

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS IN BUDDHISM

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## **Abstract**

The topic of this article is “**Mental Health Awareness in Buddhism**” It was discussed about Mental Health on Buddhism. Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential. It can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and fruitfully, and be able to make a contribution to her or his community. First, the Buddha taught, the monks should not follow two extremes ways; 1. The Extreme of sensual indulgence and 2 The Extreme of self-mortification. The monks should go on the Middle Way; The Noble Eight Fold Path consisting of 1. Right Understanding 2/ Right Thought 3. Right Speech 4. Right Action 5. Right Livelihood 6. Right Effort 7. Right Mindfulness 8. Right Concentration. The Buddha preached the Four Noble Truths: 1.Dukkha: (Suffering) the reality of affliction and impermanence. Birth, old age, disease and death etc. 2. Samudaya ( cause of suffering) Arising (reaction) & Attachment (distraction) Sensory Attachment Becoming (self-formation) Non-Becoming (self-destruction) 3. Nirodha ( cessation of suffering) Containment, stopping, unhooking 4. Magga ( paths leading to the cessation of suffering) Path and Bhāvanā ( Development) 1.Kaya-bhavana:physical development) 2.Sala-bhavana:moral development 3.Citta-bhavana:emotional development and Paan-bhavana : wisdom development and The four foundations of mindfulness have a single essence mindful contemplation of natural phenomena. They are differentiated insofar as this mindful contemplation is applied to four objects : 1.the body (kaya); 2.The feelings (vedana); 3.States of consciousness (citta); and 4.mental objects(dhamma). This is the Dharma for practice and Develop Mental Health.

**Keywords:** Mental Health; Buddhism; Dharma for Practice

## Introduction

Evidence from the World Health Organization suggests that nearly half of the world's population is affected by mental illness with an impact on their self-esteem, relationships and ability to function in everyday life. An individual's emotional health can also impact physical health and poor mental health can lead to problems such as substance abuse.

Maintaining good mental health is crucial to living a long and healthy life. Good mental health can enhance one's life, while poor mental health can prevent someone from living an enriching life. According to Richards, Campania, & Muse-Burke (2010) "There is growing evidence that is showing emotional abilities are associated with prosaically behaviors such as stress management and physical health" (2010). It was also concluded in their research that people who lack emotional expression are inclined to anti-social behaviors. These behaviors are a direct reflection of their mental health. Self-destructive acts may take place to suppress emotions. Some of these acts include drug and alcohol abuse, physical fights or vandalism. **Mental health** refers to our cognitive, and/or emotional wellbeing - it is all about how we think, feel and behave. Mental health, if somebody has it, can also mean an absence of a mental disorder. Approximately 25% of people in the UK have a mental health problem during their lives. The USA is said to have the highest incidence of people diagnosed with mental health problems in the developed world. Your mental health can affect your daily life, relationships and even your physical health. Mental health also includes a person's ability to enjoy life - to attain a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience.

"The promotion of Mental Health involves working toward the prevention of mental illness & promoting and maintaining an individual's well-being. Mental Health promotion remains the most underdeveloped area of health promotion although there is an increasing recognition that "there is no health without mental health"."(Mental Health Ireland, 2007)

Mental Health is about: How we feel about ourselves, How we feel about others and How we are able to meet the demands of life etc." The Buddhist way can answer this Questions." The Summary a Sermon of Anattalakkhanasutta taught by The Buddha "The Rupa (corporeality), Vedana (sensation), Sanna (perception) Sankhara (mental formation) and Vinnana (consciousness) were non-Self (Anatta), it can not be ordered "Let it be like or don't be like that" Rupa, Vedana, Sanna Sankhara and Vinnana were permanent, happy and ego impermanent, suffering and non-ego. So the Buddha taught try to leave the holding fast to Rupa, Vedana, Sanna Sankhara and Vinnana and then to

regarded intellectually according to the fact that is not ours, that is not oneself, that in not our own self.

## Meaning of Mental Health

**Mental health** is a level of psychological well-being, or an absence of a mental disorder; it is the "psychological state of someone who is functioning at a satisfactory level of emotional and behavioral adjustment". From the perspective of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life, and create a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. According to World Health Organization (WHO) mental health includes "subjective well-being, perceived self-efficacy, autonomy, competence, intergenerational dependence, and self-actualization of one's intellectual and emotional potential, among others." WHO further states that the well-being of an individual is encompassed in the realization of their abilities, coping with normal stresses of life, productive work and contribution to their community? However, cultural differences, subjective assessments, and competing professional theories all affect how "mental health" is defined.

A person struggling with his or her behavioral health may face stress, depression, anxiety, relationship problems, grief, addiction, ADHD or learning disabilities, mood disorders, or other psychological concerns. Counselors, therapists, life coaches, psychologists, nurse practitioners or physicians can help manage behavioral health concerns with treatments such as therapy, counseling, or medication. The new field of global mental health is "the area of study, research and practice that places a priority on improving mental health and achieving equity in mental health for all people worldwide".

“**Mental health** is not just the absence of mental illness. It is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.” (WHO, 2007)

## Mental Health Awareness in Buddhism

The Avatamaska Sutra says:

If one does not understand one's own mind, how can he know the Right Way? It is because of the perverted mind that he only increases his evil deeds.

The Sandinirmocana Sutra also says:

If one does not understand the Dharma of Formlessness, he can hardly wipe out contaminations.

According to the Vairocana Sutra, Bodhi means understanding the reality of self-mind. From this, it may be clearly seen that to practice Buddhism, we should cultivate self-awareness; by developing awareness, we can also develop concentration and wisdom to understand the mind and the self-nature, so that we may wipe out our various habits and realize the Truth of Life by self-experiencing; so that we may turn subjective thinking into objective awareness and look deeply into things before us from their phenomena to their substance, liberate ourselves from the suffering of birth and death in this world and then attain the supreme and perfect Enlightenment - this is practically the gist of Buddhism, and mind you, it is also the fundamental objective of Buddhism.

## **The Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight Fold Path**

The Fourth Noble Truth, like the first three, has three aspects. The first aspect is: 'There is the Eightfold Path, the atthangika magga - the way out of suffering.' It is also called the ariya magga, the Ariyan or Noble Path. The second aspect is: 'This path should be developed.' The final insight into arahantship is: 'This path has been fully developed.'

The Eightfold Path is presented in a sequence: beginning with Right (or perfect) Understanding, samma ditthi, it goes to Right (or perfect) Intention or Aspiration, samma sankappa; these first two elements of the path are grouped together as Wisdom (panna). Moral commitment (sila) flows from panna; this covers Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood - also referred to as perfect speech, perfect action and perfect livelihood, samma vaca, samma kammanta and samma ajiva.

Then we have Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, samma vayama, samma sati and samma samadhi, which flow naturally from sila. These last three provide emotional balance. They are about the heart - the heart that is liberated from self-view and from selfishness. With Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration, the heart is pure, free from taints and defilements. When the heart is pure, the mind is peaceful. Wisdom (panna), or Right Understanding and Right Aspiration, comes from a pure heart. This takes us back to where we started.

These, then, are the elements of the Eightfold Path, grouped in three sections:

### **1. Wisdom (panna)**

Right Understanding (samma ditthi)

Right Aspiration (samma sankappa)

### **2. Morality (sila)**

Right Speech (samma vaca)

Right Action (samma kammanta)

Right Livelihood (samma ajiva)

### 3. Concentration (samadhi)

Right Effort (samma vayama)

Right Mindfulness (samma sati)

Right Concentration (samma samadhi)

The fact that we list them in order does not mean that they happen in a linear way, in sequence - they arise together. We may talk about the Eightfold Path and say 'First you have Right Understanding, then you have Right Aspiration, then....' But actually, presented in this way, it simply teaches us to reflect upon the importance of taking responsibility for what we say and do in our lives.

### Bhāvanā: (Development)

Bhavana derives from the word Bhava meaning becoming or the subjective process of arousing mental states. To explain the cultural context of the historical Buddha's employment of the term, Glenn Wallis emphasizes bhavana's sense of cultivation. He writes that a farmer performs bhavana when he or she prepares soil and plants a seed. Wallis infers the Buddha's intention with this term by emphasizing the terrain and focus on farming in northern India at the time in the following passage:

I imagine that when Gotama, the Buddha, chose this word to talk about meditation, he had in mind the ubiquitous farms and fields of his native India. Unlike our words 'meditation' or 'contemplation,' Gotama's term is musty, rich, and verdant. It smells of the earth. The commonness of his chosen term suggests naturalness, everydayness, ordinariness. The term also suggests hope: no matter how fallow it has become, or damaged it may be, a field can always be cultivated — endlessly enhanced, enriched, developed — to produce a favorable and nourishing harvest.

the Pali Canon bhāvanā is often found in a compound phrase indicating personal, intentional effort over time with respect to the development of that particular faculty. For instance, in the Pali Canon and post-canonical literature one can find the following compounds:

**citta-bhāvanā**, translated as "development of mind" or "development of consciousness."

**kāya-bhāvanā**, translated as "development of body."

**mettā-bhāvanā**, translated as the "cultivation" or "development of benevolence."<sup>[10]</sup>

**paññā-bhāvanā**, translated as "development of wisdom" or "development of understanding."

**samādhi-bhāvanā**, translated as "development of concentration."

In addition, in the Canon, the development (bhāvanā) of samatha-vipassana is lauded. Subsequently, Theravada teachers have made use of the following compounds:

**samatha-bhāvanā**, meaning the development of tranquility.

**vipassanā-bhāvanā**, meaning the development of insight.

The word bhavana is sometimes translated into English as 'meditation' so that, for example, metta-bhavana may be translated as 'the meditation on loving-kindness'. Meditation as a state of fixed or absorption concentration by which the mind becomes completely absorbed into and therefore unmove-ably fixed upon the meditation object is properly called dhyana (Sanskrit; Pali: jhāna) or samādhi.

### **Satipatthana Sutta :**

The four foundations of mindfulness are four practices set out in the Satipatthana Sutta for attaining and maintaining moment-by-moment mindfulness and are fundamental techniques in Buddhist meditation. The four foundations of mindfulness are:

#### **Mindfulness of the body; (kaya)**

The first foundation is mindfulness of body. This is an awareness of the body as body something experienced as breath and flesh and bone. It is not "my" body. It is not a form you are inhabiting. There is just body.

Traditionally, the "intro to mindfulness" exercise is a focus on just breath. This is experiencing breath and *being* breath. It is *not* thinking about the breath or coming up with ideas but breath. As the ability to maintain awareness gets stronger, the practitioner becomes aware of the whole body. In some schools of Buddhism, this exercise might include an awareness of aging and mortality.

Body awareness is taken into movement. Chanting and rituals are opportunities to be mindful of body as it moves, and in this way we train ourselves to be mindful when we aren't meditating, too. In some schools of Buddhism nuns and monks have practiced martial arts as a way of bringing meditative focus into movement, but many day-to-day activities can be used as "body practice."

#### **Mindfulness of feelings or sensations (vedanā)**

The second foundation is mindfulness of feelings, both bodily sensations and emotions. In meditation, one learns to just observe emotions and sensations come and go, without judgments and without identifying with them. In other words, it is not "my" feelings, and feelings do not define who you are. There are just feelings.

Sometimes this can be uncomfortable. What can come up might surprise us. We humans have an amazing capacity to ignore our own anxieties and

angers and even pain, sometimes. But ignoring sensations we don't like is unhealthy. As we learn to observe and fully acknowledge our feelings, we also see how feelings dissipate.

### **Mindfulness of mind or consciousness (citta);**

The third foundation is mindfulness of mind or consciousness. The "mind" in this foundation is called citta. This is a different mind from the one that thinks thoughts or makes judgments. Citta is more like consciousness or awareness.

*Citta* is sometimes translated "heart-mind," because it has an emotive quality. It is a consciousness or awareness that is not made up of ideas. However, neither is it the pure awareness that is the fifth skandha.

Another way of thinking of this foundation is "mindfulness of mental states." Like sensations or emotions, our states of mind come and go. Sometimes we are sleepy; sometimes we are restless. We learn to observe our mental states dispassionately, without judgment or opinion. As they come and go, we clearly understand how insubstantial they are.

## **Mindfulness of Dharma**

The fourth foundation is mindfulness of dharma. Here we open ourselves to the whole world, or at least the world that we experience.

Dharma is a Sanskrit word that can be defined many ways. You can think of it as "natural law" or "the way things are." Dharma can refer to the doctrines of the Buddha. And dharma can refer to phenomena as manifestations of reality.

This foundation is sometimes called "mindfulness of mental objects." That's because all of the myriad things around us exist for us as mental objects. They are what they are because that's how we recognize them.

In this foundation, we practice awareness of the inter-existence of all things. We are aware that they are temporary, without self-essence, and conditioned by everything else. This takes us to the doctrine of Dependent Origination, which is the way everything inter-exists.

## **Conclusions**

Mindfulness in the Buddhist sense goes beyond just paying attention to things. It is a pure awareness free of judgments and concepts and self-reference. Genuine mindfulness takes discipline, and the Buddha advised working with four foundations to train oneself to be mindful. The four foundations are frames of reference, usually taken up one at a time. In this way, the student begins with a simple mindfulness of breath and progresses to mindfulness of *everything*.

These four foundations are often taught in the context of meditation, but if your daily practice is chanting, that can work, too.

The eight elements work like eight legs supporting you. It is not like: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 on a linear scale; it is more of a working together. It is not that you develop panna first and then when you have panna, you can develop your sila; and once your sila is developed, then you will have samadhi. That is how we think, isn't it: 'You have to have one, then two and then three.' As an actual realisation, developing the Eightfold Path is an experience in a moment, it is all one. All the parts are working as one strong development; it is not a linear process - we might think that way because we can only have one thought at a time.

The main teaching of Buddhism (Ovadapatimokkha) is the poetical writing with three and half Gatha: **The first** Gatha was indicated that, Khanti, Tolerance was the supreme penance., Wise men said “ Nibbana was excellence.”, Ascetics who were killing and harming somebody else would not be called “Samana”. **The second** Gatha was indicated that, Not to do any evil, to do good or to do well and to purify the mind” these were the Buddha's Teaching., **The third** Gatha was indicated that, Not to speak satirize words, not to kill each other, To be composed in Patinokkna, moderation in eating., To be satisfied with quiet bed and seat, to make higher mental effort. Those were the Buddha's teaching. The Buddha gave Ovadapatimokkha in order that the Buddhist disciples who were going to teach can choose any topics of Dharma which were suitable for the people. It was said the Buddha said Ovadapatimokkha to Buddhist monks in Uposatha hall every half month. This was stopped when he allowed monks to pray the disciplinary rules provided at Sangha assembly. It was so called “*Praying Patimokkha*”.

Dharma is the eternal law of the universe as taught by the Buddha. One who keeps this law lives happily in this world and in the next. It is the duty of every human being to use the mind in the correct way. The human mind should be channeled towards creating a just, equitable and peaceful world. If the mind is allowed to roam at random, it will become undisciplined, distorted and depraved. Most of the suffering in the world is caused by unruly, distorted or depraved minds. The person who is not at peace cannot be at peace with others. As the Buddha says, “One who is caught in a whirlpool cannot help another out.”



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