



Sati Pasala : Week 02

# Monday

## Being mindful in the present moment

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**W**e understood the discussion about mindfulness last week. During this week, we intend taking the lesson on mindfulness forward to a different level. We need to introduce mindfulness in to our system at some point. Unless we start this practice and understand its value we will not progress. Even though we may be very skilful in understanding many things and we may be clever at performing many tasks, yet we may not realise that we are unmindful. The mere understanding that we lack mindfulness, and that we need to learn to be mindful, is perhaps a good point to start introducing mindfulness into schools as early as possible.

Therefore, we need to start small, taking small steps in introducing this valuable practice and we can then refine this skill gradually. When we start small it becomes easier to learn and as we grow older it will become a very useful practice to incorporate into our lives.

Last week we discussed about the importance of being wholeheartedly mindful in as many tasks as possible. We also mentioned that if we are faced with anger and irritation, we should act like a ‘tortoise’, i.e. tuck

our limbs under the shell and retreat inwards mindfully, and not react or retort to such situations. If we are to succeed in protecting ourselves in this manner, we need to reflect constantly on this teaching of mindfulness and remind ourselves that being mindfully non-reactive is the key. When the mind is continually taught this pattern of mindful behaviour, it learns to function accordingly. One day, without any prompting you will be mindful automatically, especially when you face unpleasant or irritable situations.

Let us remind ourselves what mindfulness means. Being mindful is to become fully aware and attentive to the present moment. It could also mean that we are fully awake to our present posture. 'Now - I am - Here' is a nice way to verify whether we are remembering to be mindful. When we are fully attentive to the present moment we will notice/witness many things – these could be sensations, sounds, sights or smells. We may even be able to catch various emotions that come to mind at that moment. We may, in fact, be able to catch them early, just as they surface and before they become uncontrollable. Catching these emotions early is a manifestation of mindfulness. And when we develop this trait, it will help you to be quick and to be like a 'tortoise'!

Unless we keep practising regularly, mindfulness will not seep in and become internalised. Until such time, let us keep reflecting and training our minds to become aware of as many activities as possible that we undertake. And let us undertake all our tasks slowly, mindfully and silently.

I can recommend books like *Pollyanna* (by Eleanor H Porter), *Settling back into the Moment* (by Joseph Goldstein) to help you understand the value of mindfulness better. These are lovely books and the authors of these books have presented this powerful message in a simple style.

Let us also try to explain the practice of mindfulness to others in a simple manner, and also to engage them in 'Glad Games' so that they too will benefit from this powerful message



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# Tuesday

## Being mindful in sitting

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**O**n the previous Tuesday, we discussed how we could establish mindfulness while being seated and how our sitting posture should be during such an exercise. When seated, we should be comfortable in our posture, with no tension. After some practice, we would be able to reach a state where we can maintain mindfulness quite effortlessly for a considerable period in that particular posture. When seated comfortably in that manner we would begin to observe various changes occurring in the body.

After a while, with repeated practice, you may notice your breath and sense/feel how you breathe in and out. That will happen after you have practised noting your sitting posture mindfully. If you don't notice your breath, just become familiar with your sitting posture, very patiently.

While seated in this posture, in case you start noticing your breath naturally, with no extra effort, it means that mindfulness is getting established in the body. Watching the breath in this manner continuously, would also mean that your mind is getting settled into the

present moment quite successfully. This Tuesday we would like to elaborate and encourage this practice.

Let us imagine that at certain times our mind becomes disturbed and discursive. If we had trained ourselves to connect with the breath mindfully, then at times of such disturbance we could use that technique to bring calmness to the mind. This is a very useful practice for our daily lives.

Let us take a situation like answering the Mathematics paper at the examination. If you become excited and your mind gets disturbed, you could perhaps try this technique of watching your breath. Just see three breaths consecutively and see how the mind settles when doing so. After a short while, you will be able to work clearly on the Maths paper and in fact you may even perform exceptionally well!

This situation applies to all our activities, not just at examinations. Try this out when facing interviews or the viva voce at higher examinations. I can personally vouch for the benefits of this practice during such challenging situations. When the mind is stressed, we tend to forget even what we know very well. It's a pity because all our efforts at preparing for the examination would be useless if we get stressed. I would urge you to try this out well before the exam and see how being mindful will work well at exams.



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# Wednesday

## Being mindful while walking

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**L**ast week on Wednesday we learnt how to be mindful when doing simple tasks. We explained how we should walk slowly and mindfully. Initially we may feel that it's a strain to do so, but gradually it becomes easier. After a while, with regular practice we will find that it's comfortable and relaxing to walk slowly, mindfully and silently. This is called walking meditation. Often, it's difficult to find a suitable place to practise walking mindfully. Let's deal with that issue later.

When we walk, we will notice that the ground on which we walk is not smooth or balanced. Similarly, our feet are also not always balanced. Imagine if we keep walking in such an imbalanced way continuously, as we grow older what would happen to us?

Just as much as we are comfortable with using one hand more than the other (most people are more comfortable using the right hand, and not the left), we are more comfortable with using one leg more than the other. Try and observe that, and see which leg/foot is more comfortable – is it the right or the left? But don't try to correct the imbalance while walking. When we walk mindfully, this correction takes place

automatically, naturally. When we start to climb the stairs or when we try to leap forward, we would notice that one leg always becomes predominant. A football player, surely knows which leg is the best for the kick! Similarly, we need to be aware of our body and all its movements. And please don't confine this exercise only to Wednesday – you should try and be aware of your body and its movements every day of the week.

Whenever possible try and walk in water which is about knee-deep. Perhaps in a shallow river or in the shallow sea near the shore. Try and experience how it feels when the feet push against the water with each step. This would give you a good idea regards mindful walking. Similarly, when pushing the pedals when cycling. Mindfully riding a bicycle gives a very good experience on how the legs move. In fact, we can be mindful and watch how our feet move every time we cycle.

We will get the maximum benefit when we walk barefoot and experience how the feet touch the sand or the gravel on the ground. The experience we get when the sole meets the rough, coarse surface of the ground, and the different sensations we experience are unique. And unless we are mindful, we will not be able to experience these sensations.



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# Thursday

## Being mindful in day to day work

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**L**ast Thursday we discussed how we could be silent and mindful in our daily activities. Brushing our teeth was taken as a typical example that we can do mindfully. We could also notice the sounds that are produced during that exercise. If we repeatedly practice this exercise, we would become familiar with ourselves and we begin to learn about ourselves!

Gradually we could increase the moments we spend alone with ourselves, and they will feel light and relaxed. When we learn things on our own, experientially, we will never forget them, even when we grow old. And we needn't rush into this either. As we understand such experiences, they will get stabilised slowly and expand gradually, automatically.

Listening to your own sounds is something that we can continue to do. This will be very helpful for each person individually. At the same time, when we are in a group, becoming self-aware will benefit everyone in the group. In fact, when we silently listen to the sounds we produce, we are giving a 'silent sermon' to the others. Similarly, such behaviour by others

gives an important reminder to us to become mindful and silent. Therefore, when we are closing a door, washing a plate or a cup, or when we are talking, we'll always have to be mindful about the noise we produce. In fact, these noises we produce will be helpful for us to establish mindfulness.

Those who practise in this manner within the school (our Mindful School-Sati Pasala) will be a contrast to the student who does not practise in this manner. Soon we will learn how we can listen to the sound of silence. That will be an interesting mindfulness game to practise.





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# Friday

## Being mindful while doing Glad Games

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**D**uring the past several days, we have practised being mindful very enthusiastically. It's very encouraging to see this. You have practised being mindful when sitting, when walking and while engaged in daily activities. We became familiar with our body and with each other.

This means that we have become happier and more content with ourselves. This also means that we have developed gladness, kindness and friendliness - instead of anger, irritation, stress and bitterness with nature. This is the natural power of mindfulness.

In the absence of mindfulness, we shall have eternal discontent, tension and unpleasant feelings. Being mindful helps us to overcome these undesirable mind states and helps us to be content at any given time. Mindful children exude fragrance like blooming flowers!

Today let us try to welcome and be happy with our pleasant mind states. We can be happy mindfully, with these positive traits that we have developed. Let us have fun with these positive feelings. Then every task we accomplish, can be done with a happy and 'smiling' mind. Even if we make mistakes, we shall not be remorseful and keep grumbling. Instead

we shall know that we have made a mistake and accept it. Instead of being regretful, we could try to find a reason to be glad in this situation. Mindfulness will help us to understand this and to continue being in the present moment. We shall see our mistakes or our lapses with a balanced mind. We begin to get a deep understanding about our mind. And this very gladness is interesting, rewarding and revealing!

You should not try to criticize or judge others who have made mistakes. Just as much as we make mistakes others also would do the same. When we see things in such a positive way, our mind is free from strain and tension. This is yet another reason to be glad! In fact, we shall feel a sense of lightness. We shall develop a liking for the sound of silence, and we might always look for ways and means to enjoy the silence and solitude.

Also, you will get closer to nature, and not be too disturbed when facing natural changes.

Indeed, you shall become a glad and contented person. Next week we shall learn how to do random acts of kindness!