



## SATI (MINDFULNESS) AS PROTECTION FOR ONESELF AND TO OTHERS ALSO

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### ABSTRACT:

*"By Protecting oneself, one protects others"—the truth of this statement begins at a very simple and practical level. This first material level of the truth is so self-evident that we need to say no more than a few words about it. It is obvious that the protection of our own health will go far in protecting the health of others in our environment, especially where contagious diseases are concerned. Caution and circumspection in all our doings and movements will protect others from the harm that may come to them through our carelessness and negligence. By careful driving, abstention from alcohol, self-restraint in situations that might lead to violence—in all these and many other ways we shall protect others by protecting ourselves.*



**KEY WORDS:** (Mindfulness), Kāyānupassanā, Vedanānupassanā, Cittānupassanā and Dhammānupassanā.

### INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness (*Sati*) makes one aware of what is happening in the mind. It is based on such recognition that something can be done about the arising of unwholesome reactions or the presence of detrimental states of mind. Unless recognition through mindfulness is established, greed, anger and delusion will have free range to work havoc in the mind, hiding under any of the various pretences and excuses they are capable of assuming so as to disguise their true nature. Mindfulness, however, enables seeing through these different disguises and rationalizations. By detecting the presence of mental defilements, established mindfulness can counteract one's innate unwillingness to admit to oneself that one is angry, greedy or confused. Whatever diversionary he is there one should be carefully guide or manipulate someone or something in order to achieve an end. The mental impurities have staged to avoid being detected, bare attention unmasks these and reveals the actual condition of one's own mental household. In this way, mindfulness can indeed become a real protection.

The successful achievement of such self-protection through mindfulness finds illustration in another simile, which compares *sati* to a careful charioteer.<sup>1</sup> The implications of this simile are self-evident, as without the presence of mindfulness an 'accident' is prone to happen. Applying the indications given in the *SedakaSutta* to this simile, a careful charioteer is one who by maintaining

<sup>1</sup> SN. I, p. 73.

awareness while driving through life's vicissitudes does the needful to avoid an accident, whereby he protects not only himself, but also others.

### THE MEANING OF SATI AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN OUR DAILY LIFE

The psychological concept of mindfulness involves the non-judgmental acceptance of thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Mindfulness and a practicing of mindfulness can also decrease negative thoughts that intrude upon a leader's mind.<sup>2</sup> Mindfulness (*Sati*) leads to a better quality of life through feeling better and having less emotional distress. *Sati* plays a central role in the teachings of Buddhist meditation where it is affirmed that "correct" or "right" mindfulness (*sammāsati*) is the crucial factor in the path to liberation and subsequent enlightenment. *Sati* is unique to Buddhism and it is spread to every religion and philosophy. It is the Buddhist code of mental and physical conduct leads to the end of suffering.

The Pāṇi word "*Sati*" literally means "memory." the Sanskrit word *Smṛti* (*Smṛti*) literally means "that which is remembered", usually translated as mindfulness, or as awareness and constitutes a mental quality of crucial importance in early Buddhism. Bhikkhu Bodhi adds that "as a mental factor, it signifies presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than the faculty of memory regarding the past."<sup>3</sup>

In the simple term, *Sati* means the training of one's mind to examine things in such a way as to recognize what is important and not to be led astray by the way of unwholesomeness. "Whatever we do we should do it with mindfulness, that is paying full attention, when you study you should pay full attention, you must be mindful, then you will get good results. If you work with mindfulness, you will do good work and the chance for errors are very few. Mindfulness is an important instrument of working".<sup>4</sup> *Sati* is required not only to fully take in the moment to be remembered, but also to bring this moment back to mind at a later time. To "re-collect", then, becomes just a particular instance of a state of mind characterized by "collectedness" and the absence of distraction.

To sum up, we can say that there are basically the elements to note of the definition and meaning of *sati* in the literature: (1) *sati* remembers or does not lose what is before the mind; (2) *Sati* is a natural 'presence of mind'; it stands near and hence serves and guards the mind; (3) *Sati* "calls back to mind", that is, it remembers things in relationship to things and thus tends to know their value and widen the view; (4) *Sati* is thus closely related to wisdom; it naturally tends to seeing things as they truly are.

### THE CHARACTERISTICS AND THE FUNCTIONS OF SATI

The theme of mindfulness spreads throughout each of the Buddhist scripture as well as other religions that compose the path to freedom. The fundamental of mindfulness and its characteristics will be explained in detail.

In the *Visuddhimagga*, *Sati* is described as follows; Mindfulness has the characteristic of remembrance. Its function is not to forget. It is manifested as guarding.<sup>5</sup> *Sati* has the characteristic of not wobbling. Its function is to forget unwholesomeness. It is manifested as the state of confronting an objective field. Its proximate cause is strong perception or the foundation of mindfulness(*sati*) concerned with the body, (*kāya*) feeling, (*vedanā*) consciousness(*citta*) and mind objects(*dhamma*).<sup>6</sup>

While a determining factor among the thirty-seven factors of Buddha's teaching (*Bodhipakkhiyadhammas*), *Sati* is the central characteristic of the mind. In the present time, awareness is

<sup>2</sup> Srinivasan S. Pillay, "*Your Brain and Business*." Printed in the United States of America, first printing March, 2011, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi (ed), "*Abhidhammattha Saṅgaha, A comprehensive manual of Abhidhamma*." Kandy BPS, 1993, p.86.

<sup>4</sup> Ven, C. Phangcham, "*Buddhism for Young Students*." Wat Dhammaram: Sunday School, USA, 1990, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (trans), "*The Path of Purification*." Taipei, Taiwan, 2006, Pr.172, p.169.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.142.

the characteristic of *Sati* (Mindfulness). With Mindfulness one sees all phenomena without references to concepts like “me”, “my” or “mine”.

The “absence of confusion” is the function of *Sati* (Mindfulness). According to Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield in the book “Seeking the Heart of Wisdom” there are three functions of *Sati* (Mindfulness):

The first function of *Sati* (Mindfulness) is to see clearly what is happening in the present moment.<sup>7</sup> In this function mindfulness allows us to notice the present things, to receive each experience without judgment, without grasping or aversion. Through the freshness and immediacy of our attention, and with less identification, we can begin to sense a whole new inner spirit of wisdom. The second function of *Sati* (Mindfulness), “*Sati* develops all the other factors of enlightenment.”<sup>8</sup> That is *Sati* (mindfulness) makes an extremely powerful attribute of mind, as *Sati* grows it brings steadiness, calmness, and equanimity with other factors.

The third “function of *Sati* (Mindfulness) is to balance the mind.”<sup>9</sup> Mindfulness balances the factors of enlightenment too. We can say that mindfulness can help to bring about an extra-ordinary balance, even elsewhere allowing us to be energized, focused, tranquil, and exploring, all at once. Looking at *Sati* from the point of view of ethics, we will discern both negative and positive aspects of the functioning of *Sati*.

From agitation side, *Sati* (Mindfulness) restrains the mind, protects one from error, and prevents one from stumbling into undesirable mental states or situations. *Sati* allows no opportunity for unwholesomeness to enter the mind and prevents the misuse of thought.

On the positive side, *Sati* is the controller and inspector of the stream of sense-consciousness, mentality and one’s all actions, ensuring that they all lie within desired parameters. *Sati* keeps the mind harnessed to chosen object. *Sati* is thus the tool for laying hold of or clasping into an object and its action is rather like placing the object in front of the mind for consideration.

## WHEN WE PRACTICE MEDITATION, WE CAN USE THESE ACTIVITIES AS FUNCTIONAL DEFINITIONS OF SATI:

### 1. *Sati* (Mindfulness) reminds us of what we are supposed to be doing;

In meditation, we put our attention on one object. When the mind wanders elsewhere, it is Mindfulness which reminds us what we are supposed to do. It is Mindfulness that brings our mind back to the object of meditation.

### 2. *Sati* (Mindfulness) helps the mind to see things as they really are.

When we are in meditation, *Sati* is the most important factor, *Sati* is bare attention and it just looks at whatever comes up.

### 3. *Sati* sees the deep nature of all phenomena.

*Sati* (Mindfulness) sees the true nature of all phenomena. Only when one has mindfulness, he can perceive the three prime characteristics which Buddhism teaches: they are (1) impermanence, (*anicca*) (2) suffering (*dukkha*) and (3) non-self (*antta*).<sup>10</sup>

In brief, “non-superficiality” is the salient characteristic of mindfulness, while the “absence of confusion” is its function, and the “state of being turned towards the object” is its manifestation. It is also called the “*Appamāda*” (non-negligence) awareness which indicates the state of unremitting alertness of the *Yogāvacara*, the proficient in spiritual endeavor.

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Goldstein & Jack Kornfield, “Seeking the Heart of Wisdom.” Boston & London, 1987, Ps. 62-63.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Venerable H. Gunaratana Mahathera, “Mindfulness in plain English.” W.A.V.E, 2003, p. 148.

## TYPES OF SATI (MINDFULNESS)

There are four types of Mindfulness according to *SatipaṭṭhānaSutta*, it can be classified in detail as follows:

### *Kāyānupassanā* (Mindfulness of body):

This means that one's mind is firmly bound to the whole body by the rope of right mindfulness. Here the mind is constantly looking at or concentrating upon bodily phenomena, such as breathing in and out and the other exercises listed in the discourse on the application of mindfulness. At this point the meditator has control on his mind so that mind can be fixed on any subject of meditation.

### *Vedanānupassanā* (Mindfulness of feeling):

It means that one's mind is firmly bound by the rope of right mindfulness to the feeling group, e.g. pleasant feeling, painful feeling, neither painful nor pleasant feeling, which occur all the time in the body varying according to conditions. Repeatedly fixing the mind on these feelings will put an end to restlessness of mind, and when this occurs then one has mental control so that the mind will be concentrated on any subject of meditation.

### *Cittānupassanā* (Mindfulness of Mind):

*Cittānupassanā* is mindfulness on mind object. It means the mindful which is firmly bound with the mindfulness-rope to the contemplation of the mind when it is associated with greed and aversion, which have been present in one's mental continuum from time to time according to conditions. When this is often practiced the restless mind disappears and the mind becomes workable so that it can be fixed on any subject of meditation.

### *Dhammānupassanā* (Mindfulness of mental phenomena):

The rope of right mindfulness here binds the mind to the contemplation on such mental objects as sensual desire, ill-will, mental and physical sloth, distraction and worry, and uncertainty (the five hindrances) and other subjects given in the discourse which arise conditionally in one's mind-continuum. When this has been repeated many times restlessness disappears and with this mind-control the mind can be directed to any subject of meditation.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the Buddha declared in *SatipaṭṭhānaSutta*: "The four foundations of mindfulness are the only way that leads to the attainment of the purity of mind, to the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, to the end of pain and grief, to the entering upon the right path and to the realization of *Nibbāna*".<sup>12</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The Buddha exhorted us to cultivate the arousing of mindfulness through a practice called "the four foundations of mindfulness". The practice of mindfulness should be applied to each and every action that one does in daily life. In all movements, the Buddha taught us to be mindful, whether one walks, stands or sits, whether one speaks, keeps silent, eats, drinks or even when one answers the calls of nature, one should be mindful and wide awake.

Mindfulness runs through the whole of the Buddha's word, and embraces everything there. It is like the elephant's footprint which is able to contain the footprint of any other animal. Therefore, the Buddha said: "all wholesome things are founded on mindfulness, converge on mindfulness, and mindfulness is to be considered as the most excellent of them." The teaching of the Buddha, which is within the scope of the mindfulness, is a way that guides a disciple through pure living and pure thinking, to gain supreme wisdom and deliverance from all evils and defilements.

<sup>11</sup> Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, "The Manuals of Buddhism." Yangon, Myanmar, 2004, p.321.

<sup>12</sup> DN. II, p.312.

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