



Sati Pasala : Week 06

Monday

Being mindful in the present moment

Mindfulness teaches us to be awake to the moment that we live. Living means the entire set of activities of our eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. It can also be described as all the actions related to the four postures. So, the Sati Pasala teaches us to do all activities with mindfulness, with the mind focused on the task at hand, and not allowing the mind to run helter - skelter. Last week you learnt how patience develops as a result of mindfulness. This week, let us see how mindfulness helps to reduce stress and strain.

The teachers showed us that agitation, impatience, fear, anger, stress and strain. would build up when you do things unmindfully. Also, you tend to do mistakes. Generally, we keep on either thinking of the past, regretting, feeling sad, angry about our past mistakes or imagining /planning / dreaming of the future. That means, that we hardly live in the present moment. That is why we do not concentrate on the work at hand. Regretting, getting angry about incidents in the past / living in a future dream world make our life stressful, this is common to all of us, whether we are children or adults.

Someone can ask: How do we forget the past? Haven't all the things we learnt in the past help us to be what we are now? Let me answer: By "forgetting the past" we mean not clinging on to the past emotionally or sentimentally. Certainly, we should make use of our past experiences.

Let us take a simple example: Maya was doing her homework - an essay. While writing it, she thinks "Oh! I could not write last week's essay well. That's why Sama came first. This time of course I will defeat her and come first. Surely my Mum will give me a present." Do you see what is happening? Maya regrets that she did not do well, she feels sad, then feels angry and jealous towards Sama. She becomes competitive. Further, she dreams about a present from mother. All these emotions were agitating her mind, so that she could not write a good essay this time either. If she did not delve in the past or dream of the future, she would have been able to concentrate and write a nice essay.

Now you understand the importance of not clinging on to the past. Do not cling on either to good deeds or to bad deeds. Engage in your lessons, but do not keep imagining things. Now see, Sama likes very much to practice mindfulness. She tries her best to be mindful all the time. Accordingly, she writes her essay mindfully. She knows that she is unmindful at times, but she is aware of it. Also, she is aware when emotions such as anger and jealousy come to her mind. Then she thinks that those emotions are harmful. Of course, she too thinks of a present from her Mum, but does not get excited. With such a calm mind, it is easy to remember, when necessary, what you learnt in the past. Then she can attend to her lessons very effectively. All the facts related to the essay get nicely organized in her mind, and she writes a very good essay.

You see, Sama utilized what she learnt in the past to write the essay in the present moment. She did not panic "Oh! I might forget what I learnt last month", or she did not dream "Ah! I am intelligent, I can score more marks than the others". Instead she writes the essay mindfully and wins uncontested!

One might say: “How on earth do we plan our activities if we do not dream about the future?” This is my advice. Plan anything when you plan it. But do not plan it while you are doing something else that is not relevant to that plan! And, do not dream, but plan.” THAT is mindfulness. Now see what happened to Maya. She thought that she will get more marks than Sama. She imagined of a present from her mother. So, while writing the essay, she was also dreaming and making those plans. She was not living in the present moment. The facts necessary for the essay did not come to her mind because it was cluttered with many other things.

Therefore, dear kids, you have to do your studies diligently, but without stress. If you do your studies with anxiety that you might forget, you might fail the tests, and if you do your studies with a competitive mind that you should get higher marks, then you would invariably develop stress. And, if you want to do away with all that, and if you want to share your knowledge with others and help others, developing mindfulness is essential. The child who is mindful accepts both success and failure gladly.

Mindfulness is really rewarding and therefore, we should develop it. It enables us to detect our skills and capabilities. That paves the way to contentment and happiness. Happiness means accepting things just as they are, and not possessing things that you did not have. However, this should not be misinterpreted as being inactive or lazy. What I am saying is, that while you work, do it efficiently, diligently, happily, and light-heartedly. Accept whatever the outcome or result happily and contentedly. Then you would not experience stress, strain or disappointment. This is the outcome of mindfulness.



Sati Pasala : Week 06

Tuesday

Being mindful in sitting

When we sit mindfully for a little while, we keep the past aside, and stop dreaming about the future, because we go to a quiet place and close our eyes lightly. Then we keep the attention on the body, and accordingly experience “I – am – now – here”. We keep our attention at the sitting posture. When you practice this often, you develop the habit of being in the present moment, without clinging on to the past / dreaming about the future. If you maintain the mind in the present moment, you do not get any stress or strain.

Let us take an example: All the pupils in Sama’s class are now seated, ready for the lesson. The teacher is taking the mathematics lesson. Sama, who has practiced mindful sitting, felt that she sits nicely. The mind sensed the seated position. But her eyes were open, she could also hear the teacher’s voice. Her nose and tongue were inactive and she was aware of that., And she was listening to the teacher mindfully. The teacher asked a question from the last week’s lesson, and Sama answered correctly. At that moment, she felt that she was a “talker” and not a “listener”. She remembered what she learnt last week, and then she felt that was a “thinker”. She utilized what she learnt last week,

simply because that was relevant to the present lesson. Accordingly, at that moment Sama did the correct thing, without either clinging on to the past or dreaming about the future.

The teacher asked the next question from Maya. She failed to answer, because she was munching a “Veralu” fruit on the sly. She was not attentive to her seated posture, she was not listening to the teacher, and she was not even aware that she was eating the fruit. True, her mind was neither in the past nor in the future, but her mind was not in the present moment either. The mind was utterly diffused. She was pretending to be listening to the teacher, and was eating Veralu fruit, and at the same time covering that up. She was utterly unmindful. At that moment, she had to be a “listener”, but she was not. She neither learnt the lesson, nor enjoyed the fruit. So, she could not answer, and was ashamed. She felt shame, regret and anxiety as to what the teacher would do, and accordingly she became stressful.

From Sama’s example, we clearly saw the importance of mindfulness, didn’t we dear children? She paid much attention to the lesson. When the question was asked, she remembered last week’s lesson. The teacher was pleased with her answer. Sama was glad. She was glad because she was mindful, was a “listener”, then became a “thinker”, and nicely prepared the answer. At that time, she did not keep on thinking of the past, but picked up what was necessary. She merely changed herself from a listener to a thinker, and then became a “talker” when she answered. It is only a mindful mind that can change over rapidly in such a successful manner.

The mindful mind is always open to each moment. When the mind is trained to be in the “I – am – now – here” position, it can easily change over from one activity to another without any difficulty. Accordingly, when we are trained to be mindful of the body, we can easily become mindful in multitude of daily activities. So, now you can clearly see how useful it is to train yourself to be mindful in the seated position.

If you can spend even a little time to sit and be mindful, your mindfulness develops moment by moment. That reduces tension, so that you can attend to your studies happily, with a relaxed mind. Also you would be able to do everything with contentment.



Sati Pasala : Week 06

Wednesday

Being mindful while walking

Yesterday we learnt how the mind, trained to be mindful in the seated position, can change over to various activities. Today we shall see how walking mindfully can help us to reduce stress in our activities. Can you remember that we learnt how to be mindful while walking?

Let us take Sama's example. Today it is Sama's turn to clean the classroom. Maya's name too is in the list. On such days, Sama goes to school very early. She takes the broom and starts sweeping. She feels her feet on the floor, she is aware that she slowly walks sweeping the floor with the broom. She feels the handle of the broom in her hands. She is aware whenever she moves chairs and desks. Once sweeping is over, she collects the dirt, and she is aware of that fact. She is aware that she bends, collects the dirt, goes to the dust bin and puts them in. She is aware that she returns to the class room. Then she sees Maya just coming in.

Maya comes and says "Sama, I got late today. You of course come by car, so it is easy for you to come early and sweep. Although I live close-by, I have to walk from home. If I too had a car, I too would have come early."

Sama got angry, thinking that Maya, without at least bothering to thank me, gives excuses for getting late. But Sama kept silent. She entered the class room, being mindful that she was walking. Now that she practises mindfulness, she was aware of her anger, and its ill effects. She thought, “Even if Maya did not come, I finished the task well, if I get angry with her, I am the one who would suffer. I must talk to her some other time about being more responsible. And, above all, I can think in this manner because I practise mindfulness. Earlier I too was just like Maya. I too used to get late. I used to quarrel with children. Now, thanks to mindfulness, I am really patient and do not get excited or agitated.”

The following day, Maya got good marks in a test, and she was very happy. So, Sama, while strolling in the school grounds with Maya, thought that this is a very good opportunity to talk to the latter. She says, “Oh, Maya, you are lucky that you can come to school walking. I wish I too can do so, but unfortunately, I live far away. In the Sati Pasala we learn how to walk mindfully, so this is a good opportunity for you to practice that. They taught that if we learn to be mindful while walking, that would be beneficial to both the mind and body. So, you can walk mindfully when you come to school and again on returning home. I too wish I could walk to school.”

“Yes, Sama, thanks. I shall certainly do that.”

Now see, because Sama practises mindfulness, Maya became a good friend. Sama did not scold her for not helping in the past, or did not make future plans to report Maya to the teacher. Accordingly, Sama, by practising mindfulness, avoided clinging to the past or dreaming about the future, she saw anger coming, also saw its ill- effects, finally, she became a good friend of Maya. How and why did all this happen? Just because she was mindful all the time, and was calm and happy.



Sati Pasala : Week 06

Thursday

Being mindful in day to day work

We learnt that mindfulness when developed while sitting and walking, would easily enable you to be mindful in daily activities successfully. By living we mean using eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind throughout all the activities of standing, sitting, walking and lying down. Most of these activities happen without us exactly our being aware, and somewhat “automatically”. We are too busy to notice them, and that is common to pupils and adults alike. Pupils get up early morning, get ready in a rush, and go to school in a heavy traffic jam. After school there are tuition classes, music classes, dancing classes, sports practices etc. until late evening. Then there is homework to do. When the child goes to bed, she is very tired. One cannot expect a happy emotional state from such a child. He is invariably angry, annoyed, stressful, anxious, fatigued, quarrelsome or sad.

It is exactly to address this sad state of affairs that the Sati Pasala has introduced many methods of developing mindfulness. Sama, who loves to practise mindfulness, tries to be mindful whenever possible. She too has many extra classes. One day she told her mother “Mum, I am not going to the music class any more. I know that I go there just because Dad

wants me to learn music. I have no special liking for music. Indeed, Dad plays the guitar beautifully, but it does not mean that I too have the talent.” Now Sama realizes that due to a heavy workload she is getting fatigued. It was just because of this fact that her parents have enrolled her in the music class, but that itself became an added burden. Why is that? Although Dad loves music and is highly talented, she is not. So, she stopped going to the music class.

Sama loves her nice garden. Now she sits on the wooden bunk fixed under the guava tree, and gazes upon the sky. At that moment, she knows that she is seated on the bunk. She feels the hardness against her buttocks. Her mind rests upon the seated position, and becomes peaceful. Then some birds came flying and sit on a branch of the tree. Now Sama’s mind goes to her ears, and she hears the chirping of birds. Then a cool breeze came, which brought her mind from ears to the arms and legs. Her attention went from one place to another in her body, but she did not feel any stress, because a person who practises mindfulness always lives in harmony with Nature. Also, when we do something we like, we do not feel any stress. Music is enjoyable to the person who loves it, but would be a nuisance to the one who does not love it. Now that Sama has earned about half an hour for herself, she was much relaxed. In the past, during this period, she did something she did not like, simply because she wanted to please her parents. Now she has earned some rest, and she enjoyed mindfulness.

Was it really her father that make her life busy by sending her to the music class? No. Sama herself wanted to study music like father. That desire was there hidden in her mind. She did not see it all this time. She had not realized that she lacked father’s talent. As she had not practiced mindfulness, she had not realized any of these. Now she knows. Dear kids, this is what most of us do generally, as we are not mindful. People do things with hidden desires or intentions or to imitate others, to please others, to get a job with a higher salary, to get recognition in the society. That shows lack of mindfulness. So, if one does things without realizing

their lack of talent and skills, without knowing whether they like it or not, that invariably will breed stress and strain.

Of course, music is generally soothing, but if one tries to study it with effort and dislike, it creates stress and impatience. Sama escaped from this vicious cycle just because of her mindfulness. You little kids too might get such influences. They are like strong winds. We get carried away by such strong winds, although we actually want to go to the opposite direction.

Although we cannot stop our thoughts, we can steer them along the correct path by using Mindfulness! Then we would not get caught up in thoughts. We feel relaxed, we comprehend our mind. Therefore, irrespective of external problems and difficulties, the mindful mind leads you along the correct path in a relaxed manner. As Sama is always mindful, she understood what she really wanted and accordingly she took the correct decision.

Mindfulness is like bright fresh sunlight that would dispel the dark feelings such as fatigue, sadness, doubt, fear, anxiety, impatience and restlessness.



Sati Pasala : Week 06

Friday

Being mindful while doing Glad Games

Dear kids, it is only if you are happy and relaxed that you can learn things, even mindfulness. That is why Sati Pasala initially introduces to you some Glad Games. The Glad Game is a practical method that teaches you mindfulness in a relaxed and joyful manner. Of course, mindfulness itself is something very relaxing, but those teachers say that Glad Games would initially be more effective to the untrained and restless mind before introducing mindfulness.

Let us see what sort of a Glad Game we could use in order to relax the agitated mind. We'll take Sama's example. Now the term test is coming nearer. Sama tells her friends "Shall we play a nice Glad Game? Now that the test is round the corner, we'll get prepared for it. As the first paper is on Science, let each of us write down two questions and two answers. Then put them into this box. During the interval, we'll go out and sit under the mango tree. Let's walk up there mindfully and slowly. Then our minds will be relaxed. "

So, that was what they did. During the interval, they went under the tree slowly and mindfully. Sat down mindfully in a circle. Then, Sama told

them what to do. One by one, each child read out a question mindfully. Others listened, knowing that they were listening. Then, those who knew the answer, raised their hand, knowing that the hand was raised. One child answered, knowing that she was talking. It went on very well.

At the end, Sama said “Hey! Girls, aren’t we successful? Aren’t we mindful? We practised mindfulness as well as learnt our lesson. We caught two birds with one stone!”

“Oh yes, Sama, thank you very much. As we were mindful, I could memorize the lesson much better.”

“Those teachers have advised us that if we study as a group, we can memorize better.”

“You know why, then there is no competitiveness. We are united as one!”

“Yes, the more the merrier! We really enjoyed the whole thing. We did everything slowly and mindfully.”

Maya said “Shall we study again and then eat some Veralu? Here, I have brought a bag full of Veralu”

“Excellent! However, please remember, one thing at a time, and that done well! Maya, your Veralu is very tasty, aren’t they? Let me see, they are just nicely ripe. I can feel it because I am eating mindfully”

“Oh, Sama, today I studied happily. Generally, whenever I start studying, I begin to feel sleepy. Today I am fully awake. When I read out questions, I felt that I am a “reader”. When listening, I felt I am a “listener”. “

“Yes, Maya, If we are mindful about the work at hand, there is no sleepiness, dislike, impatience, fear or competitiveness. “

“Thank you Sama, you are a great help to us. Let us do the same game tomorrow as well. I shall bring a larger bag of Veralu.”

“Congratulations, Maya, you are so mindful as to remember Veralu. It’s just great!”. Sama cracked a joke. All the girls laughed.

“I, who could not memorize anything difficult all this time, can remember them now”

“Yes Maya, that was exactly what teachers of the Sati Pasala taught us. If we are mindful, every task will be easy for us. Mindfulness takes no sides, and helps everybody. It is a genuine friend”

“Like you, Sama!”

“Oh Maya, my mind too is just like yours. I too have emotions such as anger, jealousy, fear, sadness and impatience. But I see them, thanks to mindfulness. I realise that they are very harmful and damaging.”

I used to feel very lazy to come to school. As Sama talks frequently about mindfulness, now I like the school. I used to give lame excuses and even cry in the morning. So, my Mum used to sing a song to encourage me...(a song)”අකුරට යන්නට කම්මැලි හිතීලා බොරුවට අඩනා පුංචි දුවේ .. මමත් ඔබ වගේ මම පොඩි කාලේ ඔහොම කළා මට මතක තියේ” Now see, mindfulness is like my Mum. When I am good, and when I am bad, at both instances mindfulness is by my side, just like my Mum.

“Oh, Sama, I don’t know what to do. I get angry very often. Often I feel anxiety, fear, doubt...”

Can you remember what Sati Pasala taught us. Remembering that, let us look at it this way, Maya. You know about anger because you know about compassion. You know about anxiety because you know about peace of mind. You know about fear because you know about bravery. Just think seriously, is it not so? And, if you develop mindfulness, you would comprehend both those aspects. Then it would be easy for you to become objective, to treat both alike. The equanimous mind can see the ill effects of those emotions, and then develop compassion, and peace of mind etc.

We think that we get angry, sad, and jealous, etc. because of other people, don't we? But it is not so. The teachers of Sati Pasala teach us that they are our own habits, and attitudes. hidden deep down inside us, If we see them mindfully and do not despise them or react to them, they will dissolve gradually. So, Maya, that is a very good sign that you recognize your emotions. You DO know that you have them inside you. That means that you ARE mindful, don't you agree with me? And, Maya, if you are mindful, stress and strain would leave you gradually, and instead, peace of mind and happiness will come in.