NAMO BUDDHAYA !

Namo Tassa Bhagavato Arahato Samma Sambuddhassa !..

Homage to the Blessed One, the Worthy One, the Supremely Enlightened One !..

**4. Mindfulness of Postures in Four Establishments of Mindfulness**

In this chapter we will explore mindfulness on postures or *“iriyapatha”* meditation. There are four main postures identified by the Buddha, namely, standing, walking, sitting and lying down. We can use any of these postures for meditation.

Walking is a common posture used for meditation. Walking meditation is particularly useful to many meditators as they find they come to realize *Dhamma* points most often while practicing walking meditation. Therefore, even if at the start we are hampered by the hindrances, we should take care not to be discouraged. We should persevere in this.

At the time of the Buddha, there was a monk who tried to meditate; he was very sleepy. Now think what we would do if we felt sleepy. We would most probably put off meditating and go to bed thinking it would be no use meditating as we would waste time sleeping anyway. This monk was very persevering and did not give up. He decided to try walking mediation. He was walking in the walking meditation area when tiredness overcame him and he fell down. Still he did not give up. He got up, brushed the sand off himself and resumed his task and was soon able to control his mind. So, we can see that is the nature of our mind. At one moment it is sleepy, tired and lazy. However, with skilful effort and mindfulness it can be overcome and our goal of profound awareness can be achieved. This shows that the nature of our mind is such that it follows our inputs. It can be so in walking meditation too.

Now, in walking meditation you may hear of some meditators saying as you lift your left foot think left, as you lift your right foot think right or you may be told as you lift your foot think lifting. As you set your foot down think setting down. We must be aware that the Buddha’s instructions say nothing of the sort. The Buddha’s instructions are thus, when walking stay profoundly aware that you are walking. When sitting stay profoundly aware that you are sitting. When standing stay profoundly aware that you are standing. When lying down be profoundly aware that you are lying down. In this manner we should be totally mindful of each posture our body adopts. This profound awareness is not limited to walking meditation. It is true that we can prevent being distracted if we keep our mind on left, right etc. as we raise each foot. However, this was not what our supreme teacher taught. His instruction was to keep our attention on this body while it is moving. We just need to sustain our awareness that this is the posture of our body at the moment, which is walking. There is no need to pay special attention to whether we are lifting our foot or setting it down. We need to keep in mind that the aim of this meditation is to develop wisdom. That is to understand things as they really are.

There was one *arahant* named Parasariya who said that when the posture is maintained in this manner and the mind is well based on the four establishments of mindfulness physical movement and posture become very smooth, like a stream of fine oil. This means that the meditator’s movements and the posture become superbly refined and fluid. So, if we stand with the intention of walking meditation, we look at the path ahead of us and determined a spot in front of us. Then we affirmed to ourselves that we will walk to that spot with mindfulness. We lift the left foot, we carry the left foot forward, we lower the left foot. We do not label these actions as such but carry them out with awareness. Then we follow through with the right foot until we get to the predetermined spot. Then we stop. When we stopped we are aware that we have stopped. Then we turn around with awareness, predetermine the next spot to go to and resume walking meditation with our minds on the movements of our limbs. The whole process is done with total awareness.

Let us say we are going somewhere or returning home on foot or just going out for a walk. This is a good time for walking meditation. When our minds are fully focused on the movements of our limbs, there is no room for unwholesome thoughts to pervade our mind. In fact, the awareness of our movements could be so profound that our mindfulness could develop within this meditation and improve. The Buddha has described walking meditation as a method by which we could sustain our concentration for a long period. Therefore, if we find it difficult to develop our concentration, walking meditation may be a way for us to develop concentration.

We can landscape our backyards to create a path for walking meditation. If there is a stretch of land 70-100 centimeters wide and about 7-10 meters long, we can pave it with sand and use it for walking meditation. It would have to be kept clear of obstructions and clutter. Such a feature would enhance our backyards and our homes.

This close awareness of our posture and movements has many benefits. The most important one is that when we are paying attention to how our bodies move and act, there is no room in our minds for idle thoughts, which could lead us astray. Under ordinary circumstances we waste a lot of energy on letting our minds dwell on the past or the future. But if we act with mindfulness all the time our minds are bent on cultivating wisdom and that leaves no opportunity to think of mundane things.

Now, most of us are familiar with the story of Ananda *thero*, who was the personal assistant of the Buddha for 25 years. He had a superior memory and was acknowledge by the Buddha as such; and also retained and recited all of the *suttas* first told by the Buddha. He had only attained the state of stream enterer or *sotapanna* during the Buddha’s life time. He wanted to attain *liberation* before the first *Dhamma council*, where the entire teachings of the Buddha were to be recited by *liberated ones*. The night before the council of the *sangha*, he was doing mindfulness of the body or *kayanupassana* meditation using walking as the posture. It was said that when he was about to change the posture from walking to lying down, when he had lifted his feet off the floor but his head had not quite hit the pillow and his body was semi reclined he attained enlightenment. This means he was not in any one of the four postures. However, he has been practicing *kayanupassana* meditation developing mindfulness of the body. This is another instance where walking meditation helps someone attained the supreme goal.

Now, we understand the value of the *walking meditation*. Let us develop this meditation in order to make our lives successful.

**The Longer Discourse on Mindfulness Meditation** *Mahāsatipaṭṭhānasutta*

so i have heard.

At one time the Buddha was staying in the land of the Kurus, near the Kuru town named Kammāsadamma.

There the Buddha addressed the mendicants: “Mendicants!

“Venerable sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:

“Mendicants, the four kinds of mindfulness meditation are the path to convergence. They are in order to purify sentient beings, to get past sorrow and crying, to make an end of pain and sadness, to complete the procedure, and to realize extinguishment.

*“Ekāyano ayaṃ, bhikkhave, maggo sattānaṃ visuddhiyā, sokaparidevānaṃ samatikkamāya dukkhadomanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya ñāyassa adhigamāya nibbānassa sacchikiriyāya, yadidaṃ cattāro satipaṭṭhānā.*

What four?

1. It’s when a mendicant meditates by observing an aspect of the body—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

*Idha, bhikkhave, bhikkhu kāye kāyānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ,*

2. They meditate observing an aspect of feelings—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

*vedanāsu vedanānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ,*

3. They meditate observing an aspect of the mind—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

*ite cittānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ,*

4. They meditate observing an aspect of principles—keen, aware, and mindful, rid of desire and aversion for the world.

*dhammesu dhammānupassī viharati ātāpī sampajāno satimā vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassaṃ.*

1. Observing the Body

**1.2. The Postures** . *iriyāpathapabba*

Furthermore, when a mendicant is walking they know: ‘I am walking.’ When standing they know: ‘I am standing.’ When sitting they know: ‘I am sitting.’ And when lying down they know: ‘I am lying down.’

*Puna caparaṃ, bhikkhave, bhikkhu gacchanto vā ‘gacchāmī’ti pajānāti, ṭhito vā ‘ṭhitomhī’ti pajānāti, nisinno vā ‘nisinnomhī’ti pajānāti, sayāno vā ‘sayānomhī’ti pajānāti,*

Whatever posture their body is in, they know it.

*yathā yathā vā panassa kāyo paṇihito hoti tathā tathā naṃ pajānāti.*

And so they meditate observing an aspect of the body internally, externally, and both internally and externally.

They meditate observing the body as liable to originate, as liable to vanish, and as liable to both originate and vanish.

Or mindfulness is established that the body exists, to the extent necessary for knowledge and mindfulness. They meditate independent, not grasping at anything in the world.

That too is how a mendicant meditates by observing an aspect of the body.

**3: Satisampajaññya (awareness) meditation in the Four Establishments of Mindfulness**

**3.1 Living in awareness -** Now you have some knowledge about mindfulness of breathing meditation, anapanasati. You have gained this knowledge through the Buddha’s teachings. When you practice this meditation according to the great teachings, you will be feeling a natural respect coming from your heart for the Buddha. This respect will help you further develop this Dhamma.

Now you will learn another method of meditation. This is called *satisampajanna*. It is about living with clear mindfulness and awareness. The Buddha has introduced us ‘Sampajānakārii Hōtii.’ What is the advantage of living with clear mindfulness and awareness? One is that when we are conscious of every moment we can prevent unwholesome mental states creeping into our life and just let in wholesome mental states. A person who is ready to meditate should already be living a good moral conduct by observing the five precepts. The unwholesome mental states we mean here are the five hindrances or *pancha neevarana*. Now we will explore how to recognize them in order to avoid or overcome these hindrances. The hindrances are,

1. *“Kamachchanda”* that is the mind being attracted to form, sound, smell, taste and tactile sensations.
2. *“Vyapada”*, which is the mind being repelled by and in conflict with such objects.
3. *“Thinamiddha”* is laziness or sleepiness or being discouraged from meditation.
4. *“Uddacca kukkucca”*, which is regret, remorse and diffusion of the mind.
5. *“Vicikichca”*, which is lack of confidence in this process.

These hindrances are always with us in our daily life. the meditator should be fully aware of these to avoid being distracted by the hindrances. The Buddha taught that when the meditator goes forth and when he return, he must always do so with mindfulness avoiding the hindrances. When he look around himself, he must do so with mindfulness. Taking care not to let hindrances creep into his mind, he must safe guard his mind from being attached to form, sound, smell, taste and tactile sensation. He must safe guard his mind from all conflict. He must safe guard his mind from laziness and sleepiness. He must safe guard his life from remorse and diffusion of the mind and he must have confidence in this process.

This vigilance when look around is called *“alokithe vilokithe sampajana kari hoti”*. Even when moving the limbs the skillful meditator does it with mindfulness. He must know why and when he move his limbs and do it with awareness. This awareness should run through his daily routines. Let us consider dress for instance. When we dress, we have to be aware about the purpose of the dress. The usual purposes of the dress are protection of privacy, protection from insects, and protection from extreme environmental conditions. When we dress, we must be conscious of these purposes and dress accordingly and with awareness.

Now let us consider our intake of nutrition. When eating, the Buddha has taught us a reflection. It is called *“paccavekkana”*. *Paccavekkana* means reflecting something to mind over and over again. Buddha taught Dhamma practitioners shouldn’t be followers of food nor servants of food. Dhamma practitioners use food only as a means of sustaining this body. Buddha instruct us to reflect on food thus, “this food is eaten not for power, not for strength, not to build up our physical strenth, not to beautify this body but to terminate feelings of hunger in order to meditate without distraction.

The Buddha further instructs even when defecating, we must maintain this awareness. We need to realize that our lives are composed of series of postures and stances. Even when we use the toilet, we should safeguard our minds from being distracted. The Buddha asked us to maintain our awareness when we are walking, standing, sitting, when we are awake and also when we are keeping vigil, which in *Pali* is called *“jagarithei”.* This constant awareness, not letting the hindrances creep into our minds will protect us from much harm. The Buddha explained a beautiful story in *“Sakunaggi sutta”* about awareness. A hawk was flying overhead, when it spotted a little brush bird flying in the air below it. The hawk caught the little bird. The little bird screamed out, “Oh this calamity befell me because I tried to fly in an unfamiliar territory. There is a habitat I inherited from my forefathers. If I had only remained there this hawk would never have caught me”. This awakened the hawk’s interests and hawk asked the little bird “what is the habitat you inherited from your forefathers”. The little bird said, “when this field is ploughed and the earth is turned, under a sod there is a little cave like place. That is the habitat I inherited from my forefathers”. The hawk found this quite amusing. He said to the little bird, “I will let you go now; you can go and hide in the little habitat you inherited that you are so proud of. I will still catch you”. The little bird flew directly down to stand on a turned sod of earth and shouted to the hawk “come and catch me now”. The hawk drove directly down to the sod of earth but the little bird crept into the little cave like space under the sod; and the hawk hit his chest hard on the sod of earth. In this story, the Buddha shows us that awareness is the habitat we inherit from our forefathers. The Buddha said, “monks, the *Thathagatha* is your father. Your inheritance from the *Thathagatha* is based in your awareness on the four establishments of mindfulness.”

This *Dhamma* we have received is complete and fertile. This means it gets results. If anyone says they do not get the results from following this *Dhamma* that means that they are not following the profound way. This *Dhamma* when followed truly thus yields results.

To recap in *satisampajanna*, the meditator sustains mindfulness when looking around, when moving his limbs, when coming and going, when dressing, when eating, and when going to the toilet. He practice this constantly in order to stay vigilant, so the hindrances do not overcome him. When he is mindful, he needs an object to focus his minds on. That object of mindfulness should be impermanence and this gives him a good opportunity to reflect on impermanence.

Now, this may be interpreted like this or misinterpreted like this. When we are doing some chores, we could be wholly aware of what we are doing and expect the same benefits. For example, while cutting vegetables one could think, I am cutting, cutting, cutting…and expect their wisdom to grow. The awareness while carrying out mundane chores is like this and would help us complete the chores with care but would not necessarily lead us to the cultivation of wisdom. The way to cultivate wisdom is through mindfully contemplating the impermanence of things and through profound vigilance, which prevent the hindrances taking control of our minds. Through this, the meditator can improve his wisdom, his awareness, skill and effort.