



QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE

Sangha Samaggi Togetherness of the Buddhist Sangha

Published by the Queensland Sangha Association Inc
An incorporated association of Buddhist monks and nuns in Queensland, Australia. Est. 2007
108 Eric Street, Goodna, Queensland 4300 [ABN 56 506 052 172]

QSA WEBSITE www.sanghaql.org
EMAIL ADDRESS infoqsa@gmail.com

Facebook: *Queensland sangha Association*

15 NOVEMBER 2020

NUMBER 003

ARTICLE NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

- | | |
|---|---|
| 7 | Mindfulness (Sati) |
| 8 | The Four Foundations of Mindfulness (Sati Patthana) |

Article 7

MINDFULNESS-BASICS

Namo Thassa Bhagawatho Arahatho Samma Sambuddhassa!!!

According to the Sati Patthana Sutta (Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness) establishing mindfulness on the four foundations is the one and only way (some translate as direct way) for attaining enlightenment. The Buddha uses the word 'Ekayano Maggo' meaning the one and only way. The discourse sets out the framework for establishing four foundations of mindfulness.

There is not much information about what in fact mindfulness is. In the ancient language Sanskrit, it is equated to Smriti (meaning memory). A closer look at the aforementioned discourse suggests that the English translation "memory or remembering" is having a very limited scope in realising ultimate happiness, enlightenment. Mindfulness is more to do with knowing or being aware.

Four foundations of mindfulness mentioned in this discourse are the awareness relating to the physical process, sensations, cittas (meaning the mental contents) and dhammas (meaning natural phenomena relating to physical and mental processes). Before we develop mindfulness, it is best to know what exactly mindfulness is

Based on the discourse, we can understand that the mindfulness means **“The self-awareness that I am Here and Now”**

To explore this definition a bit further, one needs to understand the words, “I am”, “Here”, “Now” and “Awareness”.

How do we identify the “I am”? In simple sense, it is this body and the mind associated with it. In a more specific sense, it is the physical process, mental process, and their inter-connection treated as a whole. The technical terms used are “name” and “form”. Although “a living being” is physical and mental processes and their inter-connections, most of our attention is habitually on the body (physical process]. The mind is a relatively unknown and neglected factor. The mind seems to have its own agenda all the time. The mind tries to live mostly in the past and the future and hardly ever in the “now”. Similarly, it also lives in other places such as workplace, friends’ places, other suburbs, states, countries and may be other galaxies and not “here”. This means that the physical process is “here and now” but the mental process is not. This results in unhealthy, stressful, and inefficient existence.

Now means the point in time that keeps moving always making future now and now the past.

Here means that the area demarcated by the skin and the contact with the mother earth so far as the physical process is concerned.

Awareness means the mere attention or choiceless knowing. We always live here and now but are not aware. Consequently, we are not mindful. When you bring awareness to what you already are, mindfulness starts its journey. So, “awareness” is a particularly important aspect of mindfulness. Mindfulness has been there even when prince Siddhartha was born.

To attain enlightenment, The Buddha’s instruction is to maintain mindfulness to the fore (parimukam satim). He further suggests starting the practice taking the body as the reference/focal point (ujum kayam panidaya). This may be because the body is what one knows, and the mind is a forgotten and neglected process. By doing this, one may bring his mad monkey mind to the body and be constantly aware of it.

One may not be mindful by reading this article, a book, listening to a talk or discussing about it. They may be helpful to trigger your quest to experience it. Mindfulness is a skill or an ability that must be cultivated by practice. There are two levels of practice.

- Basic level and
- The continuing level

In basic level practice, one can develop mindfulness by bringing awareness to the

- Lower part of the body (walking mindfulness)
- Upper part of the body (sitting mindfulness) and
- Daily routines

In continuing level, one will continue the basic practice and will observe that mindfulness is naturally leading or guiding one's whole life. This is an evolution of the basic practice. Hence, one should strive mainly in the basic level. So, I would like to explain the basic practice a bit in detail.

Walking Mindfulness

This deals with lower part of the body.

First choose a path to walk on say about 30 steps. Ideally, the surface can be flat, straight, and natural (sand, gravel, or grass). If ideal conditions are not available, we may use what is available.

You will stand, ideally barefooted, at the beginning of the path. The eyes cast down about a metre in front. The hands are held by your sides or clasped in front or at the back. Be aware of the fact that you are standing before you start walking. You can do this by feeling the soles of the feet. Then, you start walking at natural pace. Walk up and down a few times to get attuned. Then, try to direct your attention to the sole of the foot when placing and pressing to the ground. Observe all the information such as shapes, manners, and sensations. Initially, if you find it difficult to maintain the attention, label "right" "left" in your head to bring the mind closer to the walking. Once you can feel the sole of the foot without labelling, please let it happen. It would be better. It is an indication that you are more attentive.

To dive a bit more into the lower part of the body, you can now observe another aspect of walking. That is observing shapes, manners, and sensations of lifting the sole of the foot from the ground. If you can reasonably observe the details at this stage, then you may also observe details of the moving pace of the walking process. This way, you will gradually bring the full attention to whole walking process.

What you see or hear or thoughts flowing can be a disturbance. There is no need to react to any of these. You just accept them. They will arise and pass away.

Sitting Mindfulness

This deals with the upper part of the body. Sit in a comfortable posture. Ideally it can be full or half lotus positions. If you need you may sit on a chair. Avoid

leaning on the back rest when you sit on a chair or on a wall when seated on the floor. Ensure body and the neck is held upright. Right palm ought to be on the left palm on your lap. Feel relaxed in your abdomen, shoulders, and body in general. Shut the eyes. I usually scan the body from the top of the head to the tip of the toes to relax and get the wondering mind closer to the sitting body.

When you bring the attention to the body, the natural tendency is to feel the movements in the body. One of such movement is the respiration, breath coming in and going out. Stay with patience and keep watching the natural breath as and when it happens. People might feel the contact of the air with the body at the nostril, near the abdomen or the chest. The focus should be at the most prominent point in your experience. Place your attention to the chosen point. Observe any characteristics (shapes, manners and sensations) that get manifested on the selected point or in the breath itself.

If it is hard to bring the mind to the breath, you may keep observing the posture. If the mind comes to the breath and doesn't stay, then you may label the breath as "IN" or "Out".

Disturbances such as sounds, pain, and thoughts may occur. Just let them pass. Learn to accept them. As you get more experience these will not disturb you even if they appear. There is no need to get upset.

(This article is based on a talk given by Mr. Amaranath Jayakody in QSA Buddhist Forum 03-Session 1 on Mindfulness.)

Article 8

FOUR FOUNDATIONS OF MINDFULNESS

Namo Tassa Bhagawato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa!!!

We are in search of a path to enlightenment. The Blessed One stated that Sati Patthana Sutta (Discourse on the Establishment of Mindfulness) establishing mindfulness on the four foundations is the one and only way (some translate as direct way) for attaining enlightenment. The Buddha uses the words 'Ekayano Maggo' meaning the one and only way. The discourse sets out the framework for establishing the four foundations of mindfulness.

There is not much information about what in fact mindfulness is in the discourse. We have already discussed it in our last session. Mindfulness is the

“bare attention” to one’s presence, right here and right now. Anyone practising mindfulness must support the practice with the following:

- 1 Morality
- 2 Listening
- 3 Discussion
- 4 Concentration
- 5 Insight.

Buddha has provided this guideline in the Discourse on Supportive Factors (Anuggahita Sutta). Now, we are trying to provide the listening supportive factor and have selected the “Discourse on Four Foundations of Mindfulness” because it provides the essential ingredients for the practitioners of mindfulness to understand the pragmatic nature of their experiences.

The discourse was delivered by the Buddha in a market town called Kammasadhamma. The Buddha addressed the audience by the term Bhikkhus. Our general impression that a bhikkhu is an ordained person. The stanza for the veneration of Sangha states that “ that is to say four pairs of persons, eight kinds of people” (yadhitan chattharo attha purisa puggala). These eight people are:

- 1 Those who are walking on the path to stream-winning
- 2 Those who have attained stream-winning (Sotapanna)
- 3 Those who are walking on the path to once-returner (Sakadagami)
- 4 Those who have attained once returner
- 5 Those who are walking on the path to non-returner (Anagami)
- 6 Those who have attained non-returner
- 7 Those who are walking on the path to full enlightenment (Arahant) and
- 8 Those who have attained enlightenment.

Each of the four stages consists of a Path and Attainment. Those who practice mindfulness are practising the one and only path to enlightenment and hence are at least on the path to stream winning. Therefore, you may form the idea that anyone practising mindfulness is technically a Bhikkhu.

It is also important to understand why Buddha mentioned that this is the one and only way (Ekayano maggo). The folks in the town, Kammasadamma had been using various techniques to develop their spiritual practices to attain the highest happiness. The Blessed One addresses them and says that this is the

path to Nibbana. In other words, he implies that other practices do not lead to Nibbana.

For example If someone desires to come to Australia, that person must go to the air or seaport in his country. He may use any mode of transport getting to the port, but those modes of transport do not bring them to Australia. You have to get on to the proper vehicle.

Likewise, you may use any technique for tranquillity and calmness, but mindfulness is imperative to achieve Nibbana. So, it is the only way. This is mentioned in the loving kindness discourse as well. On the other hand, if one maintains mindfulness to the fore, it has the potential to evolve into right mindfulness over time. Therefore, it is one-way and ends up only in Nibbana.

In addition to attaining the ultimate bliss, the Blessed One also states that this is the one and only way for the purification of beings, for the overcoming of sorrow and lamentation, for the destruction of suffering and grief, for reaching the right path.

In practising the four foundations of mindfulness three important qualities are particularly important:

- 1 Being ardent in relation to the energy applied (Atapi)
- 2 Clear comprehension led by mindfulness (Sampajanno Satima)
- 3 Discipline in regard to covetousness and grief in the world (Vineyya loke Abhijja Domanassa)

The application of energy in walking along the path needs to be balanced depending on the level of practice.

Clear comprehension is continuing mindfulness which allows the practitioner to face the impermanence and non-self but still, continue with close attention. It helps the mindfulness to evolve into higher stages.

Discipline in covetousness and grief in the world ensures that the practitioner does not try to change the world, but will ensure that he/she will change himself/herself instead.

**THE END OF THE 6 PAGE QSA DHAMMA MAGAZINE FOR THE PERIOD
SEPTEMBER
2020**

Issued by the President of QSA, Reverend James Wilson

**YOU ARE WELCOME TO FORWARD THIS NEWSLETTER
TO A FRIEND WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT**

**THIS MAGAZINE IS NOT FOR PUBLIC CIRCULATION BUT FOR THE INFORMATION OF
MEMBERS OF QSA, SUPPORTERS AND FRIENDS. PAST COPIES OF THE MAGAZINE ARE
PLACED IN THE CURRENT PAGE OF THE QSA WEBSITE www.sanghaqlld.org**

*If you do not want to receive this newsletter please advise QSA via infoqsa@gmail.com
If you want a friend to see this magazine please let us know*