

Mayfair, Bombay July 5, 1967

Mindfulness per the Lord Buddha – 3rd Talk Bare Awareness.

This is more contemplation rather than tuning the mind with the mind that guides on the subject of the Discourse as is usually the case with me when I give Discourses. Today, I will talk about the deeper aspect of mindfulness than what we have talked on during the last two lectures.

A thought arose in my mind which says:

“Light is life, darkness is absence of life and can lead to even death.”

The death here is not of life¹, but of the object, whether human or otherwise, that is a prisoner of the darkness. So, from the point of view of spiritual light, our human mind, which we call our finite ego-mind, is in darkness and this darkness prevents us from knowing the light that is Divine Life. If we do not remove this darkness, it ends into what we call our physical death. That does not mean that the spiritual light dies. It is we, as human instruments, who die, because we have not made the right effort to know the light that is Divine Light which is inborn within us. It is inborn within every creation, and if we do not inculcate the right methods given to us by the High Ones, the ancient ones, particularly those who have descended from the highest of the high, and do not take advantage of the way of life shown by them, leading us into light, then we must end through darkness into death which is our physical death.

But, does it mean that if we go towards the light, our physical human personality will not end in a physical death? That is possible as well as not possible. It is possible to not pass through a physical death for those who have not only known the light that is physical, psychological, and that is the life principle, but also know the actual source of the life principle commonly called the soul or Atma, and have spiritualized the matter that is their mind and body.

It has been the case with such High Beings as the Buddha. It is said that at one time he told Ananda, “Ananda if the Tathagat wants to live for a Kalpa, he can live.” Ananda was just pleased but he did not say anything. Then again Buddha repeated, as it was his custom. He repeated three times and still when Ananda did not respond in a positive way to tell the Buddha that at least for their sake he should live for the Kalpa, he told Ananda that now you can do your work.

¹ Life here means the soul which is called atma in Vedic scriptures.

Afterwards Mara² appeared before the Buddha, and Mara pleaded hard with the Buddha that “Lord, now your mission is fulfilled, it is time for the Lord to pass on.” When the pleading continued, the Buddha accepted Mara’s suggestion and told him that the “Thathagat will leave this body after three months.” And then, there was such a hue and cry that the Thathagat was to leave and poor Ananda has been blamed even today by the Buddhist about why he did not tell the Buddha to live on?

What I am trying to point out here is that the mind that has become oned with the very source, like the Antim Buddha, can even spiritualize the matter that is body which can then go on living for years, even centuries, if not forever. This apart, we have heard in connection with the ancient rishis, in our country who have lived for centuries. We cannot understand how it is possible from the point of view of the present-day sciences of anatomy, physiology, pathology, and all that we have been made to know about our body, including psychology and para-psychology etc. But it is not wrong. It is true. As a matter of fact, some of these Spiritual Masters who are guiding the working of not only the world, but even the universe, are in the invisible and they can become visible whenever they want to or they can manifest through a visible instrument if they find the need for it, by taking charge of that instrument, if not fully, at certain levels of their consciousness.

So, it is possible even for the matter to be spiritualized and liberated, as it is possible for the human soul to grow unto the very ‘Source of sources.’ But, most existence of human beings today is far from that goal, and we strive and struggle, even when we are real seekers, to grow towards that light which sustains at least our life. But, we fail to achieve that purpose and that is due to many factors. One of them is our ignorance of the door and the way leading to that goal and secondly, when we do know or we are made to know that door and the way towards the goal, we are found wanting in many of the tests and trials. We are not persistent to see that the obstacle that is in our human mind is removed and that eventually the human mind itself is removed, and ultimately the human mind is killed in the true sense, so that the Divine Mind takes charge of the human mind which has been emptied.

Now, one of the methods given is the method of what is known as mindfulness, as it is mentioned by the Buddha in what is called Satipattana Sutta. But it is not only the Buddha who has emphasized this. Almost every high Spiritual Master who has descended from the highest of the high, has taught this in different ways in different terminology, but it is the same goal of what is called the right mindfulness. But the Buddha has made it very systematic,

Last time we talked about the four aspects of right mindfulness and as I said that now-a-days five are more important than the four which were given in the Satipattana Sutta. We will take the fifth one some time later on. But let us take

² Mara is Satan in the Pali language.

only one of these aspects that is given by the Buddha on the Discourse on right mindfulness.

Mindfulness in Body

Now, mindfulness in body is the beginning. It is grosser than the other three categories of mindfulness. The other three types of mindfulness being:

1. Mindfulness in the senses.
2. Mindfulness in the feelings linked with emotions
3. Mindfulness in the mind and the consciousness.

But though mindfulness in the body is grosser than the other three, still, it is not easy for most people. It requires training in order that it becomes habitual with us.

Today, as we observe ourselves, when we get up in the morning till we again sleep, we are conscious of being alive. Leave apart the fact that we are also living during the sleep when also we have got to be mindful in a distracted way. But even when we are awake, we are not mindful of many of the thoughts that arise in us. Many things we actually do or say, we just do without any mindfulness. We are not giving any attention to even the manifestation of our thoughts in the form of words and action. The beginning of the mindfulness or right mindfulness is attention.

You have to give attention to the thoughts and the manifestation of the thoughts. Now, we know that we cannot say or write anything nor can we manifest in action until, behind our manifestation something subtle is occurring in our mind, which we just in a general way call thought. But, that thought of our human nature is not only due to thinking nor merely feeling, nor sense perception. But it is a mixture with combinations and permutations of all these three faculties, at different levels in our consciousness.

We have seen that some people who manifest thoughts in writing or speaking or action on a particular subject will deliver a very poor presentation, whereas another person when speaking or writing or manifesting the same subject in action will do so in a much deeper way, and another person will do so still deeper. Why is this all so? It is because the level at which the consciousness manifests these thoughts differs so widely among people.

Those who manifest these thoughts at deeper levels are nearer right; not necessarily right and that right also is relative right and not absolute right. At the deeper levels, the thinking aspect of our consciousness is predominant. At deeper levels the thoughts are clearer because the emotions and sense perceptions are under control as is usually the case with me when I give Discourses. At deeper levels, the emotional and sense perception faculties are

subservient to the thinking faculty. You will find that those who manifest the same thought at the level of their feelings or emotions, where emotion is more predominant, sometimes, when it goes beyond a certain stage, they are carried away by their emotions and become sentimental and mostly they are wrong. So, there is no thinking behind it in the cooler sense, deeper sense.

Then those who are conscious of only hearing and seeing and perceiving conditions around through sense perception more predominantly than even feeling or thinking manifest in a very different way on the same subject and it will be much poorer, lower and nearer the animal level one may say. So, you can see that when the consciousness is at a lower level, though in the human finite wakeful consciousness, all these thoughts and their products out of those levels, differ so widely. So, why does it happen?

It happens because we are not giving attention. We are not mindful of the thoughts that we manifest and also at the level of consciousness to which the thought can be raised within us towards which we are capable of growing. It is not easy for everyone to grow towards the higher levels of wakefulness. But, we should try to be as wakeful as each one of us can be in order to manifest these thoughts and these levels vary. There are people who can grow to the level of thinking even deeply and there are people who can grow up to the point of a mixture of thinking at a lower level and emotionalism at a higher level which is lesser than the thinking level. It is mostly appealing to human mind at this level, specially the mass minds which get carried away with emotionalism. So, you can see that these levels of the conscious mind are also very important.

So, let us consider mindfulness at the lowest level which is one may say nearer the animal level of consciousness, where our sense perception faculty is more predominant than our finer emotions of love and sympathy for the surrounding and our neighbors. The grosser emotions are mixed with our sense perception, but the finer are higher. It is nearer our thinking level. So, when we take that lowest faculty of which we are always conscious, particularly when we are so-called relaxing ourselves and indulging in loud thinking, in light thinking and sliding into a sleep stage, so many thoughts occur to us of different nature. Where do they come from when we are about to sleep?

Without doing anything we absorb sensations from outside, through our senses and various thoughts arise within us. It means that they are there within us and they are surging up into that level of consciousness where our mind is linked with our sense perception even leading to sensuality. These thoughts we are not mindful of. We get into these thoughts of various nature, which seemingly may be called of love, but they are more nearer the sense satisfaction, which can even grow, if not controlled, into what is called lust, which is worse than animal behaviour which is controlled by instincts. So either, at that level we manifest these thoughts if we have got any chance or if we don't have any control to do so

or we do not like those thoughts, we try to run away from them and we divert our attention into something else.

Now, this is wrong. By running away, these thoughts are not going to go away. On the contrary, they will come up again because they will sink down into your lower sub-conscious mind. Also by expressing these thoughts, they are not going to go; they will become stronger. So, either way we try it, we find that we are not successful and so much of our lifetime we are wasting with our lower thoughts. Thoughts, which we have inherited biologically from our parents and foreparents apart, but we have inherited from our past and past, past lives that have ripened and have come up through the unconscious and sub-conscious planes of our human mind into our lower conscious level.

At that level if we can be mindful of these thoughts, mindful in the right way, then sooner or later, these very thoughts will become purified. But, to be mindful at that level, there are techniques given. There are methods, there are ways given. It is in that particular level of consciousness that you have to create a field where you become the seer of that thought. Remaining in that level, not running away from it, nor expressing those thoughts in anyway, right or wrong from a human point of view, doing nothing, but only watching these thoughts.

Watch means what? You must have one aspect of yourself that watches and the other aspect that is the object or the thoughts that are to be watched. So you watch the thoughts that arise in you by becoming a seer of the thoughts, without being carried away with them, without running away from them and without even raising these thoughts to higher levels. You try this. You will find it very difficult, but it is the right thing to do to begin with. You remain in that thought, however wrong it may be, however immoral, sinful, lusty and watch and you will see that by sheer watching, without any attachment to that thought, which means watching and neglecting that thought, it will soon lose the force and will ultimately not disturb you.

But, our human mind is a chain of thoughts and one thought leads to another thought, and another to a third thought and thereby, a series of thoughts will arise in you. This is due to a psychological law, the 'Law of Association.' At that level, even the thought that is disturbing you, if you watch, it will lose its force. But, another connected thought will come up and, a third will come up, all depending upon how many thoughts are already there of your past and past past and that you have inherited biologically. You have to repeat the process of watching your thoughts. Go on repeating it. You just watch, and when you watch all these thoughts in the right way, sooner or later, you will find that this mind that watches is going to be your anchor, sheet anchor in which you can go and let these thoughts come and go and they will not disturb you and sooner or later, these very thoughts will die their deaths.

Now, this is just bare awareness of the thought at the level of sense perception. Bare awareness is the first step and bare awareness will lead to association with your past and past past thoughts and their association with your past and past past thoughts will lead to a desire in you to find deeper contents of these thoughts. But when? When your mind becomes unattached to those thoughts. Your attachment should be to the mind which watches, not to the objects or the thoughts that are being watched. Otherwise, you will get carried away into the flood of thoughts and you will find yourself lost.

So, the Principle of Attachment should be transferred to that mind which watches and you will see that a stage will come when without being carried away by the thoughts which arise; you would like to know deeper things behind the thoughts and that deeper thing will lead you to the source of these thoughts. First the immediate, then deeper and deeper till the ultimate.

Then when you come to the level where you can see the deeper aspect of these thoughts without being carried away by them, without being pulled into them, you will find that these very negative thoughts, the so-called sinful, immoral, unethical thoughts from not only human point of view, but even from the point of view of the Spiritual Masters who have given the Commandments and the Sheelas and the Yamas and the Niyamas, have a divine aspect in them.

Now, this is important. The very negative thoughts have got not only the positive in the sense of the relatively positive, but the absolute positive aspect in them. Had it not been for that which is the very Divine behind such sinful thoughts, these thoughts cannot live for a fraction of a moment, and this is a reality. In the untruth, there is the truth. It is no use just conceptually thinking that oh yes! God is all pervading and that He is there in everything and whatever we do or anyone does, it is God who is doing it. It is utter, sheer nonsense. You must know by direct knowledge what is the wrong in that sinful thought and what is the right in that sinful thought. Until you know, you have to follow the Masters, who have given the Commandments, the Sheelas and the Yamas and Niyamas, so that, at least you don't get carried away in the flood of those thoughts. But, when you know, you just know what is right from the spiritual point of view and what is wrong from the spiritual point of view, and how even that wrong, which is wrong from spiritual point of view, the very Divine itself is supporting and sustaining even that wrong. This part of it will come in its own time but that will be beyond the third aspect of watching.

Three Aspects of Watching

First aspect is the bare attention or awareness, the second is the association with the thoughts you watch, and the third is the deeper aspect of these thoughts you watch without being carried away. When you can remain unattached to them by transferring the Principle of Attachment on to the seer aspect of yours, then, at that time, when you go higher, a new phase begins, and you see in it what is

actually right and what is wrong from spiritual point of view. But, that stage will come to you, the last one. It will not be possible for you to aspire it, to go into it even. It will come to you when you deserve it. Until then, it is going to be a conflict. Now, this is taking you further into mindfulness in the body aspect of the Principle of Mindfulness and at its lowest level of the body aspect, which is the sense-perception aspect, even the sensuous aspect. This is how to deal with thoughts that arise at that level, through right mindfulness.

But, I tell you here; it is not easy unless and until you have got someone to guide you as well as to guard you. It is not enough to merely be watching thoughts in the way as I have said, but also to create that mind which watches the mind that sees. You will have to make a field in the same finite mind at that lowest level through someone who will give you the proper guidance and grace. So, for that, I say, recapitulate our Seven Principles of Right Surrender. That will give you the field in your finite consciousness at all levels, where you will be able to protect yourself from various thoughts that will be infused in you, inspired in you from the wrong sources.

Even in the Buddha's teaching of mindfulness, the very first of the teachings is: 'Buddham Sharanam Gachhami'. "I take refuge in the Buddha." It is not just mere mindfulness. It is all the six steps that He gives out of the Eightfold Path to be followed. Then the seventh is the mindfulness and before these eight steps you have to be conscious of the Four Fold Truths. To be a follower of the Buddha, the three refuges are absolutely essential. 'Buddham Sharnam Gachhami, Sangham Sharnam Gachhami and the Dhammam Sharanam Gachhami'.

So you can see that he has not merely said you just be mindful in this or that way. There is the basis of the teachings of the Buddha, that you must take refuge in the Buddha, the Sangha of the Buddha and the Dharma or the teachings of the Buddha. Those who merely intellectually go into this mindfulness at this low level, will find a very hard fight because they will be all alone at that low level of consciousness and wanting to outgrow the horizontal way of life into vertical, they will find that the anti-divine will do everything possible, not only to side-track them, but to finish them off.

So, there you will need some Divine Mind to guide you, to guard you and grace you and if you would like to follow the way of the Buddha, follow right from the beginning the Buddham Sharnam Gachhami down to the mindfulness. Then you will grow into the eighth step, which is the right meditation leading to Samadhi and the Four Jahanas. If you would take to the path shown by this Society, you start with the Right Surrender for internal practice based upon the Seven Principles of Right Surrender and the right mindfulness will automatically arise out of it and when you do the right mindfulness side by side with Right Surrender, you have the protection of the one to whom and through whom you surrender, whether that be the Buddha, or Christ or Krishna or Ram, or Zoroaster, or Mohammad or Shiva, or Vishnu, or any of these High ones.

So, don't merely take this right mindfulness as an intellectual or a philosophical practice. Make it a part of spiritual practice and link it up with one or the other Spiritual Masters whom you should enthrone in your heart of hearts, so that anti-divine mind does not carry you away. At this level, there is the danger, because at this level, your willpower also will not be so strong, at the level at which it will be nearer the thinking consciousness. But, if you have surrendered to the Divine Mind, then that Mind, in one way or the other, will guide you and guard you.

Tape-checked by Hella, May 23, 2019

Editor's note: The above Discourse was edited by the editing team in the month of September 2023 and finalized on October 10, 2023 in New Delhi, India. Some words were edited out, some were inserted and some sentences were moved around and others inserted so that the thoughts would flow better and the message becomes clearer