

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 lack of 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. Similarly, mind without mindfulness is the worst enemy. We should be clever enough to live with the best friend getting rid of the worst enemy.

The importance of practicing mindfulness is always emphasized 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. Hence mindfulness is highly praised in Buddhism.

That is why Buddhism illustrates the one and only way;

for the purification of beings (*Sattānam visuddhiyā*),

for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation (*sokapariddavānam samatikkhamāya*),

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

for the gaining of wisdom (*ñāyassa adhigamāya*)

for the attaining or realization of Nibbana or enlightenment (*nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya*)

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna, Satipaṭṭhāna Bhavana and Satipaṭṭhānabhavanagamini patipadā Mindfulness, Mindful Meditation and the path of Mindful Meditation

When we discuss mindfulness, we can see that a lot of people discuss it everywhere in the current society. Mostly they say mindfulness is that living in the present moment. Actually, this is not an exact definition for mindfulness according to Buddhism. Mindfulness is not just living in present moment. Mindfulness, which leads to overcome all sufferings completely, has a wide meaning in Buddhism. According to Vibhanga Sutta in Satipaṭṭhāna Sanyutta of Samyutta nikaya, when he who wants to know and practice mindfulness should know three things about mindfulness. They are 1. Mindfulness, 2. Mindful Meditation and 3. The Path of Mindful Meditation. Mindfulness means keeping our attention in four areas as body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations. Mindful meditation means reflecting on the impermanence of the body, feelings, consciousness and mental formations as arising and ceasing. The path to mindful meditation means understanding the noble eightfold path which consists of the four noble truths as,

- Right Understanding (*Sammā diṭṭhi*)
- Right Thoughts (*Sammā samkappa*)
- Right Speech (*Sammā vācā*)
- Right Action (*Sammā kammantha*)
- Right Livelihood (*Sammā ājiva*)
- Right Effort (*Sammā vāyāma*)
- Right Mindfulness (*Sammā sathi*)
- Right Concentration (*Sammā samādhi*)

Understanding mindfulness in Buddhism depends on understanding the dependent origination which is described below.

The *Satipatthāna Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of '*Sati*', mindfulness and '*Patthāna*', establishment or practice. So '*Satipatthāna*' 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 *sansāric* journey.

Here these are the four types of mindfulness we have to practice. 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 (*Dhammānupassanā*)

When we practice mindfulness in these four areas, we develop attention and awareness about our body and mind. And we practice our mind to live in the present moment consciously. We mostly suffer because of the past or the future. If we lose our awareness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes 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 of clear awareness (*Sampajañña*)**
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 (*Patavi*), water (*Āpo*), fire (*Tejo*) and air (*Vāyo*).

- **Mindfulness of the Nine Charnel- Ground (*Navasivatika*)**

Here, meditator recollects a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from moment of death to a skeleton). When he contemplates on his body according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of the body according to conditions.

- **The Contemplation of feelings (or 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.

When he contemplates on his feelings according to above information, he sees arising and ceasing of all feelings.

- **The Contemplation of mind**

Here, the meditator considers 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*)

When he contemplates his mind objects according to above areas as unwholesome and wholesome, he sees arising and ceasing of his mind objects.

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. Here it is very important to understand the dependent origination. Our entire life is the five aggregates which arise at the moment with conditions and cease when conditions cease.

If we have any experience through our six senses, five aggregates arise together at the moment. Five aggregates are forms (*Rupa*-රූප), feelings (*Vedanā*-වේදනා), perception (*Saññā*-සංකල්ප), mental formations (*Samkhāra*-සංඛාර) and mind (*Viññāna*-විඤ්ඤාණ). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they instantly cease when the conditions cease. 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** (*Ahutvā sambhutam hutvā na bhavissati*). This is the nature of impermanence that Buddhism illustrates. If something is impermanent (*Anicca*), it is suffering (*Dukkha*). If something is suffering, it is out of our control (*Anatta*). If someone can realize these three characteristics as the worldly reality, he is able to overcome suffering.

When we see this reality, we understand there is nothing to grasp or reject. We comprehend our life as a conditioned process. There is no particular certain 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 (*Sīla*) in speech and behavior, we reach the final bliss of liberation, full enlightenment. Here it is clear that mindfulness is the foundation of all doctrines. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. It means we are away from suffering like decay, death and rebirth. Whenever we are away from mindfulness, then we are in the field of the Mara. It means we are not away from suffering like sorrow, lamentation, grief, pain, decay, sickness, death and rebirth.

This understanding causes our permanent equanimity, which is the real happiness without any suffering even though we are in very complex situations. This is the highest refuge that we can gain by ourselves as the Buddha mentioned.

Dwell with yourselves as an island, with yourselves as a refuge, with no other refuge. Dwell with the Dhamma as an island, with the Dhamma as a refuge, with no other refuge.

Atta dīpā bhikkhave viharatha atta saranā na anna saranā,

Dhamma dīpā bhikkhave dhamma saranā na anna saranā. (Attadeepa Sutta)

The path how to be a refuge to ourselves is practicing mindfulness. That's is why the supreme Buddha always encourages us to practice and live in mindfulness. Living in mindfulness is that living

in the field of the supreme Buddha. Whenever someone lives in mindfulness, none can disturb his peace of mind.

As the result of practicing mindfulness, concentration and reflecting on impermanence are going to be filled. Finally, he who practices this path always keeps his mind in concentration. Also, he reflects arising and ceasing on mind, feelings, consciousness and mental objects. Then he has overcome suffering.

The highest contemplation about all our experiences that the Buddha has pointed out to Bahiya;

“In that case, Bāhiya, you should train yourself hence: In what is seen there must be only what is seen, in what is heard there must be only what is heard, in what is sensed there must be only what is sensed, in what is cognized there must be only what cognized is. This is the way, Bāhiya, you should train yourself.

Tasmātiha te, bāhiya, evaṃ sikkhitabbaṃ: ‘diṭṭhe diṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissatī’ti. Evañhi te, bāhiya, sikkhitabbaṃ. (Bahiya Sutta, Udanapali)

This is the real experience that an enlightened person lives in. This should be final goal of everyone according to what the supreme Buddha kindly advised us. We should practice all the teachings of the Buddha to reach this highest attitude.



May the Triple Gem Bless You!

May You be Well, Happy, Healthy and Peaceful!

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