

(Sathipatthana) Vibhanga Sutra

(The English transcript of the discourse made by Ven Mankadawala Sudassana on Duruthu Poya day, 2017 at Labunoruwakanda Forest Hermitage in Kekirawa Sri Lanka.)

Sathipatthananca o bhikkawe desissami, Sathipatthana, Bhavananca, Sathipatthana Bhavana Gamini patipadanca, thun sunatha,

The Buddha addressed his disciples one day,
'Monks, I will teach you the mindfulness, the cultivation of mindfulness, and the way leading to the cultivation of mindfulness.'

The Dhamma preached by the Buddha, the Buddhist scripture, is recorded under three baskets or Pitaka, i.e Sutra Pitaka, Vinaya Pitaka & Abhidamma Pitaka. Sutra Pitaka has five sections, Dheega Nikaya, Majjhima Nikaya, Anguttara Nikaya, Khuddhaka Nikaya & Samyutta Nikaya

For ease of reference Samyutta Nikaya is divided in to six parts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.1 & 5.2 In 5.1 under Sathipatthana samutta there is a Sutra named Vibhanga Sutra which I am going to discuss today. The Sutra discusses mindfulness under three topics,

- (i) Mindfulness (*satipatthana*)
- (ii) The cultivation of mindfulness
- (iii) The way leading to the cultivation of mindfulness

(i) What is Mindfulness?

*kathamanca bhikkawe Sathipattahan ,
Idha Bhikkawe Bhikku, Kaye kayanupassi viharathi athapi sampajano sathima, vineyya loke abhijja domanassa
Idha Bhikkawe Bhikku, vedanaye vedananunupassi viharathi athapi sampajano sathima, vineyya loke abhijja domanassa
Idha Bhikkawe Bhikku, citte cittanupassi viharathi athapi sampajano sathima, vineyya loke abhijja domanassa
Idha Bhikkawe Bhikku, dhamme dhammanupassi viharathi athapi sampajano sathima, vineyya loke abhijja domanassa*

Monks what is mindfulness, *Idha bhikkawe* – this is important, *Idha* means in this order (*sasana*) [i.e. in this *dhamma* (*doctrine*) and its *vinaya* (*discipline*)], *bikkhawe* means monk, i.e. a monk in this order. When the Buddha addressed as Monks he referred to all disciples not only the monks who are immediately in front of him.

The monk in this order dwells by contemplating the body, sensations, mind and dhamma (phenomena) - things that deceive the person, as they really are, with mindfulness and clear comprehension, and with necessary effort to discard defilements (to put away covetousness and displeasure), i.e. mindfulness on the body, sensations, the mind and dhamma (phenomena) with clear comprehension and necessary effort. That is called Mindfulness.

(ii) What is cultivation of mindfulness?

Idha bihaawe bikku samudaya dhammanupassiva kayasming viharathi athapi sampajano sathima wineyya loke abhijja domanassan, waya dammanu passi kayasmin viharathi athapi

sampajano sathima wineyya loke abhijja domanassan, samudaya waya dhammanu passi kayasmin viharathi athapi sampajano sathima wineyya loke abhijja domanassan,

(The sutra continues similarly for other three too, *vedanasu vedananu passi, chittanu cittanupassi & dhammanu dhammanupassi viharathi* and so on.)

The Monk who dwells by contemplating on arising of the body, sensations, mind & the dhamma with mindfulness and clear comprehension, and with necessary effort to discard defilements, living while observing arising, passing & both arising passing of the body, sensations, mind & dhamma with clear comprehension is known as practicing mindfulness meditation.

(iii) What is the path leading to Mindfulness?

samma ditti, samma sankappa, samma vaca, samma kammanta, samma ajeeva samma sathi samma Samadhi.

It's the Noble Eightfold Path (*ariyo ashatangiko maggo*), which is the right view, right contemplation, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right mindfulness, right concentration

The one who seeks to become enlightened need not study the whole Buddhist scripture, learning and practicing Mindfulness, cultivation of mindfulness & the path leading to cultivation mindfulness alone is sufficient.

Mindfulness is defined as positioning of the mind, what you practice to cultivate mindfulness is mindfulness meditation. The way leading to cultivate mindfulness, knowing how and why you do it is the path.

For example, say you need to go to a place located far away, first you will need a vehicle and then you need to know how to drive it, moreover, you must know the way to the destination. Even if you have a vehicle (mindfulness) and know how to ride or drive (practice) you need to know where you are going, the final destination and the way (The Noble Path).

There is a path to travel from this shore, which is gripped with decay and death, to the opposite shore which is free from decay and death - nirvana, however, one needs a vehicle and should have ability to drive it to get there. All these requirements should be satisfied for one to cross.

The order that we need to study mindfulness is essential, when you disassemble an equipment or an appliance to service it, what you take apart first will be the last item you reassemble. Similarly the first item of our topic will get defined last. When one learns the path (*pathipada*) and the practice (*bhavana*) thereafter he or she comprehends what mindfulness is.

The last piece to be removed is installed back first, therefore, let's learn the Path first followed by how one can cultivate mindfulness and thereby we can master mindfulness. If you accomplish this you can go to any place and practice to discard cankers (*Asrava*). If we all can learn & comprehend this dhamma, this whole world

will become one, free from differences, no one will be able to challenge and those who want to be free from suffering (*dukkha*) will join Buddhism, even those who follow other religions.

Now let me explain you the path (*pathipada*), the Noble Eightfold Path. The right view is the forerunner, when one gains the Right View the remaining seven qualities will naturally follow. Therefore let's try to understand the right view, that's what the Buddhism is about. This is what the Buddha preached from his enlightenment until his passing away (*parinibbana*).

What is the Right View (*Samma Ditti*)

*dhukke nanan
dhukke samudaye nanan
dhukke nirodaye nanan
dhukke nirodha gamini patipada nanan*

Knowing what suffering is
Knowing what causes suffering
Knowing what ending of suffering is
Knowing the path leading to end suffering.

The one who comprehends this will know how to cultivate mindfulness and what mindfulness is about. Mindfulness, cultivation of mindfulness and the path leading to cultivation of mindfulness, all are interconnected like a string of pearl. This dhamma is deep, yet it's not necessarily the case, just that we are not deep enough. If we were, we wouldn't have come all this way in samsara. We need to employ extensive effort to comprehend. It's worth sacrificing all you have to achieve this as it will help you to end samsara, then you can claim without fear that this dhamma is well-proclaimed by the Enlightened One and is excellent in the beginning, excellent in the middle and excellent in the end (*Svakkhato Bhagavata dhammo*).

If I am able to say what you had for dinner last night you would know if I am saying the truth or not, as you know it for yourself. You need not just believe me.

Let me first discuss the situation of the worldly beings first, i.e. what the wrong view (*micca ditti*) is,

*dhukke annanan
dhukke samudaye annanan
dhukke nirodaye annanan
dhukke nirodha gamini patipada annanan.*

It is;
Not knowing what suffering is
Not knowing what causes suffering
Not knowing what ending of suffering is
Not knowing the path leading to end suffering

If your mother, father or a child dies or become ill, or you lose your wealth, say your car, house etc. you think your grief is due to your parents becoming ill, their death or loss of your wealth. You believe there is no grief when your father & mother live

happily and when you have wealth, therefore, you do whatever you can to maintain the wellbeing of your loved ones by looking after them and protecting your wealth. If you closely analyse this is not just because you love them but for your own happiness. You will work hard to make a good living and make high earnings just to ensure that your child lives happily, for e.g. by building a nice house, buying a car etc. At the same time you look after your body to ensure its wellbeing. This is the wrong view (Micca ditti) which is afflicting the world.

When the vision is wrong corresponding thoughts become wrong too, such as thoughts of sensuality, anger and cruelty, (*Kama sankappa, vyapada sankappa and himsa sankappa*). Accordingly, speech, action and livelihood would become wrong as well. Further, your effort will be to maintain that status by mindfulness and concentration which are complementary to that. This is the worldly existence of eight wrong items, in other words, that is the way known to the world, the way you live. This applies to all three existences of sensual, form & formless (*kama, rupa and arupa bhavas*). The existence in the world can be either right or wrong. Buddha arrived in this world to teach & inject the right view to the world that is infected with wrong views.

The wrong path leads to suffering and therefore the right path leads to end suffering and reach happiness, i.e. by knowing,

What suffering is
What causes suffering
What ending of suffering is
The path leading to end suffering,

It is vital to comprehend this knowledge before meditating to cultivate mindfulness, if one aims to reach nirvana. Without the knowledge, however much you can be mindful and practice meditation you won't be able to discard cankers. You may suppress hindrances and even reach dhyana states but you won't succeed in discarding cankers. One may do insight meditation either by observing the form, name or name & form both back and forth, but it won't work. This is what the whole world seem to be generally doing in order to discard cankers. They just focus on mindfulness and mindfulness meditation which is not adequate.

It simply means being mindful and meditating on arising & passing of body, sensation mind & dhamma but there is no path? One observes name, its arising passing and the other person the form, it's arising & passing but is there a path? There is no eightfold path here. I want you to look at the topics in this Sutra. The sutra has three headings, mindfulness, mindfulness meditation (cultivation of mindfulness) & the Path leading to cultivation of mindfulness (the Eightfold path). The Right View is essential to discard cankers. It is known as the *vidya* in dhamma, by developing wisdom (*vidya*) one abandons ignorance or delusion (*avidya*) whereby cankers are eliminated.

As we already know the right view is knowing what suffering, knowing what causes suffering, knowing what ending of suffering is and knowing the path leading to end suffering.

- Knowing what suffering is knowing dukkha, the meaning is hidden; the Buddha preached that the five clinging aggregates are suffering (*sankittena pancaupadanaskanda dukka*).
- Knowing what causes suffering is gaining knowledge about desire (*chanda raga*) on five clinging aggregates.
- What is the knowledge of ending dukkha? It's the knowledge that by discarding desires on clinging aggregates the suffering caused by five clinging aggregates is eliminated.
- Knowing the path is the knowledge of the noble eightfold path.

What you need to do now is clear; you need to comprehend the four noble truths. , if you aim to become enlightened, this is the knowledge which removes cankers.

Now let me explain this dhamma with few analogies,

As we understood the knowledge that the five clinging aggregates are suffering is crucial. Think of a currency note made of paper (with straw & binder/pulp) and print. A child sees it the same way as you do but while you perceive it say as a Rs.5000 note the child will not, as he has no idea about its value. You both see it the same way but you perceive differently. You know the value of the note as you know you can buy various things with it. You have developed a desire for the currency note and therefore cling to its value. This is called clinging to sensuality (*kama upadana*), You cannot separate the notion of Rs.5000 from its value. You do not know that the notion of Rs.5000 arises from within you. You overlook the reality due to your ignorance. Your ignorance makes you to tie the notion of Rs.5000 (the defilement) to the external paper note.

The value and the notion of Rs.5000 is in your mind, the clinging (upadana) is what you project on the paper note to make it a clinging form. Therefore you overlook that it's a piece of printed paper and as a result you will suffer if it gets torn or if you lose it. The cause for this suffering is that the note is a five clinging aggregate (*pancaupadana skanda*). This simile will make it clear to you that the aggregates projected with clinging are suffering. If people find Rs.5000 notes scattered on ground they will not hesitate to pick them up and gather. Isn't this funny, what do you call a man who walks around picking up pieces of paper lying on the ground? a mad man isn't it? The Buddha has said 'all worldlings are mad' (*Sabbe puthujjana ummattaka*).

When it is said that five clinging aggregates are suffering do not believe that it's a thing that exists out there, it's just that the aggregates which are masked with our clinging that are suffering. In this example both the child and you see the same note, aggregates, but the value arises in your mind when you see it but not in the child's mind. There was no one who could see this and educate us until the Buddha came to be.

Suffering is there only as long as you project the value that arise in the mind (*upadana*) on to the paper note. If we all suffer when a piece of paper gets burnt there is no salvation. It's the burning of the clinging aggregates that makes you to suffer. Therefore the cause for suffering is clinging. If you do not project the value

(clinging) to the paper, you won't suffer even if you lose it. So there is a path to separate the clinging (value) and the aggregate (paper), you only need to do two things, see that it's a paper made of straw and print and that the desire arises in your mind. Cankers will not be removed by mere observation; you need to comprehend the above through meditation to cultivate mindfulness. When you see the aggregates and the desire separately, you won't develop clinging.

As long as you contemplate in this manner the value begins to fade away. Therefore the unborn cankers are not born, the born cankers are removed. If not you can also contemplate on the name (*nama*), that the thought Rs.5000 is a concept that merely arises in the mind due to mind contact and ends when the mind contact ends. That's being mindful of the mind (*Cittanupassana*), however, let me make it clear, cankers will not be removed by such observation, unless you know why you observe like that. You need to be aware that you concentrate on the mind to bar your concepts reaching the external aggregates. If you do not practice to contemplate like this you will get deceived again when you see a currency note. This is the vision one needs to cultivate as the path.

Rs.5000 note is similar to your notions of mother, father or son made of edible foods that come in front of the eye, a form made by aggregates. A stranger will not see the child as a son but just as another child and hence he will not have the love (value) like you do, though both of you see the same child. You can't separate the value (desire & clinging) from the notion of the son. The drawback is that when aggregates decay or die you suffer, you need to know that it's only when you project your notion of value on the external object that it becomes your son. When the child dies you suffer due to the death of your son, the clinging aggregate.

Clinging, or upadana, is not just grasping as we commonly believe, the Buddha has named defilements by different qualities; i.e. *Moho avidya* (Ignorance is the quality of delusion), *ayohana sanskara* (the quality of accumulating), *nikhanthi tanha* (the quality of taking delight) and *upagamana upadana* (the quality of reaching to the external). The issue is that clinging or upadana reach the form and make it look different making it a clinging aggregate.

You need to see that we don't suffer due to death of a person but loss of clinging aggregates (*upadana skanda dukkha*). Suffering arises regardless of an object being animate or inanimate; it applies the same way to a tree or a person. Observing arising passing of clinging aggregates is to see that the form is made by edible food and that it ceases when there is no food. If you don't see like this when the form change (or die) due to change of aggregates, you suffer. In relation to the mind, you need to see the notion of child is a thought that arises due to contact and ends thereafter. Cankers can only be removed with such knowledge, we need to separate aggregates from clinging aggregates.

Now let's look at Craving,

Sako paneesa tanha katta uppajja mana uppajjathi etta nivisamana nivisathi.

Where does craving arise and dwell? It arises in places of delight & dwell therein. What are delightful in the world? the eye and the visible form and the ear & sound

and so on are delightful in the world. Craving arises in the eye and visible form & dwells on them.

By rubbing two pieces of wood (sticks) on to each other we can ignite a fire and similarly when the eye impinges an object it results in formation of defilements (or Keles). The fire ignited by the sticks will persist and grow so long as it clings to the two sticks and similarly the defilements that arise, for example perception of self, will endure and grow so long as it is tied to the external object and the eye. The fire cannot burn for long if it doesn't hold on to the wood.

The Eye is one piece of wood and the Rs.5000 currency note made of aggregates is the other piece. The value of Rs.5000 persists as it is tied to the note. The currency note is just a piece of paper but the value of Rs.5000 that arises in the mind is the fire which is not in the note, if the government decides to cancel Rs.5000 notes the currency will be worthless, this has been proven in the past.

The fire does not belong to the sticks, similarly the defilements such as sensual pleasures and perception of self that arise in the mind do not belong to the external object (form) or the eye. The fire can only be extinguished by shielding it from the wood. Similarly the notion of Rs.5000 should be removed from the note or the eye. As long as the eye holds onto a visible object the ear to a sound, the tongue to a taste, the defilements will persist like the fire that clings on to the wood.

By comprehending this dhamma and cultivating mindfulness you can reach the state that is free from clinging (*Anupada Parinirvana*). Your leniency to senses makes you to create defilements and therefore to cling.

The body made of aggregates, i.e. the shape with colour, is one stick and your eye the other, the value that arises when these two come together is fire (e.g. son). Now you can't differentiate the value from the aggregates. The moment your eye comes in contact with the aggregates all associated desires come together with the value such as the love to your son.

Once you cling to the form as your son you ignore that it's a bundle of aggregates composed of hair, skin, flesh etc. which can be unpleasant at times such as when the child is sick. As long as the form (son) is there and when the eye comes in contact with it, a fire will ignite in your mind. The evidence that a fire is present is that you have a son out there and an eye to experience him. Now you have the notion of the child. When you think of your child you know he is there and you love him. This is the state of the worldly view, (Personality View - *Sakkaya ditti*)

*Rupan aththatho saman passathi
Rupawanthan aththathi
Aththaneewa rupan
Rupasmin aththanan.*

See form as self
See self as form
See form in self
See self in form.

The fire (defilements) can only be extinguished if you can achieve cessation of the six sense bases, not otherwise. A layperson sees the death of a son but the wise one sees passing of clinging aggregates.

With regard to the fire ignited by the two sticks, when the sticks are longer the fire lasts as long as they last, similarly the longer the love to your son is, longer would be the suffering. This is what one needs to comprehend. Without such knowledge no one can even feel the warmth of nirvana. Without comprehending this, however much you meditate it won't work, cankers won't be eliminated. When we cling to aggregates as son it incorporates all levels of defilements. This is the heart of the doctrine (dhamma) and comprehension is essential to remove cankers, not otherwise.

The Buddha has said, you cannot milk a cow from its horn as there is no milk in the horn. If you want to milk a cow you need to milk it from its udder. One thing you must remember, your suffering cannot be removed by somebody else's wisdom. If so we would have liberated long ago.

One more analogy I want to discuss is the cinematic experience.

The mentality of grasping to images on the cinema screen as people and sentients is characteristic of the worldly beings. As commonly evident in a cinema experience, spectators get involved with the characters ignoring that it's just a cinema. They tend to grieve when a character they like meets with some misadventure. This is identical to the state of the world where you find people who suffer due to decay and death. The Buddha showed how we are deluded with the wrong view – one stick is the screen and the other is the eye, the notion of self is the fire, the fact that you are just stepping on the truth makes you ignorant. Meditation practices today miss this crucial dhamma. Meditation without knowing the path is not what the Buddha taught.

If you don't know aggregates apart from clinging aggregates you are not on the path. If you know arising and passing of aggregates you will know the three disciplines (*shiksha*), morality, concentration and wisdom (*sila, samadhi, panna*) which lays out the eightfold path. A path does not necessarily contain morality, concentration and wisdom. Mindfulness meditation takes you to the eightfold path not the other way around.

Each individual needs to develop wisdom of eliminating the cause for suffering, one cannot get it from someone else.

The Buddha identified the difference between the aggregates and those forms that associate aggregates (*upadaya rupa*). The form is experienced as self and suffering arise due to self-view, it is the Buddhist philosophy. This doctrine cannot be explained the way I do if one has not studied and understood Abhidhamma, not merely by referring to thought processes and various other theories, but through the way Buddha preached it. The analogies I discussed above to explain this dhamma such as Rs.5000 note is evidence for this knowledge about the form I gained by learning *Dhammasangani Prakaranaya* in Abhidhamma. Only abhidhamma can reveal the truth where we hold on to a self-view. I am not saying that you should

learn the whole teachings of Abhidhamma but it's essential to learn to the level that help one to reach the states of enlightenment.

This is not a philosophy of the Buddha or the sangha it's the eternal truth about the world. The Buddha comprehended this truth on his own and disclosed to the world in a way that it could be grasped by everyone.

What I explained today was the Path Leading to Mindfulness which begins with the right view, i.e. with the knowledge that five aggregates are suffering or in other words that things projected with clinging are suffering. When clinging is removed suffering ends. Therefore you need to separate clinging from aggregates and aggregates from clinging, that's the right view.

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