



Sati Pasala : Week 01

# Monday

## Being mindful in the present moment

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**T**he message we intend to convey through the Sati Pasala – Mindful School concept is a very important one. This message will be equally important to the Principal, all the teachers and advisors of the school as well as to all the children. We believe that this message, and the ones to follow in the coming weeks, will create a significant difference in your entire school. Sati (being simply aware and mindful) will create a beneficial impact to everyone in school irrespective of whether they are teachers, administrators or students. Besides, everyone will have to practise being in sati (or being mindful) like a beginner or a Grade Four student for quite a while, in order to reap the benefits.

We believe that young children (e.g.: Grade Four) may find it easier to train to be mindful than adults. Isn't that surprising? We feel that such children may be able to share this practise with their family members and be an example in the home and amongst family and friends. This message we are sharing with you at the beginning of this week, will be once again reminded next Monday and we will describe this concept of a mindful school even further. The message we intend sharing in the coming weeks will benefit a student in Grade Four or a beginner.

Sati is a Pali word. In English it is called mindfulness or awareness. This simply means that, as much as possible every day we should be fully mindful or completely aware of what we do and what we say. This also means to practise being heedful in our day to day actions and speech. When we practise mindfulness in this manner our attention will be focused only on what we are doing or saying at each given moment. The mind will not stray to anything else. We will then remember everything we do. This is a great benefit to students because it will help in their class work. However, a lot of practise is needed to develop these benefits.

When we are not mindful, we are likely to forget what we do. This is because our attention doesn't rest fully with the activity. Our mind is usually in the past or we are thinking about the future or we are thinking of someone else. We are rarely in the present moment. Let us learn to be mindful and to live in the present moment. This is what the concept of Sati Pasala or Mindful school is all about. We are hopeful that young students will practise being mindful and share this with your family and friends. We are sure that your entire school and everyone else will benefit very much from this. We also want to inform you that in this project of the Sati Pasala or Mindful School there are many people around you for support and to share your experiences with.



Sati Pasala : Week 01

# Tuesday

## Being mindful in sitting

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**T**he mindfulness practice we learnt yesterday can be experienced in many ways. Today we will learn how we can be mindful if we get some free time when we are able to sit quietly. Whether you are seated in the class room or at home, try to quietly watch the silence in your mind and try to bring your mind to the sitting posture. If the sitting posture is not comfortable and balanced, it may be difficult to bring your mind to this posture – initially. It doesn't really matter whether you sit on a chair or on the ground, as long as you are comfortable during this exercise.

Always remember to adjust yourself so that you are comfortable before you attempt to bring your mind to the sitting posture. After some practice in doing this mindful sitting, you will find it easier as the days go by. When you are able to bring your mind to the body easily, you will find that sitting quietly and mindfully also becomes easier. The body will feel more comfortable then. Once you reach this stage of comfortable sitting with awareness on the posture, you may like to close your eyes softly and continue sitting mindfully and experience the same.

How do we know that our mind is with the body or with the sitting posture? How do we know that we are being mindful? After some time, if mindfulness has been established, we will feel comfortable and won't feel uneasy when sitting quietly with the mind on the body or on the posture. At the same time, you will notice that your mind is not drifting to the past or imagining about the future. In fact, you will know that: 'I am sitting here and now'.

You may have seen elders sitting for long periods in such a posture. Young children might find this difficult. But you could try this out and see. After a while, when you repeatedly practise, it becomes easier to sit quietly with the mind on the body and on the posture. And then you will be able to sit longer. This means that mindfulness is improving.

Some of you may find it easier to experience this situation when you are alone. For some, it may be easier to practise in a group. In future, we plan to test this out as a group, while sitting in the school class room. Today we are only sharing some instructions with you. Next week we will expand on this further. As the days and weeks go by, we will slowly take this practice of mindfulness forward.



Sati Pasala : Week 01

# Wednesday

## Being mindful while walking

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**T**oday we are going to see if we can apply mindfulness practice in doing a simple task, like walking. While walking slowly, can we reflect that: ‘we are not sitting, but we are in the process of walking’? If we can do that successfully, this means that we are applying mindfulness while walking. For this exercise, our eyes need to be wide open. This is different from the exercise we discussed yesterday – where we practised mindfulness while sitting with our eyes closed.

In fact, many children prefer to practise mindfulness while walking. When walking, we can experience the feet touching the ground and experience different sensations on the soles of the left and the right foot, and therefore it becomes easier to maintain mindfulness. When we move the feet, we can clearly notice the different movements and we may experience heat/cold. In fact, the mind becomes more energised during mindful walking than in sitting. If we do a session of sitting mindfully soon after such walking, we may experience being able to sit longer than before. And we will be able to bring the mind to the body and the sitting posture easily.

Let us see how many steps we can take mindfully, when we are walking. If we can take a greater number of steps while being mindful, this means that mindfulness is getting established. We can practise this whenever we are walking – whether we are walking home from school or whether we are walking a short distance for some errand.

I used to practise this, when walking back home after school. No one knew what I was doing. Actually no one needs to know that we are being mindful while walking. But this is possible only if we can limit talking to a bare minimum. After practising in this way for a while, you will find that it becomes a natural ability. In fact, you may wish to walk alone and in quietness so that mindful walking can be practised well.

Many scientists and philosophers have got bright ideas during such spells of quiet walking. When the mind is quiet, automatically it becomes creative. This won't happen overnight, but with many sessions of practice it is possible. Many elderly people go for walks to the beach or to garden parks in the evening. This activity is healthy to the body and mind. In fact, when patients recover from a chronic illness they are advised to start walking slowly, first. Once you learn this practice you can even teach your grandparents and elders how to walk mindfully!



Sati Pasala : Week 01

# Thursday

## Being mindful in day to day work

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**E**ven though we may be able maintain a reasonable level of mindfulness when sitting and walking, being mindful during day to day work is far more challenging even for an adult. Generally, we are very much pressed with work, so we move about quite fast during daily activities. Due to the speed at which we work, it becomes difficult to watch whether mindfulness is getting established.

At the outset, I will share with you my experiences. Initially I learnt about mindfulness from a foreign monk when I was about 26 years old and then I decided to try it out on an experimental basis. This may have been because the message was given to me by a foreign monk! I really don't know! When I was a young boy I used to move about in a great hurry and even though I wanted to, I could never be mindful when sitting or walking. I explained this to the foreign monk. He advised me to try being mindful in my daily activities. I was quite surprised by his response and wondered how it could be done.

The monk told me to try to become mindful and be aware of the activities I do when I was alone. For instance, he asked me if I can be fully aware

when I am brushing my teeth and washing my face in the morning. Since I do these tasks while I am alone, I decided to try this out. When brushing my teeth, I did it slowly so that I could be aware of every movement. At the beginning, I couldn't experience anything new. When I explained this to the monk, he encouraged me and told me to continue doing this repeatedly, saying that one day I will really see a difference.

Just as he predicted, after a while I noticed how the tooth brush touched the gums and the teeth. And I noticed the flavour of the toothpaste and the tingling sensation when brushing, and I was able to describe these experiences to the monk. This gave me the confidence that I was able to maintain mindfulness whilst brushing teeth. Similarly, when washing your hands, having a shower or doing something while being alone, you can gradually try to do it slowly, mindfully and silently.

Something that I found very interesting was to be able to listen to the sounds that I produced when engaged in daily work. When doing so, I found that I was automatically becoming silent and mindful. I would like to advise you to try and do everything slowly, while listening mindfully to the sounds produced in day to day activities. This is what is meant by being mindful during daily activities. Once you become familiar with this practice you will find that being mindful when sitting and walking becomes easy. You will gradually realise that these practices are very relaxing. But you need to practise daily and regularly. There may be days when it doesn't work but don't be disheartened, because with consistent practice, one day you will discover that you have learnt something that gives you much peace of mind.





Sati Pasala : Week 01

# Friday

## Being mindful while doing Glad Games

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**W**hen we keep practising mindfulness, after a while we find that the sensitivity of the mind is enhanced. What I mean is, that we become aware of even small and seemingly insignificant issues. These can be related to the body as well as to the mind. This marks progress. But when even small matters become significant, the mind may get provoked by the slightest issue. These issues could relate to your own self or to others. The mind may become disturbed and discursive. This situation applies to children as well as adults.

What should we do if we feel that: ‘my mind is easily provoked and gets disturbed’?

First we should know that the enhanced sensitivity of the mind is beneficial to us and that it’s not an obstruction. Remedies for such situations are called mindfulness games. Let us become familiar with some mindfulness games today.

In the United States teachers taught students how to behave like a tortoise. Imagine a situation in the class, when the teacher is absent, if another student provokes you with angry words or unpleasant deeds.

Instead of reacting or retorting, try to turn your mind inwards. Like how a tortoise would tuck its limbs in when facing danger/disturbance, try to turn your mind inwards and become mindful. If you react with angry words or deeds, you have lost the game. Instead, if you turn the mind inwards and become mindful, and not react to whatever provocation, then you have won the game! When teachers repeatedly remind students of these games, whenever someone provokes you, you can 'become a tortoise' and be the winner!

Furthermore, whenever something unpleasant happens, we could learn to reflect that: 'everything happens for good'. When we practise this thought, soon we will be able to see every single worry or unpleasant situation from a different angle. Instead of feeling sorry for ourselves, we can look at every unfortunate incident as having a streak of goodness. We call this the 'Glad Game'. We can learn to see the silver lining in every dark cloud. So, we can learn to be glad in every circumstance.

Suppose a finger gets injured in our right hand and we can't mix our food with it to eat, we will end up by training ourselves to use the left hand for this purpose. It certainly is an inconvenience not being able to use the right hand, but still we adjust and adapt. And we use the incapacity in our right hand to learn the possibility of using dormant skills in the left hand.

Isn't that wonderful?

If the finger in the right hand was not injured, we would not have learnt these dormant skills!

There are people with no hands – but yet they learn to function, to do many activities. Have you seen pictures of such people using their feet to do functions of their arms?