



Christina Garbe Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) – the penetrating mental power to understand life

Mindfulness and clear comprehension - „these two are the helper for practicing all meditation subjects, for all meditators and at all times, because they remove the hindrances and support mental development.”¹

In the Buddha’s teachings, mindfulness (*sati*) is of central importance. It is the most important factor in developing insight. Insight is necessary to achieve liberation from suffering. Being mindful means being fully aware of body and mind, which includes feelings, thoughts, and speech and bodily actions, at every moment.

Mindfulness must be connected with a pure, clear perception of the abundance of phenomena that appear in the moment, without judging them. One can practise this skill by sitting quietly, but also during all activities in body, speech and mind throughout the day in everyday events, whether at work, doing housework, caring for the family, gardening, being with friends, going for a walk and the many other actions and encounters of the day. The exercises during silent sitting and those during the many everyday activities support each other.

The Buddha explained this practice in detail in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta DN 22, the great discourse on the foundations of mindfulness. It is the most important part of the training to reach awakening, the final liberation from suffering, as well as freedom from worry, fear, sorrow and pain in the present moment. So it is a way to reach a goal that goes beyond this world, as well as to improve the quality of life in the present existence. One should therefore make mindfulness a state of mind that shapes one's whole life.

Besides concentration (*sammā samādhi*) as a factor of the noble eightfold path, mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is also a factor of the noble eightfold path. Mindfulness is an important factor to be developed for meditation. Both path factors are also mental factors (*cetasika*).

The factor concentration is called one-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) and occurs in all mind-moments, whether wholesome or unwholesome. However, it can only be developed in wholesome mind-moments, because in unwholesome mind-moments it is always disturbed by its simultaneously appearing opponent, restlessness (*uddhacca*).

¹ Mūla-Tikā (Abhidhamma-Subcommentary), quoted from: Buddhagosa: Kommentar zur Lehrrede von den Grundlagen der Achtsamkeit, übersetzt Nyanaponika, Stambach, 1999, S. 30

The mental factor mindfulness (*sati*) only occurs in wholesome mental processes. Therefore, if one wants to develop and strengthen mindfulness, it is very important to dwell in wholesome states of mind. Later, when one has concentration, one can see these items in one's own heart and learn through them. As long as one does not have this ability, one has to rely on learned knowledge. So, if one wants to develop mindfulness, one must first learn what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.

The Buddhist mindfulness practice described below is a special kind of mindfulness (*sati*), which is to be seen in connection with the right view taught by the Buddha. This practice serves not only a symptomatic treatment of difficulties in body and mind, but a fundamental solution of existential problems. This mindfulness practice was developed by Buddha Gotama about 2500 years ago with the aim of finally overcoming suffering. For this, a complete transcendence, a gapless understanding, of our existence is necessary.

Today there are many trainings or therapies that work with mindfulness. This is not necessarily the same training as we find in Buddhist mental development.

Mindfulness helps to understand our existence as a body-mind structure. Practised regularly, life becomes more peaceful and harmonious.

Right mindfulness is a mental power through which one can see the things that make up our lives as they really are.

Mindfulness (*sammā sati*) deals with what we really experience in life. It is nothing exotic or ritualistic. It is simply looking at our own experiences. It is also not a path that leads to mystical experiences, because the Buddhist path of liberation is about understanding what is actually happening in our lives. Mindfulness is an important tool for this. It is not an escape from life.

Part of mindfulness practice is clear selfestimation. One should clearly recognise and accept one's possibilities and circumstances and see where one is on the Buddhist path of insight.

One should not be frustrated if, as a lay practitioner, one does not reach the goal of the teaching in a retreat of one or more weeks. There are people who devote their entire lives to practice in a monastic context. The Buddha also recommended a monastic, non-distracted life for the attainment of his teaching.

In order to find appropriate intensive practice conditions in the future, it is important to practise mindfulness in the here and now as often as possible. It is also important to receive Buddhist practice kindly in the mind when one hears about it. Even if one does not have the inner and outer conditions for intensive practice now, this is very important in order to find favourable conditions in the future. The mind eventually strives to a place where mindfulness is taught because of the wholesome acceptance of this practice.

An essential practice of mindfulness in everyday life is to recognise the obstacles. One must first accept them and then overcome them step by step. To overcome them, one sometimes has to change one's outer life.

Just by hearing about liberation from suffering, one cannot overcome suffering. It is a path that requires many small and large steps. With right mindfulness it is blissful on all levels.

Wisdom increasingly arises through mindfulness. Wisdom can express itself in thought, speech and action. Through wisdom, we understand the things that make up our lives deeply and clearly. With wisdom, we do not mix what we are experiencing in the moment with past experiences when it is not necessary. As a result, we have fewer difficulties in our lives. We live more in the moment, not imagining the world as we would like it to be, but accepting it as it appears at the moment. As a result, we are less disappointed. When decisions and changes are needed in our lives, we can make them based on mindful enquiry into reality. We do not then make decisions out of an unclear state of mind full of unrealistic desires.

Through mindfulness one learns to direct ones mind. One is not so easily delivered to any moods. One learns to be able to decide what one wants to think and observe. This helps to avoid

unpleasant states of mind, such as anxiety, depression or anger.

It is important to practise correctly. Correct practice has to be learned. This learning takes time. And inwardly we have to have patience and perseverance.

If one does not practise correctly and is not guided correctly, one does not dwell in wholesome states of mind and therefore cannot expect the pleasant results of wholesome states of mind. If one does not practise correctly, a dull state of mind arises from moments of awareness accompanied by ignorance (*moha*), with which neither the sign (*nimitta*) can arise in *samatha* meditation, nor can clarity of mind arise during *vipassanā* meditation. One then seeks joy in the mental processes rooted in craving and plans the next trip or meal at home etc. during the meditation sessions. Many people then become lax with the practice, sitting meditation becomes a kind of just sitting, or one gives up the practice at all.

Our thinking and the resulting actions work habitually. If we have thought carelessly and unwholesomely for many years, it takes time to change these habits. Unwholesome is not meant here in the rough sense of ethical transgressions. The Buddha found out in a very differentiated way which consciousness leads to pleasant results and which to unpleasant ones. Any craving, any aversion and any deluded view lead to unpleasant experiences, which means that such thinking is not good for us and we should change it.

As we are often very busy with external things in our daily lives, it is not always easy to change the way we think and see things in an everyday context. Therefore, times of intensive practice, times when there are few external distractions, are necessary to change the habits of our thinking. We call these times retreat. If you work on changing your perception and thinking regularly, several times a year, in such intensive practice times, your whole inner life changes very much for the better. Positive means that one can live more contentedly and clearly. The right mindfulness then becomes more and more a habit in everyday life. It replaces the deluded thinking more and more according to the duration of the practice times.

When we practise mindfulness, we are honest and sincere with ourselves through this mindfulness. We do not delude ourselves, but look closely at what is happening in our body and mind. This way we know exactly what is happening inside us and diffuse fears and other emotions cannot come up anymore.

Such a state of mind gives rise to completely different decisions in our everyday life than when we have to protect ourselves from harm out of diffuse fear and thus seek a security in things and people that cannot offer this security at all. We find security in ourselves, no matter what the external conditions are.

Through right mindfulness, which brings about a decomposition of our mind, our body and also our brain change. This makes our body healthier and better functioning.

In the Buddhist sense, one practices mindfulness to overcome mental defilements. Mental defilements always lead to suffering, to difficulties and problems within ourselves and also with others. The aim of the whole Buddhist path is to overcome suffering. Such a goal is a wholesome goal.

It is important to be realistic with oneself in the practice. Mindfulness is also necessary for this. It is a path of tireless practice. And when you have practised enough, you can reach the goal. It comes then naturally. Just because you have a goal, you should not think that you have to reach it in the next retreat. If you don't achieve it, all this teaching is useless and you stop practising. This inner work with the goal of completely overcoming suffering can also extend over several lifetimes until one has reached the final goal.

If one practices correctly, which means being continuously mindful, observing what happens in body and mind, one does not give up so quickly, because even small steps already show positive effects. Worldly competitive thinking is not applicable to this practice. Real mindfulness excludes competition and rivalry, as we so often find in the worldly when people want to achieve something. Right mindfulness, combined with honesty and sincerity with oneself, leads to connectedness and acceptance among beings.

The more mindfulness is developed, the more one can observe unpleasant experiences, as well as pleasant experiences, with equanimity. Desire for the pleasant experiences and aversion to the unpleasant experiences diminish more and more. This creates a balanced, stable state of mind, independent of the concrete experiences. Through the ever-increasing mindfulness, one sees how quickly the phenomena and experiences that make up our lives change. Thus impermanence and selflessness become clearer and clearer, and we see realities in our lives. When one perceives realities clearly without rejecting them, happiness arises in the mind. Perceiving the truth can bring about long-lasting happiness and joy. In contrast, an unrealistic view of reality makes one very unhappy and restless. It leads to worry and sorrow or struggle against reality.

This practice can be done in any posture, at any time and in any place, be it at home, in the company of people, at work, on the street, on public transportation, in all leisure activities and in meditation retreat. It takes practice to integrate it step by step more and more into life. It is the way to become free from attachment, which in turn is the cause of all difficulties and problems, as well as suffering in the ultimate sense.

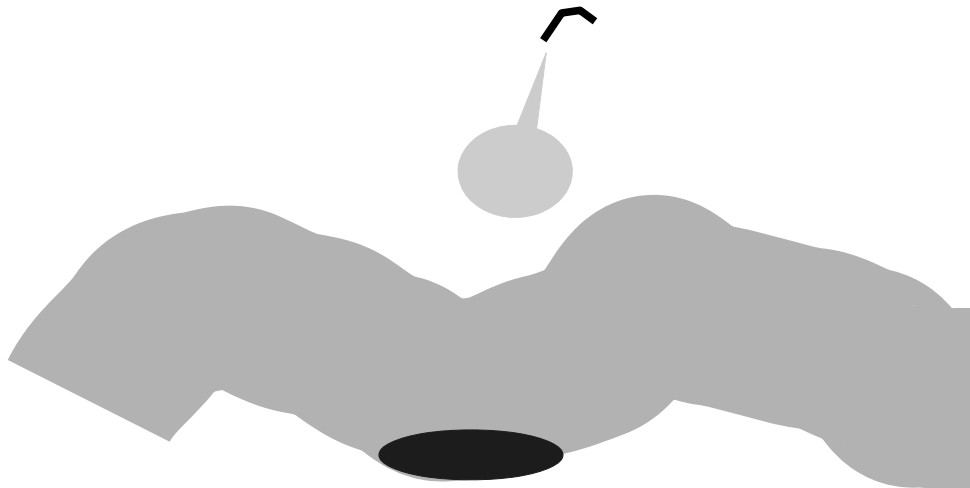
Some people think they have no time for this practice. One should then ask oneself what is the cause of being so busy that does not allow to be mindful and aware of what is happening in everyday life. If one is very attached to the things of life, there is no space in the mind for mindful enquiry.

Attachment has been cultivated by beings since beginningless times, for a very long time. Attachment arises because of repeated craving. Attachment refers to the external objects as well as attachment to a person who experiences these objects. Through this attachment, one is unable to see clearly the suffering in the objects with which one continuously seeks pleasure. Attachment leads to ever new sorrowful experiences. One can only overcome this attachment by examining, clearly recognising and understanding the objects to which one is attached. This requires mental energy and mindfulness. Attachment to a person also dissolves through the gradual and liberating recognition of the non-existence of an ego. The mental means for this is continuous mindfulness.

A motivation that seeks ego-related benefits in such a practice prevents the development of the factor of mindfulness, for such a motivation is associated with a wrong view. Only the motivation that wants to overcome suffering allows the mental quality of penetrating awareness of phenomena to arise.

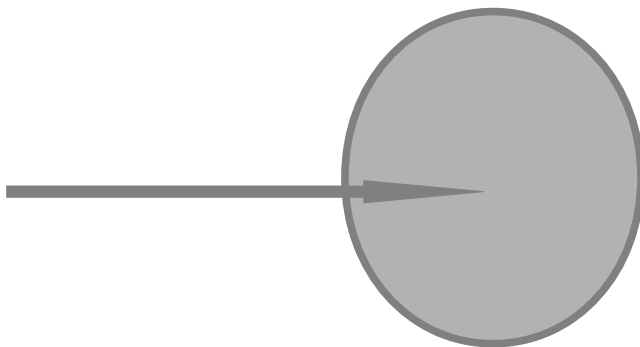
The Pāḷi word *sati* is the nounisation of the verb *sarati*, which means to remember. In the English translation, the use of the word mindfulness has become common. One could also use full awareness, attention, presence of mind, bare observation. In the Buddhist sense is mindfulness a specific quality of mind.

It is difficult to express the meaning of the comprehensive word *sati* in any other language. The English word 'mindfulness' expresses an essential aspect of this mental factor, because the mind is completely absorbed in the object. *Sati* is more than ordinary mindfulness. It is a special mindfulness that fixes on the object, does not digress or drift away. In the commentaries, *sati* is compared to a stone thrown into water. The stone does not remain on the surface but sinks to the bottom. The opposite of how mindfulness should not be, is described as a hollowed-out pumpkin, it is light and floats on the surface.



Mindfulness does not remain superficial,
it goes into the depths
and sinks to the bottom.

One could compare mindfulness in a wholesome mind-moment with an arrow that hits the target and penetrates it. If the arrow would have awareness, it would know exactly the nature and characteristics of the target. This is how mindfulness works. It penetrates the object and on the one hand knows the nature of the object, on the other hand it supports the other accompanying mental factors in the exact examination of the object.



Mindfulness penetrates the object in order to understand it.

The derivation of the word *sati* from the word remember can be understood here as remembering the object of meditation. In *samatha* meditation it is a conceptual object, in *vipassanā* meditation the object is a physical or a mental one. In *samatha* meditation, the connection with remembering is easy to understand, because the image taken, *nimitta*, must be constantly remembered. This task is fulfilled by the mental factor *sati*. In general mindfulness as preparation for *vipassanā* meditation, remembering takes place insofar as the object of meditation must be understood quickly and deeply. This deep understanding requires repeated practice, and through repeated practice a kind of remembering takes place when the object is encountered again. A connection is made between previous experiences. Thus insight goes beyond mere perception (*saññā*) and simple attention (*manasikāra*). In this way, progress can be made on the path of insight.

Remembering can also be understood in terms of remembering wholesome views. Unwholesome views are deeply embedded in the stream of consciousness of unenlightened beings. It takes energy and remembrance to break these habitual patterns in order to give priority to the wholesome.

Mindfulness requires right view so that unwholesome states of mind with unpleasant results do not follow sense impressions. One has to learn this right or favourable view. And then it is mindfulness not to react habitually with aversion or desire, but to see things as they really are. A smell, for example, is just a smell. If one can register it so simply as a sense object, without developing aversion to an unpleasant object and desire for a pleasant object, wholesome awareness conducive to meditation arises. It is the same with sounds, sights, bodily sensations. Bodily sensations can be unpleasant, as in pain, or they can be pleasant, as in a massage or bath or swim.

Even with pleasant or unpleasant words, one should apply mindfulness in the same way.

All impressions at the sense doors have arisen conditionally. Unpleasant ones have arisen through unwholesome actions in body, speech and mind. Pleasant ones have arisen through wholesome actions in body, speech and mind. If we want to avoid unpleasant sense impressions in the future and attain awakening or liberation, we must respond with mindfulness to all impressions on body and mind. Desire on the one hand and aversion on the other are to be avoided, because both attitudes bring forth new unpleasant impressions in the future.

Perception and attention are mental factors that occur in all mind-moments, while mindfulness, *sati*, occurs only in wholesome mind-moments, and here in all of them. Perception and attention in unwholesome mind-moments can never penetrate into the depth of the objects. They are always disturbed by the simultaneously present restlessness to reach their object purposefully. One could compare it to an arrow that falls down in front of the target. If the arrow had consciousness, it would have seen the target, but could not penetrate into the depth and thus could not grasp the true nature of the target.

Another disturbing factor in unwholesome mind-moments is delusion or ignorance (*moha*). It obstructs vision in such a way that objects appear as if viewed through a cloudy pane of frosted glass. It can happen, for example, that one can actually see the sign (*nimitta*) clearly in *samatha* meditation. During a break, the mind becomes entangled in unwholesome thoughts instead of mindfully observing other objects. When one then continues with meditation, the *nimitta* appears veiled, if one can see it at all. The same can happen with *vipassanā* meditation. One may have already reached the stage of seeing the dissolution of all appearances and can perceive this clearly for a long time. But then, during a break, unwholesome thoughts arise. Through unwholesome thoughts one falls back to lower levels of insight and unclear vision and must also endure the unpleasant results of unwholesome mental states. These may consist of pain and other unpleasant bodily sensations or mental restlessness.

Mindfulness in the wholesome mental processes is supported in its function by other simultaneously present wholesome mental factors. The mental factor tranquility (*passadhi*), enables undisturbed grasping of the object, the mental factor proficiency (*pāguññatā*) enables skilful grasping of the object, the mental factor uprightness (*ujukatā*) enables honesty with oneself. Mindfulness constitutes the presentness of the mind, the constant remembrance of the object to be observed, the directing of the mind to the object of observation, the non-distraction of the mind. *Sati* is fixed on the object and should not digress, should not waver. The mind should plunge into the object.

The function of *sati* is the absence of confusion or forgetfulness.

Sati manifests itself as the confrontation of the mind with the object, the mind should meet the object face to face, that is, approach the object in such a way that thoughts cannot interfere. When you talk to someone, it is also easier if you stand or sit directly opposite the person and can see the face than if the person stands at a certain distance and other people keep stepping in. Then you can't pick up every word of what is being said. Misunderstandings can occur. It is the same with mindfulness. If the awareness is not kept close and continuous to the object, other thoughts

can keep interfering and one cannot clearly understand the nature of the phenomena.

If one does not stay close to the object of observation, and thoughts keep intervening, one only sees conceptual appearances of the objects. For example, one observes: 'I bend my arm', 'I eat an apple', 'I take a shower', 'I go to the toilet', and so on. But if the consciousness is continuously and closely anchored to the object, one sees more and more the indivisible, ultimate realities of which the compact appearances such as 'I', 'apple', 'arm' etc. consist. And only the vision of these ultimate realities leads to liberating wisdom.

Mindfulness should be developed as if one were looking at something with the eyes and wishing to see it very clearly and precisely. It should be developed as if one wants to watch a theatre performance on a stage in a public place. If you stand very far away, there are always people walking along in front of the stage and you cannot follow the performance from moment to moment. You can only make out fragments. But if you stand directly in front of the stage, very close to the action, you can follow what is happening on stage without interruption. You understand the story that is being conveyed. That is how mindfulness should be. You have to approach the object. No other thoughts should come in between. Then the mindfulness stabilises in such a way that it stays with the object for an increasingly long time.

Sati also manifests as protection of the mind, protection towards defilements (*kilesā*). The direct cause of *sati* is strong perception or continuous perception. Perception must be greatly strengthened in order to understand objects deeply. With superficial, wandering perception, mindfulness cannot penetrate the object of observation. Perception should be like looking for a needle on a grey carpet. One has to look very closely and intently to find the needle.

One moment of mindfulness brings forth the next. Mindfulness becomes both deeper and deeper, and gapless through continued practice. As a result, one sees things more clearly. One understands the nature of things more and more. When one learns a language, one can first say and understand single words. But the meaning can still be misunderstood. With continued practice, one can speak and understand complete sentences. The listener already understands some of what you want to communicate. When one can speak fluently, the listener understands exactly what one wants to say, and one understands completely and quickly what another person is saying. It is the same with *sati*. At the beginning of the exercise, the understanding of the objects is fragmentary. One only perceives phenomena partially. With continued practice, one understands the nature of phenomena more and more until finally, when awareness is complete, one attains wisdom and fully realises the nature of phenomena. To understand the true nature, there should be no gap between one moment of awareness and the next. Gaps would be filled with thinking, reflecting, analysing or comparing. However, pure awareness is necessary for insight knowledge. And only directly experienced insight knowledge leads to liberation from suffering. It is like a ball game, if the player thinks about how best to catch the ball, he is most likely to miss it.

Sati should appear continuously and simultaneously and as closely to the object as possible. The Buddha also compares the way mindfulness should be practised to someone who, as it was common in earlier times, wanted to create a fire with two sticks by rubbing. Only through uninterrupted rubbing, without interruption, could the fire ignite. It is the same with the fire of wisdom, which can only ignite with uninterrupted mindfulness. Or another example: When a hen hatches eggs, she must not leave the eggs for long or frequently, otherwise they would cool down and no fruit, no chicks, would hatch. So it is with *sati*, if mindfulness is interrupted by wandering mind, one cannot reap the fruits of meditation.

It is important to dwell on the object with the consciousness at the same time as the object appears. If one thinks about the appearances afterwards, one thinks in conceptual terms. But if one observes in the present moment, one understands through direct seeing how the objects actually are. Only through this direct seeing can one become free from suffering. There should be no gap in observation, no break between one moment of mindfulness and the next. One should remain continuously in direct seeing. The presence of the mind should be directed towards the object of observation for a long time without interruption in order to attain deeper understanding. In this way, one can observe an object or process from the beginning through the middle to the end. If

there are gaps in between, the obstacles such as desire, aversion and delusion can enter the mind and weaken mindfulness.

How should mindfulness be developed?

- continuously, from moment to moment
- simultaneously, in the present moment
- close to the object

In order to let arise this mental factor *sati*, mindfulness, it is very important that wholesome mental processes arise. A somehow directed attention, without knowledge of what is wholesome and what is unwholesome, may perhaps lead to the improvement of the individual life situation, but does not correspond to what the Buddha taught out of great compassion for the liberation of beings from suffering. The Buddha gave many discourses to correct the view of his disciples. We find valuable material in these even today. When we see appearances as concepts, unwholesome consciousness arises, rooted in delusion (*moha*). Concepts are, for example, to perceive the mental or physical phenomena in terms of man, woman, daughter, son, and so on.

The Buddha taught in groups as in the five groups of existence, which are
Materiality,
feeling,
perception,
formations (with intention) and
consciousness;

or in groups as in the twelve bases, which are six inner ones:
Eye base,
ear base,
nose base,
tongue base,
body base,
mind base.

Six corresponding external ones belong to it:
Visual object (colour and form),
sound,
smell,
taste,
tangible object,
mind object.

Other groups are the elements or the faculties. If one practices according to this analysis of our person in the form of these groups, one sees more and more clearly how things really are.

The Buddha also taught the conditional arising of all phenomena. In such contemplations one sees ultimate realities (*paramattha*). When one sees appearances as ultimate realities, wholesome awareness arises because one sees the true nature of appearances. The Buddha did not teach like this by chance, but because he could see these things with his strong concentration and wanted to help beings with his knowledge and compassion.

When one meditates, it is very important to understand the difference between concepts and

ultimate realities. This distinction is fundamental to the Buddhist path of insight that leads to overcoming suffering in any form.

Concepts are composite things or beings that are given a name according to their appearance, function or relationship to other concepts. Concepts are created by the mind through thinking. They consist of ultimate realities. Concepts correspond to the arrangements among beings and have subjective meaning. In the ultimate sense, these things do not exist.

Ultimate realities can be perceived directly without thinking about them or giving them a name. They exist behind conceptual thinking, fantasies, imaginings and proliferating perceptions.

For *sammā sati*, right mindfulness, within the framework of the noble eightfold path, it is important to see things in their real appearance without adding anything to them. Only in this way right mindfulness can lead to insight (*vipassanā*) and the resulting liberation from suffering. Only in this way can *sati* and *vipassanā* lead to the four paths of awakening. Here lies a serious difference between Buddhist mindfulness and modern mindfulness trainings that pursue only worldly goals.

We find many instructions on this in the Sutta Pitaka.

in this context the Buddha said in MN 1:

*"Here, bhikkhus, an untaught ordinary person,
who has no regard for noble ones and
is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma,
who has no regard for true men and
is unskilled and undisciplined in their Dhamma,
perceives earth as earth.*

*Having perceived earth as earth,
he conceives [himself as] earth,
he conceives [himself] in earth,
he conceives [himself apart] from earth,
he conceives earth to be 'mine',
he delights in earth.*

Why is that?

Because he has not fully understood it, I say."

In the same way the Buddha spoke in this sutta about the other three elements, water, fire, air, about beings, deities, Pajapati, Brahmā, beings of the Brahmā world, about the four immaterial realms, about what is seen, heard, felt, known, unity, diversity, all and also about *Nibbāna*.

About a disciple, someone who has already attained one of the paths but not yet the last, Arahatsip, he said:

*"Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is in higher training,
whose mind has not yet reached the goal,
and who is still aspiring to the supreme security from bondage,
directly knows earth as earth.*

*Having directly known earth as earth,
he should not conceive [himself as] earth,
he should not conceive [himself] in earth,
he should not conceive [himself apart] from earth,
he should not conceive earth to be 'mine'
he should not delight in earth.*

Why is that? So that he may fully understand it, I say."

About an Arahats he said:

*"Bhikkhus, a bhikkhu who is an arahant with influxes destroyed,
who has lived the holy life,
done what had to be done,
laid down the burden, reached the true goal,
destroyed the fetters of being,*

*and is completely liberated through final knowledge,
directly knows earth as earth.*

*Having directly known earth as earth,
he does not conceive [himself as] earth,
he does not conceive [himself] in earth,
he does not conceive [himself apart] from earth,
he does not conceive earth to be 'mine',
he does not delight in earth.*

Why is that?

Because he has fully understood it, I say."

In order to attain the liberated view of the arahat described here, right mindfulness is the appropriate means. The worldling, on the other hand, takes pleasure in things he perceives because through thought he forms concepts of them and considers them as his own. He does it this way because he is ignorant, because he doesn't know the true nature of things. He produces suffering through his thinking.

Labeling bodily movements, an expression of the wind element, such as 'bending', 'extending', 'rising', 'falling', 'chewing', 'standing', etc. results in an unwholesome (*akusala*) mental process rooted in ignorance (*moha*). This mental process is unwholesome in the sense that it is not conducive or skilful for attaining deeper insight. It is not unwholesome in the sense as consciousness in connection with killing or stealing, for example, is. The wholesome mental factor *sati*, which should develop, is not present. Labeling the perception of the 12 bases, such as eye sensitivity and color as 'seeing, seeing', or the body sensitivity and the tangible object as 'touching, touching', or the taste sensitivity with taste as 'tasting, tasting', also creates an unwholesome, unskilful mental process rooted in ignorance.

In the same way, if one labels the steps 'right, left ...' in walking meditation, an unwholesome mental process occurs. These unwholesome, unskilful mental processes produce unpleasant results according to the law of cause and effect. They are not grossly unwholesome, like anger or greed. However, they miss the goal as an exercise in gaining insight for liberation from suffering. They may be useful in preventing grosser defilements of the mind, such as greed and hatred, but are not the most effective way to strengthen a mental factor that is not present due to the manner of observation.

A distinction must be made here between the use of language in communication and the practice of mental development. In the practice of mental development it is important to see things more and more as they are, that is, as ultimate realities (*paramattha*). This view requires constant practice. You can integrate this more and more into your everyday practice, the formal meditation then becomes much easier.

In order to communicate by language, conventional language is necessary. But it does not correspond to the ultimate reality.

Although in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta the Buddha said:

*"Again, bhikkhus, when walking, a bhikkhu understands:
'I am walking'; when standing, he understands: 'I am standing';
when sitting, he understands: 'I am sitting';
when lying down, he understands: 'I am lying down';
or he understands accordingly however his body is disposed."*

The Buddha only uses this manner of talking in personified verbal expression because he knows that the audience is already pre-educated and understands how to practise this exercise, namely as an analysis of materiality. He also said that the statement 'I am walking' should be understood. Understanding here means knowing exactly which individual factors are involved in the description 'I am walking'. This requires an analysis of the complex process of 'walking'. Mindfulness is the

mental power that is able to do this.

In many other discourses the Buddha said as in SN 22.23. Full Understanding:

"And what, Bhikkhus, are the things that should be fully understood? Form, Bhikkhus, is something that should be fully understood, feeling ... perception ... volitional formations ... consciousness is something that should be fully understood. These are called the things that should be fully understood."

Right mindfulness is an analytical method whereby one observes, recognises and understands even the smallest sections of a course of action according to ultimate realities. Analytical is not meant here in the psychological sense of reflecting on a situation through thinking. Analytical here refers to pure observation. One does not stop at conventional observation and perception, but tries to see the individual parts of a physical-mental event in direct experience. In this way, the ego identification becomes weaker and weaker and leads to the path of realising *anatta*, selflessness. Only in this way is access to *vipassanā* meditation prepared. In *vipassanā* meditation, one then sees the universal characteristics of phenomena. This enables problems to be understood and solved at a fundamental level.

Mindfulness should not only be practised when it is difficult in life. Especially the routine daily processes are a broad field for deeper insights.

If you practise this with simple everyday processes, such as walking, you can also apply this skill to more complex events in everyday life. Our world is becoming more and more complex and therefore often difficult to understand. This exercise of analytical mindfulness is a way of looking at overburdening impressions or tasks in a healing way. This often results in understanding and solutions that one had not suspected before. Tensions and excessive demands can dissolve. This analytical mindfulness is often more satisfying than compensating frustration with sensual pleasures when overwhelmed. People often run after sensual pleasures to displace unresolved problems. In the end, the pressure becomes stronger and stronger as a result.

Boredom, which arises from routine, is also often and gladly interrupted by sensual pleasures. The Buddha calls sensual desires as one of the fetters, i.e. they prevent mental development, they bind to habitual patterns. When mindfulness is practised in the form of direct observation, routine courses of action that may seem boring become interesting again. Many people are dull in their perception because they no longer look at what they are actually doing due to excessive demands and routine. In the beginning, patience and determination are necessary. The more you practise being mindful even in simple situations, the more the satisfying fruits become apparent.

In this way, general mindfulness can be developed in all life situations, in everyday life as well as in retreat.

In summary, everyday practice should serve to dwell in wholesome states of consciousness, skilful for liberation. In these, *samādhi*, concentration, as well as mindfulness, *sati*, are present as mind factors. Through their repeated occurrence, they are strengthened. At the same time, one accumulates wholesome kamma and perfections are perfected, which in turn causes formal meditation to improve.

If one dwells in wholesome states of mind in everyday events, seeing things as they are, one practices the perfection of renunciation, *nekkhamma*, for one withdraws from sense pleasures. Often, such continuous practice gives rise to opportunities for long-term practice in seclusion.

Wholesome is the question: 'What actually is happening here?' When one turns to the phenomena in body and mind with this question and analyses them, interest arises, and interest is associated with joy. This question contains the wholesome desire to understand the things that make up life.

In several discourses the Buddha instructs his disciples in the following way:

*"Bhikkhus, dwell with yourselves as an island,
with yourselves as a refuge,
with no other refuge;
with the Dhamma as a refuge,
with no other refuge."* DN 16

He then explains the four foundations of mindfulness: mindfulness of the body, of the feelings, of the consciousness and of the objects of mind.

Another factor to consider for everyday practice is that only satisfaction with a state motivates one to continue practising and to practise more intensely. However, if one dwells in unwholesome states of mind accompanied by delusion due to wrong view, satisfaction cannot develop at all. The mind then craves short-term satisfaction through sense pleasures, and practice is neglected or abandoned. Conversations are also sensual pleasures for many people, regardless of the other part of the conversation, he or she becomes the object of their desire to distract themselves.

If one practices more and more frequently to react mindfully to the manifold impressions in this way, more and more humility develops. Genuine humility is an expression of contentment, which in turn produces a constant quiet feeling of happiness and inner joy.

Desire for sensory objects, ever more opulent ones, is an expression of a permanent, increasing dissatisfaction. Dissatisfaction is based on aversion. Aversion has unpleasant results. Desire has also unpleasant results in the future, even if at present one can obtain pleasant objects through desire.

Aversion and craving arise from unmindful reactions.

In the beginning, it is difficult to react without aversion and craving. One should not then condemn oneself when such states of mind arise. They are habitual patterns that we have practised since beginningless times. When aversion or craving arises in the mind, it too must become the object of mindfulness. One must first register them as such and then observe them further. What do they cause in body and mind?

Mindfulness is very neutral, it does not judge. It is tolerance towards everything that appears. It is tolerance through simply noticing what is experienced without pushing one away and grasping the other. Being mindful means observing from moment to moment, noticing and thus accepting the object, whether internal or external, as it is. While mindfulness is tolerance of appearances, this does not imply a lack of discernment as to what is wholesome and what is unwholesome.

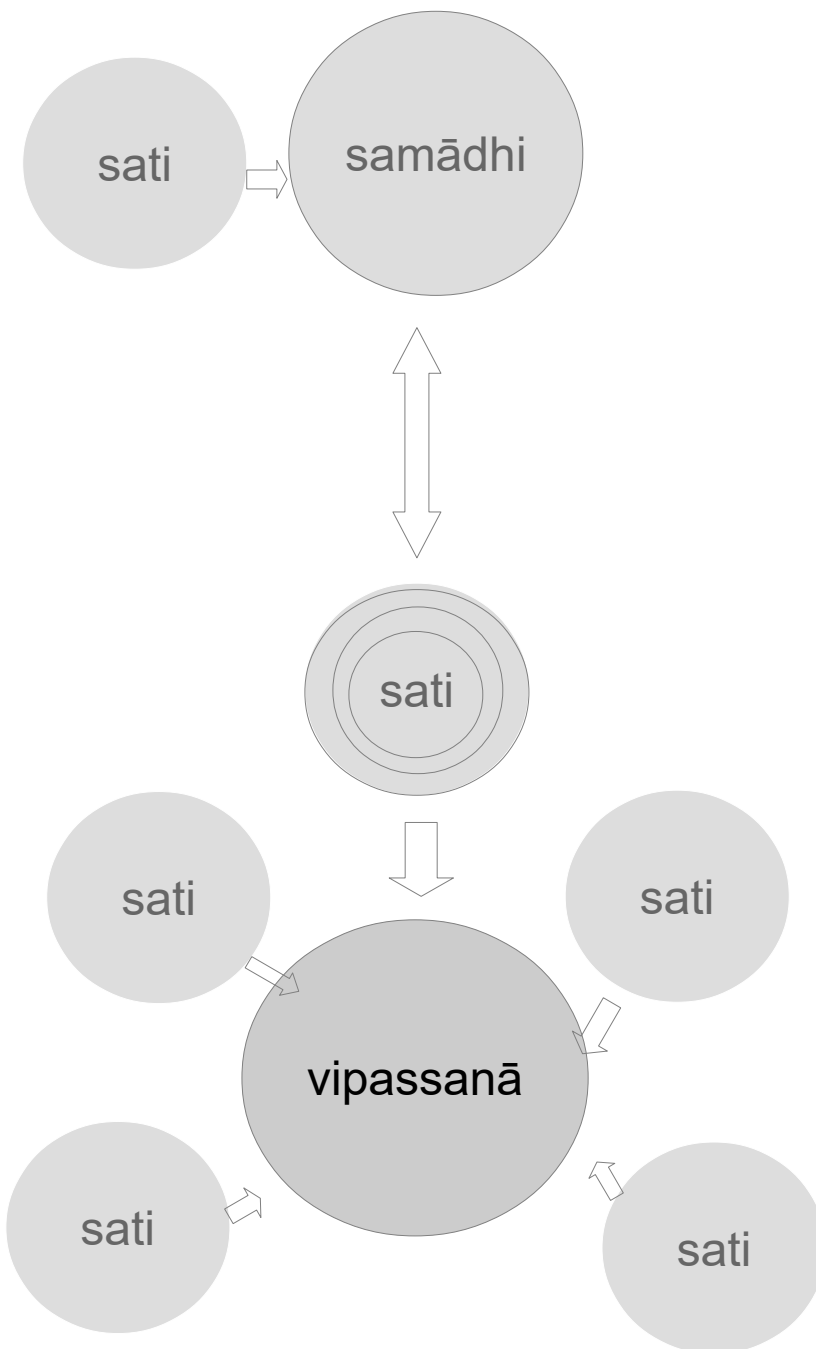
Thus mindfulness is free from judgement, prejudice, preference, expectation. Mindfulness purifies the mind and leads to clear understanding.

Thus mindfulness prepares the ground for wisdom, just as the farmer has to plough the soil for the seed.

Concentration is the prerequisite for developing wisdom.

Mindfulness is also of great importance during the development of concentration. Through constant mindfulness, the development of concentration becomes a harmonious, pleasant process. Deeper states of concentration in *samatha* meditation cannot be achieved without mindfulness, both during formal meditation and during times of daily activities.

Whether one practises *samatha* meditation or *vipassanā* meditation, one always needs good and strong mindfulness.



Right mindfulness (*sammā sati*) is the most important factor to be developed on the Buddhist path of liberation. It has to be refined more and more in order to see things as they are, to overcome all kinds of concepts and proliferated perceptions. No one can omit the development of this important and also special factor. No matter how much one desires liberation and recognises *dukkha*, unsatisfactory things, without analytical mindfulness in all parts of life without exception, liberation cannot be attained. Right mindfulness in its neutral, non-judgmental way is the mental quality the Buddha found that overcomes all kinds of attachments. This overcoming has in no way anything to do with aversion to the existing and desire for something better. Aversion to unpleasantness and

desire for something better is the ordinary way of dealing with difficulties in life. This approach, based on deluded vision, inevitably leads to ever new problems and difficulties. They are only brief moments of experiencing new circumstances, created by desire, which pretend to be a liberation from suffering for a moment.

Mindfulness, on the other hand, is the mental potential that is to be developed in order to overcome all attachment in a wholesome way through profound understanding. On this path, nothing useless is discarded and something new is longed for, but in the seeing through of all phenomena based on mindfulness lies liberation and the ultimate attainment of the goal of freedom from suffering, called Nibbāna. This goal can only be achieved through untiring mindfulness, which does not miss even the smallest spark of experience.

Mindfulness is supported by other mental qualities such as concentration, impartiality, flexibility, stillness, lightness, confidence. These are mental factors that occur in wholesome consciousness. All wholesome actions and thoughts are therefore supportive for mindfulness. A hard, rigid mind is not able to develop the special quality called mindfulness that is used to understand life deeply. The mind that wants to understand life through mindfulness must be quick. Only a light, flexible mind can quickly grasp, observe and examine objects. A heavy, stuck mind cannot directly grasp the so fleeting phenomena of our life, therefore cannot directly observe them as they really are, but remains with opinions, prejudices and conceptual perceptions.

Developing this kind of silent presence of mind takes longer practice. If practised again and again, mindfulness becomes fluid and a natural, very pleasant companion that makes life easier. In order to overcome fixed, rigid thinking, energy (*virīya*) is needed at the beginning, a mental factor that also includes the aspect of courage. Courage is necessary to separate oneself inwardly from long-trained views and to open oneself to the direct experience of the present moment.

Mindfulness is

- **neutral**
- **not judging**
- **tolerance towards the objects**
- **without pushing away**
- **without grasping**
- **acceptance**
- **without evaluation, prejudice,
preference, expectation**

It is important, to practise correctly, this completely changes the state of mind.

If one thinks, 'I want to become like this or like that', better, more perfect, etc., so that 'I' become this or that, a super-woman or super-man, this is an approach based on unwholesome consciousness. This view is rooted in desire with the view of an 'I', accompanied either by wrong view (*diṭṭhi*) or pride and arrogance (*māna*). If one wants to exchange one behaviour for another with mindfulness so that one will have this or that advantage, it is also an unskillful intention. The simple state of being, based on confidence in continuous practice, is important to bring about wholesomeness.

For this everyday practice, both as an exercise in concentration and as well an exercise in clear understanding, some practical instructions are given below.

AN 4. 41 Concentration

"And what is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension?"

Here, a bhikkhu knows feelings as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear; he knows perceptions as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear; he knows thoughts as they arise, as they remain present, as they disappear.

This is the development of concentration that leads to mindfulness and clear comprehension."

Advantages of mindfulness practice:

- The stronger the mindfulness, the more ego-centredness recedes into the background. Mindful presence brings relief because the ego no longer criticises, demands, suffers. The ego is ultimately only a habitual way of reacting, it does not exist as such.
 - Through continuous mindfulness, inappropriate reaction patterns fade into the background.
 - Our thinking, if necessary, gets more structure and clarity. Confusion is dissolved, especially also by recognising the obstacles in meditation. Noting and labelling can support this disentanglement.
 - Mindfulness and the clear recognition and differentiation of objects, thoughts, body sensations and feelings are necessary preparation for *vipassanā* meditation.
 - Through right mindfulness, one comes back to a natural state of mind, to the ground of facts. Today, in a complicated society, this is more necessary than ever. Because of the way we communicate, the constant preoccupation with external things and the abundance of information, most people forget what is essential in life and lose the ground under their feet. Here, mindfulness is a self-help in an externally confused world to collect oneself, to see clearly and to make appropriate decisions for oneself.
 - This creates a natural modesty or humbleness that does not have to reject or reject the abundance of entertainment, but through inner satiation does not need it.
 - The more one practices mindfulness in everyday life, the less difficult it is to access meditation. The mind is more and more able to focus objects. It is then easier to enter into concentration, and through collectedness, in turn, mindfulness gains more depth. So deeper and deeper understanding can arise through these two complementary qualities.
 - Mindfulness is on the one hand passive observation of what is happening, but on the other hand it gives rise to knowledge and understanding. This knowledge from direct experience is a valuable potential for a well directed, useful ability to act.
 - Likewise, this exercise, if practised continuously, strengthens the readiness to react. This is an essential factor for *vipassanā* meditation.
 - Through passive observation, the mind first stops and does not immediately react with habitual patterns. This allows unfavourable patterns of behaviour and opinions to be looked at, and new perhaps more skilful ways of behaving and thinking to develop.
 - Pure observation leads to understanding and inner security, so that often obsessive and suffering-causing attachments can be transformed.
 - Very quick, unreflected reactions often produce new unpleasant experiences. Through mindfulness and the associated stopping, reactions change.
- Nibbāna is the ultimate pause, ultimate peace. It is the only goal of the Buddha's teachings.
- Through continuous mindfulness, the mind becomes calm, peaceful and undemanding.

Objects of mindfulness:

As it has already been described, right mindfulness does not arise from looking at what is happening in a conceptual way. Mindfulness is an analysis of complex perceptions and emotions, such as 'I feel good here', 'I am angry', 'I am so depressed', 'I feel hurt'. Analysis is necessary for right, satisfying mindfulness to arise.

First, in complex perceptions, one should find out exactly what is physically obvious, and what is mentally obvious. Body and mind are two essential areas of our existence. They are different and have different functions, so this distinction between body and mind is already an important first step in understanding life.

The Buddha often speaks of the six sense bases in the teachings. He further breaks down body and mind through this division.

These six sense bases include:

- the eye base, which includes the ability to see,
- the ear base, which includes the ability to hear,
- the nose base, which includes the ability to smell,
- the tongue base, which includes the ability to taste,
- the body base, which includes the ability to touch,
- the mind base, which includes all kinds of consciousness.

These six are called the internal bases.

Accordingly, there are 6 external bases which are the objects for these internal bases. These are:

- Colour/ form,
- sound,
- smell,
- taste,
- tangible objects,
- mental objects, which can be:

Consciousness itself, the mental factors, materiality, Nibbāna and the variety of concepts.

Consciousness can recognise manifold objects, consequently it can recognise itself, as well as the mental factors by which it is accompanied, the above-mentioned bases, internal and external, all other physical things, Nibbāna and the many concepts, such as car, woman, man, house, dress, child and so on.

It is within these realms that our entire existence takes place. There are physical phenomena in them as well as mental ones. These six realms and their corresponding objects encompass everything we are engaged in: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, recognising and thinking. These activities are always accompanied by feeling, perception, intention, attention and other factors.

The sixth bases, the mind base, is not physical. It is mental in nature and encompasses all modes of consciousness.

The other five bases are physical in nature. They are the sensitivities of the mentioned parts of the body, such as eye sensitivity, ear sensitivity, nose sensitivity, tongue sensitivity, body sensitivity. These sensitivities enable us to make contact with the external world. That is why they have a special place in the analysis of existence. The external objects strike them because they are particularly sensitive to the object corresponding to them. When an object meets these sensitivities, consciousness arises which recognises the object.

Contact (*phassa*), which is of a spiritual nature and accompanies all kinds of consciousness, arises from the meeting of the corresponding sensitivity, the object and the consciousness. Contact (*phassa*) has as its characteristic the mental touching of the object.

One can classify consciousness according to the sense bases. Thus there is

- eye consciousness,
- ear consciousness,
- nose consciousness,

- tongue consciousness,
- body consciousness and
- mind consciousness.

The eye consciousness can only recognise colours and forms, it cannot smell or taste. Similarly, the ear consciousness can only recognise sounds, it cannot see. The nose consciousness can only recognise smells. The tongue consciousness can only recognise the different tastes. These bases with their special consciousness exist only in a certain, small place in the body. But the body base with its corresponding body consciousness is distributed over the whole body, even at the places where another base occurs. Thus, on the tongue, besides the perception of taste, there is also perception of hardness, roughness, etc., based on the body consciousness.

The respective consciousness arises due to two conditions: There must be an inner base, such as eye sensitivity, and an outer base, such as colour, for consciousness to arise. Without an object impinging on the corresponding sensitivity, no consciousness arises.

Consciousness has only the function in our mind of recognizing an object. It is always accompanied by corresponding mental factors, which fulfill the other functions in cognition.

There are 52 mental factors. However, one cannot directly recognise all of them at the beginning of the practice due to a lack of deeper concentration.

Mental factors that can be perceived with mindfulness at the beginning, when concentration is not yet so strong, are:

- Contact (*phassa*), this is mental contact. This is the meeting of the object with the sense base and the consciousness that then arises,
- Feeling (*vedanā*), this can be
 - pleasant,
 - unpleasant or
 - neutral,
- perception (*saññā*),
- intention, will (*cetanā*) or motivation,
- single-pointedness (*ekaggatā*) or concentration,
- attention (*manasikāra*),
- initial application to the object (*vitakka*),
- sustained application to the object (*vicāra*),
- determination (*adhimokkha*)
- energy (*virīya*)
- joy (*pīti*)
- wish (*chanda*).

These mental factors can accompany wholesome, unwholesome and functional consciousness.

Then there are unwholesome mental factors, which include:

- delusion (*moha*)
- shamelessness (*ahirika*)
- lack of moral fear (*anottappa*)
- restlessness (*uddhacca*)

These four mental factors accompany all kinds of unwholesome consciousness, whether it is associated with craving or aversion.

Mental factors that accompany consciousness with craving (*lobha*):

- craving (*lobha*)
- wrong view (*ditṭhi*)
- conceit (arrogance, inferiority, equality of a person (*māna*)),

Mental factors accompanying consciousness with aversion (*dosa*):

- Aversion (*dosa*)
- Envy and jealousy (*issa*)
- Avarice (*macchariya*)
- Remorse (*kukkucca*).

Mental factors in prompted unwholesome consciousness

- sloth (*thīna*)
- torpor (*middha*).

Prompted consciousness is consciousness that arises when we do not spontaneously do something of our own volition, but someone else prompts us, persuades us, or we join in because others are doing something, or when we hesitate.

Mental factors in consciousness accompanied by delusion (*moha*)

- doubt (*vicikicchā*).

The wholesome mental factors include:

- confidence (*saddhā*)
- mindfulness (*satī*)
- shame/respect towards oneself (*hiri*)
- moral fear/respect towards other beings (*ottappa*)
- non-craving (*alobha*)
- non-aversion (*adosa*)
- equanimity (*tatramajjhatatā*, lit. there in the middle)
- tranquility (*passaddhi*)
- lightness (*lahutā*)
- softness (*mudutā*)
- wieldiness (*kammaññatā*)
- proficiency (*pāguññatā*)
- uprightness (*ujukatā*)

These mental factors appear always in wholesome consciousness.

The following mental factors appear only occasionally:

- non-delusion/wisdom (*amoha*)

- compassion (*karunā*)
- sympathetic joy (*muditā*)

- right speech
- right action
- right livelihood.

The body can also be broken down into its individual components. With mindfulness, when concentration is not yet so developed, one can perceive the above-mentioned inner and outer bodily sense bases.

In addition, one can perceive the characteristics of the 4 elements. These include:

Earth element: hardness - softness,
 heaviness - lightness,
 smoothness - roughness.

Water element: flowing - cohesion,

Fire element: heat - cold,

Air element: movement - support.

Other physical phenomena that can be perceived on this grosser level:

- lightness
- malleability,
- wieldiness,
- vocal intimation,
- bodily intimation,
- femininity,
- masculinity.

According to these factors, complex events should be broken down in order to strengthen mindfulness. One can start by differentiating between the physical and the mental part of an event. Then one can break down both areas in a more differentiated way.

Buddhist mindfulness practice (*sati*) is concerned with getting to know these areas very precisely. It is an important part of the path taught by the Buddha to become internally free from difficulties, problems, fears, guilt, frustrations, anger, depression, greed, addiction, etc., in summary, desire, aversion and delusion.

If we continually examine our existence within these realms, we understand more and more the nature of all phenomena. We learn to see things as they really are.

Mindfulness should be a fundamental attitude that determines life.