

## Mindfulness and Practice in Various Buddhist Traditions

Ven. Sajjana<sup>a</sup>, Kumar, Gautam Anand<sup>b</sup>, Arvind Kumar Singh<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar, Sharda University, India

<sup>b</sup>Assistant Professor, Sharda University, India

<sup>c</sup>Professor, Gautam Buddha University, India

### Abstract

The theoretical construction and practicing of mindfulness informed by this notion have gone through considerable development over two thousand and five hundred years ago. In this field, the investigation needs to distinguish about mindfulness practice between 'Theravada tradition' in Southeast Asia, 'Mahayana tradition' in especially China, Vietnam and Japan, 'Vajrayana tradition' in Tibet, Mongolia and Butan and 'Zen tradition' in Japan. Each construct of mindfulness has its own intrinsic value, informed by the historical context of which it arose. To deal with above issue, this field had tried to deal with the etymology and meaning to the term used by the Buddha in accordance with various Buddhist traditions. This present paper will discuss Buddhist mindfulness in theoretical and practical way.

**KEYWORDS:** Mindfulness or Sati, Various Sects of Buddhism, Buddhist meditation, Satipatthana (foundation of Mindfulness).

### Mindfulness practice in Mahayana tradition

In the Mahayana tradition, mindfulness is regarded as wisdom, transcendental knowledge, which is known in Pāli text as pañña, in Sanskrit as prājna. Mindfulness is also particular way of working with one's mind. It is the method of recollection, of watchfulness, which develops into the stage of awareness. When one has developed the discipline of mindfulness, awareness is simply the continuity of that mindfulness. The author Rinpoche, (2005) discussed the four foundations of mindfulness as meditators are understood and practiced in the general Buddhist approach in accordance with the Mahayana tradition. The four foundation of mindfulness in Mahayana Buddhism are not several different from Theravada tradition. The difference of these two traditions is one's understanding with each of the four objects. The object of body provides as the root of attachment to oneself as an existent, permanent ego. To that one add feeling, something to be experienced by this self. Then one has mind, which is what one relate to as the real self. When one tries to point to the self, the ego, one usually objects of self-attachment which cannot exist without body and feeling. Mind cannot really express itself without the body and felling. Therefore mind, in the third stage of mindfulness, is the fundamental idea of consciousness. The fourth object of mindfulness is phenomena. Ordinarily, one relates to phenomena as the root of ignorance (moha). However, from this perspective, phenomena are seen as the root of both ignorance and liberation.

The essence of mindfulness is the *pañña* of seeing, the wisdom that understands and experiences the true nature of body, the true nature of feeling, the true nature of mind, and the true nature of phenomena. The meditator has to focus the place or relate one's mind closely with these four foundations of objects to practice. The essence of these practices is experiencing these four objects without any barrier between one as the knower and the experienced object. The absence of any barrier is *pañña* (insight knowledge). *Pañña* is also without coloring, therefore, one sees the objects' fundamental state and relate with that. The fundamental simplicity of the object is the essence or nature of mindfulness. To one examines these four types of mindfulness, one will recognize that they involve working with the five aggregates (*Khandhā*). The mindfulness of body relates to the *Khandhā* of form (*Rupakkhandhā*). The mindfulness of feeling relates to the *Khandhā* of feeling (*Vedanakkhandhā*). The mindfulness of mind relates to the *Khandhā* of consciousness, which is the fifth *Khandhā* (*Viññanakkhandhā*). The mindfulness of phenomena relates to the other two *Khandhās* (*Sannakkhandhā* and *Samkharakkhandā*). Keeping this in mind helps one to understand these four foundations of mindfulness (Rinpoche, 2005).

The method of practicing with the four foundations of mindfulness in the body, there are two ways of viewing the practice of the mindfulness of body. The first is the general Theravada Buddhist approach, which is the most fundamental way of looking at mindfulness. The second approach specifically reflects the Mahayana point of view. In the general Theravada Buddhist approach, one works with outside form of the physical existence. Everyone tries to understand what this existence is, what this physical form is. Usually, one experiences the physical body as existing somewhere. Men feel that the body exists outside of the mind. That is one's fundamental experience of body, and it goes wild in the usual situation of life. Through the practice of mindfulness, meditators calm down the wildness of one's physical existence and bring it to a certain level of understanding. By bringing it into the present, one brings it to what it actually is, rather than thinking about what it is.

At the Mahayana tradition, meditators must be understood beyond the simple physical presence of body. At this point, one relates to the way the body is experienced. The way one experiences one's body is simply the perception, the reflection. As far as the Mahayana path is concerned, there is nothing solid beyond that there is no real existence of an outer physical body. Through the practice of reflecting on the physical existence, the discipline of mindfulness develops into seeing with awareness, meditators are seeing a much deeper level of the physical self. One who meditates mindfulness is discovering the true nature of the experience of body. Therefore, when one examines about this mindfulness in the Mahayana sense, one is examining about the selflessness of the body, which is very different from the Theravada Buddhist approach. Therefore, in the Mahayana path, our whole experience of the body and the physical world is seen as simply a projection of our mind. It is a production of mind and will remain as long as remain in dream of life. Mindfulness of body is the dreamlike nature of one's body. In order to really practice mindfulness of body, one must begin along with Theravada tradition of simply being there in the physical sense, experiencing the presence of the body. To going further into experience of body, one can see the illusory, dreamlike nature

of our body as a reflection of the mind and going into the depth of that experience, one realizes body as emptiness.

The practice of the second foundation, mindfulness of feeling, is relating to the basic existence as life of beings. In the Theravada Buddhist point, feeling refers to acting with the basic fear, which is the fear of suffering, or the fear of fear. Therefore, mindfulness of feeling relates with the three objects of the existence in the life of beings, the pleasant object, the unpleasant object and the neutral object. In relation to these three objects, one can experience three different states or aspects of fear. Towards the pleasant object, one can feel a fear of attachment, a fear of desire. Towards the unpleasant object, one can feel a fear of hatred or aggression and towards the neutral object, one can feel a fear of neutral feeling, of numbness or stupidity. Everybody daily experiences these three aspects of feeling in surviving the existence in the world. To relate with these three feelings, the Buddha taught that one has to understand properly to the three objects with practicing their nature. The Buddha addressed that when one examines the nature of these three feelings and their three objects, one could discover that the fundamental nature of all of them is suffering. The pleasant object, the unpleasant object and the neutral object all have the same nature of suffering, regardless of whether one is relating to attachment, aggression or ignorance. Consequently, practicing mindfulness of suffering is the mindfulness of feeling, and relating with the three objects is the method to relate with the three levels of suffering.

The third stage of mindfulness is practicing with the basic state of mind, which is the consciousness or awareness. In the Mahayana tradition, mindfulness of consciousness is closely connected to the meditative experience. Mindfulness brings the mind down to the fundamental state of present moment of reality that means mindfulness of consciousness in the Mahayana tradition. The fourth foundation of mindfulness is called mindfulness of phenomena or dhamma. After practicing with mindfulness of mind, it continuously leads to the next one, which is panoramic awareness of phenomena. In the Mahayana tradition, mindfulness of phenomena means understanding the emptiness of phenomena, the egolessness of phenomena. This realization is developed through the cultivation of the three pañña of hearing, contemplating and meditating. By going through this three stage process of analyzing the phenomenal world from the Mahayana perspective, there can realize the nonexistence or selflessness of these outer phenomena (Sally Vee, 2014).

### **Mindfulness practice in Tibetan Buddhism**

Tibetan Buddhism is known as Vajrayana Tradition which is one branch of Mahayanatradition (Rinzler, 2015). In this tradition, the first emphasis of practiced meditation is making the simulation of Buddha's image in mind to stabilize. The method of this meditation was informed that first one takes a physical object of the Buddha such as statue or image of Buddha and gaze at it until to very familiar with its images. After this situation one has to create a simulation of this image in mind for the point of stability. The benefits of this meditation gained as a fairly peaceful mind, a deep faith and reverence for the Buddha, a very inspiring and effective at stabilizing the mind (Wallace, 2005). This Tibetan meditation method is the most similarity with Buddhānussati (reflection on the virtue of the Buddha) meditation in Theravada Buddhism.

The second Tibetan Buddhist meditation is focusing one's awareness on the breath that is practice widely in all Buddhist tradition. The main point attribute of this meditation is that in breath awareness the object of meditation, the breath, is present without our having to imagine it. The awareness of meditation involves several different ways. For someone, it focuses on the rise and fall of the abdomen during the in- and out-breath. For another, focuses on the sensations of the breath passing through the apertures of the nostrils and above the upper lip. All of these practices are valuable methods and they can be especially useful for all beings with highly discursive, imaginative minds. Mindfulness meditation of Tibetan tradition is mental factor that allows meditators to focus an object with continuity, without forgetting that object. So, if one is focusing on the sensations of own breath at the nostrils, mindfulness enables meditators to fasten the attention there continuously. When one practices mindfulness meditation, meditator must practice vigilance with mindfulness together. If mindfulness vanishes, the mind slips off its object. At that time vigilance maintains to stabilize the object not to lose mindfulness out of mind.

### **Mindfulness practice in Zen Buddhism**

Zen Buddhism is the core concept of Dhyana which is based on the Mahayana tradition. Zen Buddhism derives its nomenclature from this central concept (L. P. Singh, 2018). Zen mindfulness all rests on the fundamental goal championed by Zen as the path to liberation. The point of Zen mindfulness meditation is the realization that ultimate freedom only comes when one let go of every goal one is clinging to. According to Zen tradition, the Buddha just sat here and didn't act any verbal action. When one sits in Zen meditation, one just sits and doesn't say a word that means this isn't non-action, it is the most specific action and all actions leads to results. Negative actions lead to negative results, beneficial action lead to beneficial results (Hawley, 2009). Zen mindfulness meditation is known as zazen meditation in Japanese, which should be understood that Za means sit and Zen means concentration, the term of zazen literally means sitting meditation. Zen meditation is complementary with Zen meditation. It corresponds to the last two factors in the eightfold path of Buddhism which those are right mindfulness and right concentration. According to the author Hawley, he mentioned the main three steps to meditate in practicing Zen mindfulness. All three steps involve crossing borders between mental and emotional mind-states, which meditators visualize as realms or regions they can move through (2009). However, mindfulness is an opening up of awareness to include everything happening in this moment. Every tradition of mindfulness involves the four aspects of foundation; body, feelings, mind and the dhammas as what the Buddha taught.

### **Mindfulness and practical application in Theravada Tradition**

At various places in the Theravada Tipitakas, the Buddha has addressed about the mindfulness for different people in different way based on the individuality. While going through the Theravada Texts, one often came across with the term of appamāda, which means mindful or active care and encouraging his followers to fare forward with the word of appamāda by the Buddha for over sixteen thousand times as 'appamādenasampadetha', means 'be mindful' (Jagarabhivamsa, 2002). It implies ever present watchfulness or heedfulness in avoiding evils and doing good and doesn't allow the mind to wander

among the objects of sensual pleasure. The term appamāda is used to denote mindfulness. It is like the elephant's footprint which is able to contain the footprint of any other animals. Being mindful is the most essential for freedom of suffering. The literally meaning of the word appamāda is the non-neglect of mindfulness. Sati or appamāda usually translated as mindfulness or as awareness, constitutes a mental quality of crucial importance in early Buddhism that Sati in relation to memory, to sense restraint, as a factor of the noble eightfold path, as a factor of awakening, and in relation to concentration. The commentary of Dhammāsangani text mentions about the meaning of termed mindfulness literally that 'the word Sati derives from a root meaning to remember, but as a mental factor it signifies presence of mind, attentiveness to the present, rather than the faculty of memory regarding the past (Bodhi, 2006).

The meaning or the nature of the real Sati or mindfulness involves various forms that one recalls the meritorious deeds performed in the past, one listens attentively so that one can remember the dhamma discourses, while meditating, one concentrates deeply not to lose the object of meditation. In Buddhism, when a person remembers his relatives, lovers, friends, recalls some precious moments cannot be classified as true mindfulness. The Buddha did not aim his teaching just by listening and studying. The Buddha always encourages trying practice in practical way. Reading, hearing, studying dhamma is quite good. But they cannot make realization for the real peace. It is sure that one cannot remove one's disease by reading and listening to the instruction of medicine. the teachings of the Buddha can be divided into three groups, learning (pariyatti), practicing (patipatti) and penetration (pativeda). Therefore, after reading and studying the concept of mindfulness, one should try to approach to practice mindfulness. The 37 factors of Bodhipakkhiyadhamma (the requisites of Enlightenment) is the essence of Theravada Tipitaka. Mindfulness is discussed or found positions at eight places in the 37 factors of Bodhipakkhiyadhamma as follows,

- Four foundation of mindfulness (satipathāna),
- Mindfulness faculty (satindriya),
- Mindfulness power (satibala),
- Mindfulness factor of Enlightenment (satisambojjhanaga) and
- Right mindfulness (sammāsati).

In the Mahāsatiipathānasutta, mindfulness stands as a leader at the four kinds of insight meditation (vipassana). In this sutta, the Buddha addressed the following practical ways of mindfulness,

- Mindfulness of body (kāyānupassanāsatiipathana),
- Mindfulness of feelings (vedanānupassanāsatiipathana),

- Mindfulness of consciousness (cittānupassanāsatiipathana) and
- Mindfulness of dhamma objects (dhammānupassanāsatiipathana). These are the four foundation of mindfulness (Majjimanikaya, 1954).

Mindfulness of body also has fourteen kinds of contemplation of the body, such as anapana means mindfulness of breathing, Iriyapatha means the posture of the body, Sampajāna means the fourfold clear comprehension, Patikulamanasikāra means the reflection on the repulsiveness of the body and Dhātumanasikāra means the reflection on

material element (Silananda, 2002, 2015). In this sutta, the Buddha instructed seven kinds of the benefits of mindfulness for practicing satipatthāna that one who practices the insight meditation with mindfulness can purify his mind from all defilements, will overcome sorrow and lamentation, will be free from physical suffer and mental suffering, successfully achieves the freedom of suffering and will realize the nibbāna (Majjimanikaya, 1954).

Among these methods, ānāpāna mindfulness meditation is one of the most important practicing in Theravada tradition. In the ānāpānasatisutta, the Buddha explained in detail about the ānāpāna meditation that 'Mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, developed and repeatedly practiced, is of great fruit, of great benefit, mindfulness of breathing, bhikkhus, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfects the four foundations of mindfulness, the four foundation of mindfulness, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfect the seven enlightenment factors, the seven enlightenment factors, developed and repeatedly practiced, perfect clear vision and deliverance' (Nyanamoli, 2010).

In the MahāvaggaSamyutta, the Buddha praised about ānāpāna meditation and also practiced himself it that 'Bhikkhus, I wish to go into seclusion for the three months. I should not be approached by anyone except the one who brings me alms food. Bhikkhus, I wanderers of other sects ask you that in what dwelling, friends did the Buddha generally dwell during the rains residence? You should answer those wanderers thus, during the rains residence, friends, the Buddha generally dwelt in the concentration by mindfulness of breathing' (Mahavagga, anapanasamyutta, 1954).

According to LediSayadaw's anapanameditatin method, there can be understood mindfulness as the four steps. First day and first practice is about taking breath regularly and naturally as is normal and keeps the mind on the tip of the nose, noticing the air it comes in and goes out. Second day and second practice is about breath regularly and naturally as is normal and keeps the mind on the tip of the nose, noticing the air it's for a long period and out long for long period, in short. Third day and third practice is about experiencing the whole body which means body of breath, regularly and naturally as is normal and keep the mind the tip of the nose, noticing the air which is the whole body of breath. The fourth day and fourth practice is that calming the mental formation regularly and naturally as is normal and keep the mind the tip of the nose, noticing the air, which is calming the bodily formation (Ledysayadaw, 2007).

In brief, the above mentioned about Buddhist mindfulness along with theoretically and practically are not quite different under situation of Buddha's doctrine. Simultaneously, the aim of all Buddhist practice indicates to reduce stress and suffering and to achieve final goal (nibbana). Buddhist meditation is conducted in utmost detail according to instructions of the Buddha described in Tipitaka tradition. Meditators with the powerful support of the right concentration can penetrate into the ultimate realities and discern them as impermanent, painful and not-self. Everyone should practice meditation for the welfare of all sensuous beings and for the nature of the world because only meditation deeps balance between sensuous beings and the environment. All what the Buddha taught

from the time of his enlightenment to his passing away into the element of immorality has been summed up in the sentence that is ‘appamadenasampadetha’ (Be mindful).

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