

Bāhiya Sutta - Mindfulness (S.N. 5.1, 298p)

The Buddha emphasizes in this discourse the highest valuable thing that we should give our close relatives and friends if we have compassion for them. Living in mindfulness is the correct way to overcome suffering. If we guide someone to live in mindfulness, we help them to live happily. He who gives happiness to someone, gives everything. That is why the Buddha says the gift of dhamma excels all other gifts (*Sabba dānam dhamma dānam jināthi*). Among dhamma what the Buddha taught, the establishment of mindfulness is highly praised in various places.

Once upon a time when the Buddha was at Sāvatti, Bhikkhu Bāhiya approached the Blessed One, paid homage to him, sat down to one side, and said to him:

“Venerable sir, it would be good if the Blessed One would teach me the Dhamma in brief, so that, having heard the Dhamma from the Blessed One, I might dwell alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute.”

Then the Buddha replied;

“Well then, Bāhiya, purify the very starting point of wholesome states. And what is the starting point of wholesome states? Virtue that is well purified and view that is straight. Then, Bāhiya, when your virtue is well purified and your view is straight, based upon virtue, established upon virtue, you should develop the four establishments of mindfulness.

“What four? Here, Bahiya, you should

1. dwell contemplating the body in the body ardent (*ātāpi*), clearly comprehending (*sampajāno*), mindful (*satimā*), disciplining (or overcoming) covetousness (=appetency) and displeasure (=frustration) in regard to the world (*vineyya loke abhijjhā domanassam*).
2. dwell contemplating the feelings in feelings ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, disciplining (or overcoming) covetousness (=appetency) and displeasure (=frustration) in regard to the world.
3. dwell contemplating the mind in mind ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful disciplining (or overcoming) covetousness (=appetency) and displeasure (=frustration) in regard to the world.
4. dwell contemplating the phenomena in phenomena ardent, clearly comprehending, mindful, disciplining (or overcoming) covetousness (=appetency) and displeasure (=frustration) in regard to the world.

“When, Bāhiya, based upon virtue, established upon virtue, you develop these four establishments of mindfulness in such a way, then whether night or day comes, you may expect only growth in wholesome states, not decline.”

Then the Venerable Bāhiya, having delighted and rejoiced in the Blessed One's words, rose from his seat, and, after paying homage to the Blessed One, keeping him on his right, he departed. Then, dwelling alone, withdrawn, diligent, ardent, and resolute, the Venerable Bāhiya, by realizing it for himself with direct knowledge, in this very life entered and dwelt in that unsurpassed goal of the holy life for the sake of which clansmen rightly go forth from the household life into homelessness. He directly knew: "Destroyed is birth, the holy life has been lived, what had to be done has been done, there is no more for this state of being." And the Venerable Bāhiya became one of the arahants

All Buddhist doctrines that the Buddha has explained in his 45 years of his 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, mostly they 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 suffer again and 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. **Mindfulness which is praised and recommended many times in Buddhism is one of the most important doctrines that we should practice for liberation.** Especially, *Vibhanga Sutta* in Samyutta Nikāya describes mindfulness in three stages; mindfulness, mindful meditation, the path that leads to mindful meditation. These three stages of mindfulness are very important to know by everyone who likes to practice mindfulness in proper way to achieve liberation.

Buddhism explains the reasons we suffer. Birth is suffering. Decay is suffering. Sickness is suffering. Death is suffering... Finally, the Buddha concludes all sufferings in five aggregates. In short, arising of the five aggregates is suffering (*Samkhittena pañcupādānakkhandā dukkhā*). The path of cessation 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.

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, but 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 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. Therefore, we can understand 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 adhiḡamāya*)

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

which is practicing the fourfold mindfulness.

Satipaṭṭhāna, Satipaṭṭhāna Bhāvanā and *Satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāmini 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 that mindfulness is that living in the present moment. According to Buddhism, actually, this is not an exact definition for mindfulness. Mindfulness is not just living in the 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 Nikāya, he who wants to know and practice mindfulness should know three things about mindfulness.

“Satipaṭṭhānañca vo, bhikkhave, desessāmi satipaṭṭhānabhāvanañca satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāminiñca patipadaṃ”

They are Mindfulness, mindful meditation and 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 (*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānabhāvanā? Idha,*

bhikkhave, bhikkhu samudayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati, vayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati, samudayavayadhammānupassī kāyasmim viharati,...). The path to mindful meditation means (*Katamā ca, bhikkhave, satipaṭṭhānabhāvanāgāminī paṭipadā? Ayameva ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo...*) understanding the noble eightfold path which consists of the four noble truths. The Noble Eightfold Path is,

Right Understanding	(<i>Sammā diṭṭhi</i>)
Right Thoughts	(<i>Sammā samkappa</i>)
Right Speech	(<i>Sammā vācā</i>)
Right Action	(<i>Sammā kammantha</i>)
Right Livelihood	(<i>Sammā ājiva</i>)
Right Effort	(<i>Sammā vāyāma</i>)
Right Mindfulness	(<i>Sammā sathi</i>)
Right Concentration	(<i>Sammā samādhi</i>)

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

The *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* deals with the fourfold development of 'Sati', mindfulness and 'Patthāna', establishment or practice. So 'Satipaṭṭhāna' means establishment of mindfulness. The main purpose of practicing mindfulness is to investigate our mind and body and finally understanding the whole life. If we can clearly understand the process of our life as it is, we can overcome all sufferings that we have in our day to day life and in the whole *sansāric* 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 (*Dhammānupassanā*)

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 attention with mindfulness about the present, it means we lose our happiness. That is why Buddhism emphasizes here the importance of developing mindfulness. However, living in the present moment is not the final solution to get rid of suffering. Next, we have to reflect on impermanence of body, feeling, consciousness and mental formations. For all above two steps we should have clear understanding the dependent origination (*Saticcasamuppāda*).

- **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 the 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 (*Navasīvatika*)
Here, meditator recollects a dead body, what happens to the body after death (from the moment of death to a skeleton). While he is investigating his whole body according to above areas, he sees arising and ceasing of the body.

- **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.

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 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, touch, mind-objects)
- **The seven factors of enlightenment** (Mindfulness, Keen investigation, Energy, Rapture, Tranquility, Concentration, Equanimity)
- **The Four Noble Truths**
 1. The Noble Truth of Unsatisfactoriness (*Dukkha Sacca*),
 2. The Noble Truth of the Cause of unsatisfactoriness (*Samudaya Sacca*),
 3. The Noble Truth of the Cessation of unsatisfactoriness (*Nirodha Sacca*),
 4. The Noble Truth of the Path that Leads to Cessation of Unsatisfactoriness (*Magga Sacca*)

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

As the result of practicing mindfulness according to the Buddhist teachings, we never lose our concentration of our mind anyhow. With the 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 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 the mind (*Viññāna-විඤ්ඤාණ*). These five aggregates arise together at the moment when the conditions are together, and they instantly cease when the conditions separate. These five things appear behind any kind of experiences in our life, but they are invisible, and we only have to know 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** (*Ahuvā 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 world reality, he is able to overcome suffering.

When we see this reality, we understand, there is nothing to grasp or reject. We understand 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.

As the result of practicing mindfulness, the five spiritual faculties are going to be filled. They are confidence, energy, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom.

The Supreme Buddha often encourages us to make a refuge that none can disturb our peace of mind. Here the Buddha kindly emphasizes the path to make a refuge as practicing mindfulness. Living in mindfulness is like living in the field of the Buddha. Practicing mindfulness is also that making an unshakable mind that none can disturb the peace of mind.



May All Beings be Mindful & Wise!

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