

The Practical Value of Mindfulness Meditation to Improve the Perfect Life

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Abstract: *Mindfulness meditation is not a quick fix. You will practice with a change regularly; sometimes, it takes years and months to see the profound effects and valuable things that are not easy to get after waking up one night. Some aspects of practice in meditation are also not easy. It requires a meditator to follow a long-term discipline and is sometimes a very elaborate and arduous process. You will make some progress each time you meditate, but those results are often very subtle. Those subtle results occur very deep within the mind, only later becoming more apparent. And if you sit in meditation expecting significant changes, you will miss out on these subtle changes. You will get frustrated, give up, and you will never have any change. Patience is the key. If you learn nothing from this mindfulness meditation, at least you will learn patience. And that is the most valuable lesson in this mindfulness meditation.*

Keywords: Buddhism, Mindfulness, Meditation, Life, Social Changes, and Perfected Life.

I. INTRODUCTION

Mindfulness is a meditation practice with fantastic health benefits, recognized by both traditional and modern medicine. However, not everyone understands and understands the basic techniques of this content. In recent years, meditation has become a popular health exercise among young people, not just the previous generation. Unlike physical activities, this subject requires practitioners to train the consciousness to control people's minds, thoughts, and actions to achieve a fullness in life in the future.

This article has been introduced to the crucial roles in practicing mindfulness in meditation, suitable for everyone. This article has also introduced to readers the essential roles in practice and society and the primary method of mindfulness meditation, which is suitable for people.

On the topic of mindfulness, we explore the practical value of mindfulness to improve daily life in modern society such as:

1. The general concept of mindfulness
2. The role of mindfulness in the practitioner's life
3. The role of mindfulness in social life
4. Discussing mindfulness in developing a happy life

II. THE GENERAL CONCEPT OF MINDFULNESS

2.1 What is Right Mindfulness?:

Right mindfulness is translated from Pāli (Sammā-Sati), and from Sanskrit (Samyak-Smṛti). It forms an essential part of Buddhist practice that is the first factor of the Seven Factors of Enlightenment (Pāli: satta bojjhaṅgā)¹² and it also is the seventh element of the Noble Eightfold Path³ (Pāli: ariya aṭṭhaṅgika magga). It may have been the original core practice of the Buddha, which aided the maintenance of mindfulness.

¹ Payadassi, 1960

² Soma, 1999, pp. 44-46

³ Bodhi, The Noble Eightfold Path: The Way to the End of Suffering, 2010

Sati⁴ (Pāli) or smṛti (Sanskrit) originally meant “to remember”, “to recollect”, “to bear in mind” that is retention or mindfulness or awareness. But other than that, many other meanings go too far.

In the Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta⁵ the term sati means to maintain awareness of reality, where sense-perceptions are understood to be illusions and thus the true nature of phenomena can be seen. The Milindapanha explained that the arising of sati calls to mind the wholesome dhammas such as the four establishments of mindfulness, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven awakening factors, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the attainment of insight.

Sammā⁶(Pāli) has the meanings of right and true, but also the meaning of right, properly, appropriately, completely, altogether... Totally, completely, absolutely, it is also means it is as how to capture it entirely like that, without splitting, analyzing, and not intermingling your feelings and subjective thinking.

So here, we have the most complete definition of mindfulness: Mindfulness is noticing, correct attention, complete, comprehensive, and accurate to the object, regardless of whether the object is beautiful or ugly, or distorted. or round, good or evil.

For example, the gatekeeper,⁷ who goes in, goes out; he must remember and record. Mindfulness is the one standing guard at the door of body and mind. Whatever, whatever dharma goes in, goes out, body and mind must go through you mindfully because you are the one standing guard at the door. He just stood at the door and watched. You just stand there and take note, give your full attention there. That's all your job is - don't do the job of “seeing, knowing, or distinguishing one from the other”⁸

Why so? Because seeing clearly is the function of other functions of the mind, which is called the duty of you with the right view. And the function of distinguishing men, women, bad guys, and good people is the function and duty of the right thought.

We can have another example: Someone holds a mirror to look at his face. Suppose you want to see your face clearly. In that case, the glass must be held firmly, not tilted, and the image appears to be accurate, steady, and not slanting. That is the duty of mindfulness leading to concentration, but seeing clearly, knowing well, that the mirror reflects the truth itself, is the correct view.

At this point, we can clearly see the fact that when there is mindfulness - complete mindfulness - immediately, the right view arises. This is called "ultimate mindfulness" because it includes the right view. At this point, we have understood that: Ultimate mindfulness is to abide the mind on the body as it is... Mindfulness is to return to the body and mind, to establish (put down) the reality of the body(kāya), the feelings(vedanā), the mind(citta) and the Dhamma(sadhammās),⁹ which called as cattāro sati-paṭṭhānāni

In Theravada Buddhism, mindfulness is the heart of meditation practice, an indispensable source of contemplative energy for a meditator; it is the pillar, the core of Buddhism. No matter what method you follow, the first thing you need to do is practice mindfulness. Mindfulness has always helped people in many forms such as increasing the level of calm and bringing relaxation, increasing self-confidence, and reducing stress, depression, and addiction. Especially through mindfulness, calmness increases, and as a result, compassion for others also increases and it can also become a cause of peace.

During mindfulness, participants were taught how to observe the present moment, notice and let go of thoughts and feelings as they arise, and reframe judgments in a non-judgmental and non-judgmental way, no response. The entire step-by-step intervention process focuses on emotional awareness and regulation through various meditative practices, both formal and informal.

2.2 How to Practice Mindfulness Meditation:

After pursuing meditation, many people become less anxious and calmer, know how to be friends with themselves, and can deal with the source of their mental breakdown. Meditation helps people to forge the mind, making us stronger

⁴Davids & Stede, 1921–5, p. 672.

⁵Soma, 1999

⁶Davids & Stede, 1921–5, p. 770.

⁷Walshe, 1955, p. 235

⁸Braza & Hanh, 15 May 1997, p. 15

⁹Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 145-155



enough to cope with all challenges and difficulties in life. You can even reach the point of fullness and happiness with everything if you persevere.

Mindfulness meditation is the first recommended meditation practice for beginners. Because we can do it every day with straightforward habits such as breathing, walking, eating, or anything else to exercise the body.¹⁰ Although Mindfulness is a relatively tricky meditation method to learn and go deep into, the exercises mentioned below are pretty simple enough to serve as a foundation for beginners.

Mindfulness breathing exercises for beginners:¹¹

1. First, you should find a relaxed, comfortable position and sit upright in a cross-legged position. Keep your back and neck upright, but not too tight. Hands relaxed, placed on the thighs, so the thumb and forefinger touch each other. Eyes look down about 1 meter ahead. Then close your eyes or let your eyelids drop naturally, maybe half open.
2. All you need to do at this step is watch your breath. Gently coordinate each inhalation and exhalation from the beginning to the end of the exercise. The above process will be more effective if you maintain a certain degree of concentration.
3. Next, count the inhalations and exhalations according to the formula: "Inhale...1, exhales...2". This is a common way of counting breaths used in this exercise. Whenever a thought interrupts and distracts you, start counting from 1 to 10 and repeat until your mind is no longer distracted. You should maintain this step for a few weeks or months, until counting to 10 doesn't require too much effort. And if you're used to it, combine inhalation and exhalation into one rhythm. When you reach the point of mastery, you don't need to count anymore; follow your breath. This step requires patience and cannot be rushed.
4. During the practice of Mindfulness, it is very normal for emotions and thoughts to arise in the head, causing interruptions in breathing. Most beginners find it challenging to control this situation, and they even doubt whether they are doing it right or not. We shouldn't be too worried because focusing on the breath is challenging. The only thing you can do is accept how you feel and practice more.

III. THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN THE PRACTITIONER'S LIFE:

3.1 The role of the mind in life:

The role of the mind in the Buddhist system of teachings is very important. Buddhist teachings always talk about the role of the mind in life. People become good or evil people by doing bad deeds are also created by the mind. Therefore, good or bad also depends on the mind.

So in the human mind, many different types of mind groups exist. Among them are groups of minds that, when they appear and lead people in the direction of developing unrighteous desires, attachments and aversions, mistrust, and like to harm sentient beings, are called evil minds. There are also some groups of mind in the mental factors; when those cittas appear, they will help people have the right thoughts and actions, benefit themselves and others, always protect their activities of mind, and abandon of attachment mind, detachment of unwholesome lust, separation of anger, suspicion, and malice. From these factors, a sound mind is formed, and a good person has ethical behavior in society.

Therefore, in the Buddhist scriptures, the Buddha often preaches about the mind and reminds his disciples to train their bodies and mind for perfection to become human models of morality as a refuge for others.

The Dhammapada says that all experiences are preceded by a mind-directed, mind-created everything. The mind is the source of all activity.

3.2 Mind is the cause of suffering and happiness:

So no matter what situation, whether good or bad, success or failure, luck or bad luck, no matter how our mind is in a state of renunciation or in a state of attachment, the feeling of happiness or suffering also gives rise to different feelings between each people.

Suppose the perception of suffering or happiness is also different even in the same difficult situation. Still, with different levels of attachment or liberation in their mind, they will feel different emotions.

¹⁰Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, p. 950 (MN 119 PTS: M iii 88)

¹¹Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 943-946 (MN 118 PTS: M iii 78).



Therefore, cultivating inner training leading to peace and liberation is the core value that Buddhist teachings often mention and guide each detail through suttas Buddhas had taught. Patriarches also wrote and explained in commentaries on sutras for practitioners to practice.

The first sermon in the Dharmacakrapravartana Sutra (Setting the Wheel of the Dharma in Motion Sutra) explained the Four Noble Truths (cattāriyāsaccāni), which the Buddha preached in the garden of Sarnath; the Buddha taught the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths such as dukkha (suffering), samudaya (cause lead to suffering), nirodha (cessation of suffering), magga (the path leading to the confinement of tanha and dukkha).

It is an extremely valuable lesson, telling the truths of real life that people are facing. At the beginning of the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha mentioned the sufferings, including the eight sufferings of life that cannot be avoided by people and things.

In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha spoke of eight sufferings. and among those eight sufferings, there are seven sufferings of superficial appearance, which are easily recognized by everyone as the suffering of birth, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age, the suffering of death, the suffering of love that separation, suffering due to unsatisfied wishes, resentment left encountering conflicts and harming each other. And latent suffering is the eighth sufferings of the five aggregates¹² of suffering, which are a base for above mentioned seven sufferings arise.

In the Four Noble Truths, the Buddha spoke of eight sufferings. Among those eight sufferings, in addition to the seven sufferings of birth and death, the suffering of sickness, the suffering of old age, the suffering of death, the suffering of separation from suffering, the desire not to gain suffering, and the resentful meeting of suffering, the eighth suffering is the five aggregates of suffering.

The Samyutta Nikaya, chapter The Burden, has excellent verses about the Five Aggregates that are always potential causes of suffering¹³, clinging to create evil karma leading to the remaining seven groups of suffering, as well as Buddha, gave directions to guide people train the mind leading to liberation and to attain a sense of peace.

“The five aggregates are truly burdens,

The burden-carrier is the person.

Taking up the burden is suffering in the world,

Laying the burden down is blissful.”

“Having laid the heavy burden down

Without taking up another burden,

Having drawn out craving with its root,

One is free from hunger, fully quenched”.¹⁴

All the truths about suffering (the reality of suffering) are divided into the above eight groups. The human mind feels those sufferings.

After talking about the truth of suffering, the Buddha instructs sentient beings (including deities and humans) about the causes that lead to suffering and create evil karma for which humans are responsible and will receive the consequences of self-created. Happiness and suffering also from that will generate different feelings for each person.

The Buddha also taught that the leading cause of suffering is ignorance with a lack of understanding that everything is impermanent, is no self, and suffering, so people should not give birth to attachments to them.

People have attachments from clinging to pleasant feelings to painful feelings; from sticking to the material to clinging to emotion, thoughts, the sense of the body, etc., they lose control and hurt each other.

So beings, from one attachment to another, create unwholesome karma and create the factor that leads to suffering. Dhammapada says: “Speak or act with a perverted mind, and dukkha follows like a wheel pulling an ox’s hoof.”

And vice versa, if people thoroughly understand the Buddha’s teachings, the mind can rest in mind renunciation, knowing the flexibility of the context. Depending on the conditions and time, they behave appropriately, not burdened with material things, fame, and beauty. Without attachment to the pleasures of life and emotions, their minds will be free, control their actions, not sow unwholesome karma anymore, and be compassionate to behave. That's why we say happiness or suffering is also created by our minds.

¹² Soma, 1999, pp. 40-43

¹³ Bodhi, 2000, p. 876

¹⁴ Bodhi, 2000, p. 872

3.3 Mindfulness is a fundamental factor for effective practice of the training methods taught by the Buddha

Mindfulness is the basic concept of practicing the practices taught by the Buddha, which is mentioned a lot in the sutras according to the Buddhist traditions. Especially in the practice of meditation, mindfulness plays a significant and indispensable role in meditators practicing meditation. In practice, mindfulness acts as the discipline of the mind to focus on a particular object.

Mindfulness is awareness of internal states such as emotions, thoughts, imaginations, and behaviors. Therefore, practicing mindfulness is to train one's mind to be mature, master all delusions and recheck all emotions, and always consider and be mindful of all one's actions.

From mindfulness practice, the state of mind will become balanced and harmonious, leading to the effectiveness of our actions and words. Since then, virtuous behavior will be maintained and developed well because the mind is always protected and well developed in mindfulness practice.

Therefore, when we have good mindfulness training to balance our body and mind and create a feeling of happiness ourselves, we will be able to share our joy and happiness with everyone around us and vice versa; we will not control our mind and self-emotion

From that training in mindfulness practice, we can further enhance our approach to effectively bring our mind into meditative states through the method of samadhi and the method of Vipassana, as well as being able to practice effectively the results of other methods taught by the Buddha.

IV. THE ROLE OF MINDFULNESS IN SOCIAL LIFE

Mindfulness has the potential to improve our mental and emotional health while enhancing our attention and awareness in the present moment. Mindfulness means disciplining our mind by focusing on a particular object of thought and letting go of all opinions, and observing whatever arises in consciousness. Mindfulness promotes awareness of inner states such as thoughts, anger, love, fear, behavior, and activity. Therefore, mindfulness appears in the mind to consciously motivate to do good deeds and develop virtuous actions in society.

To practice the mindfulness method¹⁵, the practitioner will be instructed to start with the practice of focusing on the breath (āna-pāna¹⁶) like a gatekeeper who goes in and out. The practice of observing the breath is the same. When we breathe out, we know the breath out. When we breathe in, we know the breath in. When we exhale with the warm breath, we notice the warm breath. The breath feels cold, and we feel the breath cool. The long breath we note the long breath, short breath we note the short breath. Just like that, the practitioner should take note.

Mindfulness means focusing the mind and thoughts on the object, not letting the mind gets distracted, and thinking about other issues. Slowly our nerves begin to reduce stress, relax, and ease out. From there, it shows that mindfulness is a form of physical and mental training.¹⁷

Momentary mindfulness is associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, ease, conscientiousness, and feelings of self-control, competence, empathy, and optimism. A positive correlation was found between mindfulness and diseases such as depression, neurosis, inattention, alcoholism, cognitive reactivity, difficulty with emotional regulation, and social anxiety. Mindfulness has been found to be successful in improving overall health and well-being.

Specifically, researchers have shown it to be associated with neuroplasticity and neural integration; increased ability to regulate emotions, improved negative thinking and enriched interpersonal relationships; enhanced bodily functions, such as healing, immune response, physical well-being, mental clarity, and physical stress reduction.

Over the past decade, psychotherapists in Canada and the UK have begun to understand that mindfulness interventions can also be helpful in reducing and ameliorating psychological disorders and that mindfulness-based cognitive therapy may be helpful. The concept of depression which is prior intellectual practice is interwoven with cognitive therapy to prevent the patient from recurring depressive episodes. Currently, mindfulness-based cognitive therapy and mindfulness-based stress reduction therapy are used to treat a multitude of illnesses, including trauma, chronic pain, stress, eating disorders, addictions flooded, etc.

¹⁵ Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 145-146 (MN 118 PTS: M iii 78)

¹⁶ Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 941-948 (MN 118 PTS: M iii 78)

¹⁷ Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 941-948 (MN 118 PTS: M iii 78)

Hargus et. al., (2010) studied the application of mindfulness practice to a group of 27 depressed patients with a history of suicidal ideation and behavior. After the study, it was found to be effective in reducing depression, increasing general cognitive ability, and reducing memory persistence related to a previous suicide crisis.¹⁸

The results of the present study show that significant changes in young people's emotional regulation and an increase in positive affect while practicing mindfulness lead to better emotional well-being.

From the scientific research on psychological responses today, it has been proven that mindfulness therapy has the ability to regulate, maintain, and direct emotions in a better way and better coping. With formal and informal practices, mindfulness therapy activates the attention network and thus focuses on different aspects of attention, such as switching, orientation, vigilance, and attention, maintaining attention.

Since then, researchers have stated that mindfulness/meditation training can be thought of as a cognitive control exercise that enhances one's ability to self-regulate internal distractions. Mindfulness meditation also improves self-control through better emotional regulation through flexible changes in mental and brain functions, regulating attention and body awareness, and regulating feelings and opinions.

In the 21st century, when people become machines to fulfill their desires. And the results that bring them are illnesses like stress, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders, etc. Although mindfulness may not actually 'cure' every illness, it will change our view of discomfort and open up new possibilities to move to a new living life in the future.

V. DISCUSSING MINDFULNESS IN DEVELOPING A HAPPY LIFE

5.1 Discussion about people who practice mindfulness well

Mindfulness is an essential element of Buddhist tradition founded on vipassana and meditative practices. Buddhist meditation teaches us how to use the sword of wisdom to cleanse ignorance and other delusions, such as attachment, jealousy, pride, anger, and hatred, that obscure the pure nature of our minds. All those clinging afflictions are the real cause of suffering that we have spent many lifetimes tied to, challenging to remove.

While practicing mindfulness with deep concentration, the meditator's mind operates continuously with attention on the object; craving has no chance to arise, which means the craving is controlled. In the same way, when focusing on mindfulness, anger is also controlled. Because there is never a case of being mindful and anger erupting.

And when mindfulness is concentrated, the yogi's mind cannot be vague, confused, or lethargic. Thus, the mind will be free from the domination of greed, hatred, and delusion, so the practitioner will have a clear mind state in every moment, action, and thought of the mind.¹⁹

Therefore, mindfulness can help us prevent defilements from arising. Through the practice of mindfulness, the bhikkhus will be more potent in controlling themselves and the number of Sangha will increase with happy holy life.

“Dhamma his dwelling, Dhamma his delight, a monk pondering Dhamma, calling Dhamma to mind, does not fall away from true Dhamma.”²⁰

“Here the first things for a discerning monk are guarding the senses, contentment, restraint in line with the Patimokkha. He should associate with admirable friends. Living purely, untiring, hospitable by habit, skilled in his conduct, gaining a manifold joy, he will put an end to suffering & stress.”²¹

Mindfulness turns equanimity into a happy feeling and a mundane scene into a fairy scene. Gradually practicing mindfulness in meditation, kindness, and love will grow to become the cause of happiness we will receive later.

5.2 Discussion about people who refuse to practice mindfulness

Without mindfulness, we can't get peace from things that we consider too trivial, like a cloud, a flower, a river, a baby...but just having mindfulness, when we come into contact with these things, we all feel that they become strangely beautiful and lovely and can create a feeling of boundless peace and happiness. For example, even just enjoying the scenery alone and quietly in the quiet natural sky will feel comfortable and light. Or just holding a small branch or looking at a small flower, we also feel happy and see that small flower so beautiful, we will cherish it, love it without

¹⁸Hargus, Crane, Barnhofer, & Williams, 2010

¹⁹ Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 956-958

²⁰ Thanissaro, B.; *Buddharakkhita* (trans.), 2013, p. Verse. 364

²¹ Thanissaro, B.; *Buddharakkhita* (trans.), 2013, p. Verse. 375-376

having to pray for immensely distant satisfaction. Or with a gentle breeze passing through the village, with mindfulness noting, we also feel at ease.²²

When we do mundane things like sweeping, washing clothes, and washing dishes... if we don't have mindfulness, we will feel that these jobs are very tasteless and boring, but if we do those things with Chanh thinking, miracles will come to us. We will feel extremely satisfied with simple work and can do it forever without getting bored. But without mindfulness, our feelings will be easily bored, frustrated, annoyed, and tired of those trivial tasks.²³

VI. CONCLUSION

For Buddhism, the reason leading to the conflict that causes suffering for each other among sentient beings is the unwholesome mentality, the lustful mind of beauty, the mind that lusts for unlimited power, the mind of hatred and deluded mind lacking understanding of the true nature of things leads to the growth of greed and attachment to this and that...etc.

The method of mindfulness practice offers us a way of life of mindfulness, developing good cognitive ability that sustains every activity of our daily life. When we keep good mindfulness in every moment, in every breath, and always guard our thoughts and actions well, it means that we must also have the patience to maintain the daily practice of mindfulness and believe in our ability to wake up.

From there, we will practice understanding the Buddha's teaching to conquer hatred with kindness, conquer evil and repel it by good and wise love, as well as have self-control of souls, free from hatred, jealousy, malice, and greed within us.²⁴

Therefore, maintaining mindfulness practice is always considered as the inner training that each person should have in practicing meditation, or the training methods taught by the Buddha to feel peace always prevails in our mettā. Scientists have found that mindfulness techniques help improve physical health. Mindfulness can help reduce stress, treat heart disease, improve sleep, and relieve chronic pain.

Psychotherapists have found that mindfulness meditation is a tool for treating a number of problems such as depression, anxiety disorders, and marital conflict. It also turns out that mindfulness supports many of the attitudes that contribute to a satisfying life.

In the contemporary world, we tend to increase conflict from within to without; it tends to be conflict from family to society, which tends to conflict between one country and another because many factors affect causing serious conflict consequences. So peace is the element of desire, which is essential to everyone. If we do not practice mindfulness and protect our thoughts, actions, and feelings well, we will quickly lead to struggles and conflicts, from minor thing to big things, by anger and greed for pursuit, the mind of jealousy and hatred, the mind of lust for beauty, greed for fame and gain, etc. Or because competing for food or the living area, people can create conflict and kill each other to survive.

Buddhism aims to create a peaceful society in the sense of achieving peace, inner stability and finding a way to peace, and developing a tendency to create a world where there is compassion, wisdom, and courage as a driving force for the development of lasting peace within each of us, which is also the inner peace for the world.²⁵

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²² Hanh & Cheung, 2010, p. 157

²³ Hanh & Cheung, 2010, p. 152

²⁴ Nanamoli & Bodhi, 2005, pp. 942-943 (MN 118 PTS: M iii 78)

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