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Being as Beyond Self and Mindfulness - an Enlightened Perspective

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Abstract

Buddhism holds that the self is a fabrication rather than an essential existence, and this idea of the self is closely connected to the concept of "no-self". If I am not who I am, then who has been experiencing this moment, and suddenly everything becomes even more perplexing? In Buddhist teaching, the main tenet of mindfulness is that it is an essential precursor for approaching illumination, or enlightenment, which helps a person to become less egoistic and comprehend the state of "no-self," along with understanding the root cause of misery. To accomplish happiness, this article attempts to illustrate how exercising mindfulness meditation enables one to achieve their non-self. Anattā has always presented as an uphill battle and debatable thesis. This paper aims to explore various questions related to the true meaning of anattā. In what way is "non-self" associated with the five aggregates? Why are "ego" and "no-self" distinct concepts? If neither exists, then why is there the illusion of a self or entity? To this question, it might be responded that vipassanā is an essential aspect of Buddhist meditation which may eventually result in Nibbāna, or salvation, in one's consciousness when it is developed by sati, or mindfulness, arguably. Happiness, according to Buddhism, can be attained when one can acknowledge reality for what it is, that is, devoid of any mental constructions we impose upon it. Genuine contentment cannot be just discovered, rather, satisfaction is achieved by mental conditioning that alienates the mind from detrimental emotions like aversion and relentless desire, and above all, by eliminating ignorance. I would like to suggest that one can probably begin the quest toward happiness, if and only if one is willing to fully devote oneself to exercising mindfulness meditation.

Keywords: Mindfulness, Self, Anattā, Vipassanā, Vijñāna, Mindful Self.

Introduction

Not everything does. Not everything has to. Your intellect has taken you far in life. But it will take you no further. Surrender, Stephen. Silence your ego and your power will rise[1].

Do you remember these lines from the Marvel Comics-based 2016 American superhero film "Doctor Strange"? Through these profound remarks, the Ancient One illuminated Dr. Strange and demonstrated to him how his ego was blocking the path of his prosperous ascension. Abandonment of ego or self is needed to emerge from ignorance's obscurity. Hence, this expression provides a simple reminder for everyone to always remember. We can observe that the cinematic adaptation of "Doctor Strange" incorporates the fundamental principles of Buddhism. It demonstrates a method of comprehending reality in the movie. Giving up one's pride and engaging in meditation for mental well-being has been preached throughout. One might be wondering why I'm bringing up this film here. A prevalent notion is that cinema is a blurred reflection of reality and the self. in this paper, I use the notion of "self" to refer to the concept of being that is both within and beyond, under the lens of mindfulness [1].

Buddhism undermines the notion of the existence of self. Buddha preached a concept termed anattā (Pāli), which is generally translated as "no-self," which implies that the thought of having an eternal, independent self is a delusion, that is often misunderstood as a theory rejecting the reality of the self, is rather a method for achieving non-attachment by accepting that everything is transient and momentary. It is believed that the self is a construct rather than an essential entity, arising exclusively as a result of intricate arrangements of many physical and psychological processes, or in amalgamation. This is not compatible with our everyday experiences. Things get more baffling if we try to contemplate that if am I not who I am, who has been experiencing things right now? But on a closer understanding of Buddhist psychology, it would be understood that it is not con-

fusing at all. This is not an indication that the concept of the self is fictitious in any manner whatsoever. It seems more aligned with perceiving ourselves as an array of functions that work together to establish an exclusive pattern. The concept is that the self can be viewed as constituting an arrangement of processes or components that are actively connected, as opposed to being comprehended as a substance or a form of abstraction. For most individuals, their immediate physical and, more significantly, mental surroundings constitute their sense of self. That I am the mind and the mind is me intuitively seems obvious. Developing the identity of a continuous sense of self is unquestionably crucial for a subjective sense of selfhood; however, it is also evident from Buddhist psychology that maintaining a sense of personal continuity and self-identity leads to relentless dissatisfaction and interpersonal disputes. A prosperous existence is the ultimate aim of Buddhist psychology, which involves a comprehensive look at the self. Mindfulness meditation is essential for attaining this form of life. As, Buddhism disapproves of the premise that there is a stable, unchanging self and that suffering is a universal aspect of life and is primarily brought on by greed, hatred, and delusions about what has been experienced and witnessed, it asserted that eradicating human suffering and anguish would require us to free ourselves from our attachments to different objects or ideas and cravings. The main idea behind mindfulness in Buddhist teaching is that it is an essential path to enlightenment, or awakening, which allows one to become less egoistic and gain an understanding of the state of "no-self," as well as the root causes and origins of suffering. This article attempts to illustrate how engaging in mindfulness meditation contributes to achieving one's non-self and in turn attaining happiness [2].

Buddhist Theory of Self

Buddhism has developed into a philosophically coherent approach to alleviating human suffering that has been adapted to various societies. However, its fundamental assumptions are firmly based on psychology, experience, philosophy of mind, and the relationship between pain and experience. The Buddhist theory of mind, which continues to evolve, is based on the teachings of the Buddha himself. Various unique perspectives have emerged from these attempts to understand the mind in a way that is compatible with the core Buddhist doctrine of non-self. Buddha defined the phrase 'I am conscious of something' as 'something is present to me'. As a result, awareness refers to the phenomena rather than the subject. Reality is defined as the presence of phenomena. It is neither the subject's nor the object's presence. In other words, it only exists because something is present. One can think about consciousness (viññāana) as the presence of a phenomenon, which consists of nāma and rūpa. Nāmarūpa and viññāna together constitute the phenomenon in an individual. This very phenomenon supports consciousness and all consciousness is necessarily consciousness of something. It is inconceivable to fully comprehend consciousness on its own; instead, it must be defined as Name-and-Form-and Consciousness (nāma-rūpa viññāna). As the subject, consciousness always provokes in terms of name and form. The form, the meaning of the name, and its implications are interdependent. Alternatively put, nāma is the mentality that signifies sensation (vedanā), perception (Saññā), intention (cetanā), contact (passa), and attention (manasikāra). Rūpa, on the other hand, signifies substance or matter. Sensations are not necessary for matter to exist in the world; instead, consciousness is required for the various representations of the material world to exist. They are not mutually exclusive; rather, they are entwined. According to early Buddhist thought, consciousness developed about several unique occurrences. The existence of "I," who questions and doubts self-certainty, is acknowledged by Buddhism devotees, despite their constant inquiry into and doubting of the individual self [3]. Buddha presents the middle way, which is neither a doctrine of no self nor a self, for this reason. As stated in the Laṅkāvatārasūtra. The ultimate truth transcends the antithesis of self and not-self[2].

The most important lesson imparted by Buddhism is the concept of the middle way, which highlights the notion of meta-self, or the "inquiring spirit," rather than any self or no self.

Non-Self and the Uniqueness

Buddha says, rupam bhikkhave anattā, "monks, materiality or form is self-less[3]."

The form is empty and there is neither a soul nor a self in materiality. Buddhist psychology and teachings revolve around the core concept of non-self (anattā), which comprises existence and experience along with impermanence (anicca) and suffering (dukkha). Different Buddhist schools, however, hold varying views regarding anattā. Within the context of Theravāda Buddhism, anattā mainly refers to the pudgalanairatmya or the doctrine of "no-self," which holds that no individual possesses an eternal, unchanging self. In contrast, the unique individual is made up of five ever-changing aggregates, known as skandhas (khandhas). On the other hand, in the context of Mahāyāna Buddhism, anattā mainly refers to the concept of "emptiness" (suññatā), which holds that no stable, eternal entity exists within any given phenomenon. Stated differently, nothing can exist in the framework of material reality. Anattā has always presented as an uphill battle and debatable thesis. What is the true meaning of anattā? How do the five aggregates and "no-self" relate to each other? Why are "ego" and "no-self" different from one another? Why is there the illusion of a self or entity if there is neither? As a matter of fact, in essence, the Buddha dhamma is the truth that master Buddha experienced during meditation, rather than any concept that is theoretically fabricated [4].

The notion of non-self underlines a mind-body pattern comprised of occurrences and operations, including an individual's mental states, that can happen simultaneously or sequentially and are typically connected to the experience of a self. There is no recognition of the self as a distinct and eternal entity in the aforementioned design, which adheres to the laws of causality and conditions of nature. Buddhism holds that ignorance and distortions of reality, as well as a sense of ongoing suffering or dissatisfaction, are reinforced by craving, attachment, or aversion to any aspect of the self-pattern (one's sense of mine-ness or the sense of self as a permanent entity). It is considered an illusion to assume that one is both eternal and causally distinct from other individuals and the world at large. Buddhist psychology

[1]*Derrickson. S (director). (2016). Doctor Strange(film). Marvel Studios.*
[2]*Suzuki, D.T. (1952). Essays in Zen Buddhism. Beacon Press. P 51*
[3]*Venerable Uda Eriyagama Dhammajīva Mahā Thero. (2014). "Form is Non-Self". Anattalakkhana Sutta: Teachings on the characteristic of Non-Self. Mitirigala Nissarana Vanaya.*

and teachings refer to this type of delusion as Sakkāya Diṭṭhi[4] or “Wrong View” of “Me” and “Mine”. This "wrong view" can be remedied by methodical psychological conditioning adopting meditation techniques that lead to mindful enlightenment. Buddhist psychology asserts that the functions of the mind-body (nāma-rūpa) pattern and the self-pattern as a whole are defined by emptiness (suűñatā), or the lack of intrinsic existence, which is intimately associated with the idea of non- self. Buddhist psychology does acknowledge that in everyday human experience, the mind- body pattern and its constituent processes can be erroneously connected with a self to which we adhere in an attachment. This is because such processes and the pattern are interpreted as existing "without self", that is, as lacking an agent or subject who regulates all of the components [5].

Five Aggregates and their Relation to the Self

A valuable theoretical tool that may lead to exciting new avenues of potential mental exploration is the five-aggregate model of the mind, which provides a first-person account of subjective conscious experience. It is claimed that the five aggregates collectively constitute the fundamental elements of "oneself[5]." The first aggregate is material form, which includes the physical body and outside matter. Feelings, perception, volition, and sensory consciousness are the other four aggregates. In Buddhist psychology, each of the components of the self- pattern is connected to the five aggregates. The following categories of experiences can be associated with the five aggregates, which are five sets of mind-body phenomena that are identified with (1) physical and sensory experiences in various modalities (rūpa); (2) feeling (vedanā); (3) representations of knowledge (saññā e.g., categories, mental images); (4) thoughts and mental states (saṅkhāra e.g., emotions, motives, intentions); and (5) consciousness (vijűāna), defined as the awareness of a being and distinction of its elements and features. This framework depicts perceptions as being aware of an object's attributes, feelings as the subjective affective consequences of an experience, and volition as the reactive or purposeful aspect of the mind. Behavior that is physical, verbal, or psychological can all be considered manifestations of volition. When we talk about sensory consciousness, we mean being aware of something, which can include experiencing a sensory stimulus or being aware of a thought. Perception, volition, and feelings are the other three aggregates that can arise from sensory consciousness. Assuming reciprocal or circular causality, Buddhist psychology views these aggregate processes as impacting the mind-body system, the whole pattern, and each other in turn [6]. This aligns with the dynamic integration found in the self-pattern. Similarly, in an embodied/enactive understanding, other people and socio-cultural factors, as well as shifting conditions throughout the entire brain-body-environment system, dynamically influence the self-pattern. The key idea highlighted by the Buddhist narratives is that neither the self nor the aggregates as a whole can be found in any one of these aggregates. When considered separately, each aggregate is ephemeral and transient; how are we to amalgamate them into something enduring and cohesive? Rather, it is more accurately described as a dynamically evolving process, a pattern of concurrent or sequentially occurring phenomena and processes, and a potential connection to self-awareness as a witnessing. An inquiry pertains to the relationship between the various aggregates. One can approach this from various angles. As an illustration, they could be viewed as being in a reflexive system, nested or cascading order, or configured in a more naturalistic arrangement. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch stated, Consciousness is the last of the aggregates, and it contains all of the others[6]. The five aggregates, which are usually presented as separate elements, are naturally interwoven. Thompson uses the metaphor of a hand and its fingers. They are all dependent on each other for their optimum functioning: perception needs feeling, feeling needs a basis in physical form, and consciousness needs them altogether [7].

The Notion of Dependent Origination

The concept of the self-pattern is reminiscent of ideas found in Buddhist psychology, which views mind-body processes and phenomena as collaboratively generated from the interplay of the environment, body, and mind. This is illustrated by the codependent emergence (paṭiccasamuppāda), which is also connected to the concept of emptiness. The model of co- dependent origination[7] incorporates multiple circular sequential influences that lead to self- consciousness, in contrast to the characterization of the five aggregates as a bottom-up progression from sensory experience to conscious reflectivity. There are two ways to understand the dependent origination approach: as a sequence of cognitive and behavioral events or processing steps, or as discrete momentary processes. In particular, they can be understood as follows: "ignorance," such as erroneous belief regarding the true nature of the self (avijjā), influence mental structures, including emotional and motivational elements, as well as cognitive predispositions (saṅkhāra). They, consequently, impact consciousness (vijñān), including the consciousness itself, and its predictions regarding sensory stimuli. It also governs the mind-body combination as a whole (nāma-rūpa), reciprocally. Predictive consequences include manipulating sensory stimuli through attentional processes (phassa) and sensory processing in various modalities (salāyatan). Thus, craving or the avoidance drive (taṇh) are illustrations of mental constructions or behavioral impulses that are influenced by the progression of feeling or emotional valence (vedanā), stimulation, or emotional activation states. This stage of impulse, toward action is propelled by self-awareness and identification (upādāna). The external world and the mind-body framework itself are then affected by conditioned action, and these effects may precisely encompass the acquisition of knowledge and the development of conduct (bhava). In alignment with this Buddhist framework, a variety of interpretations are involved in phases of co-determination that eventually have the propensity to replicate themselves. These rhythms also shape preferences, practices, perspectives, emotional response patterns, apprehension desires, aversions, illusions, and judgments, which aid in creating and maintaining self-consciousness and reflect an analogy to the patterns of its design. Although equilibrium and the automaticity of meanings, beliefs, and behaviors are beneficial in human life, they can also reflect erroneous assumptions and lead to other distortions and emotional vulnerabilities, as well as anxiety, dissatisfaction, fear, and an abundance of transparency about oneself and others. thereby, a wrong view in Buddhist psychology might also be interpreted as the erroneous attitude of nothingness and interdependence that correspond to dependent emergence [8-12].

[4]*Bhikkhu Bodhi, ed. (2000). A Comprehensive Manual of Abhidhamma. Pariyatti Publishing.*

[5]*Bodhi, B. (Ed.). (1995). The middle length discourses of the Buddha: A new translation of the Majjhima Nikaya (B. Nanamoli, Trans.). Boston, MA: Wisdom. P 27.*

Being as Consciousness

The Yogācāra school of Buddhism provides a very comprehensive and in-depth analysis of mind, awareness, and psychology that is specific to humans[8]. This school is acknowledged by its doctrine of vijñāptimātra (Consciousness only). Yogācāra Buddhism has been one of the main Mahāyāna Buddhist schools. The Yogācāra School of Buddhism methodically established an idealistic theory. The Yogācāra reduces the external object to mere cognitions. They do not acknowledge the reality of them. The Laṅkāvatārasūtra asserts that external objects have no real existence. They are unreal and illusory, false appearances like dreams, muddles, hallucinations, etc. It is the manifestation of our consciousness. This consciousness, according to Vasubandhu, is the only reality. According to the Chinese Yogācārin Xuan Zang, Yogācārins conceive of consciousness as 'vijñāpti[9]' and this Sanskrit term 'vijñāpti' accurately stands for the act that reasons someone to know something distinctly. The most crucial development of this school is the ālaya-vijñāna (storehouse consciousness), developed by Vasubandhu. The ālaya-vijñāna is the core concept of the Yogācāra school and could be used to understand our cognition. This consciousness is the ground of all consciousness but cannot itself be known. It is both all of conscious experience and all of the essentials that influence or are influenced by that experience. The mind, which is the source of creation, and has no origin, existence, or demise as a subject or an object, is the ālaya-vijñāna. In this context, Dasgupta remarked, as the ocean dances on in waves so the ālaya-vijñāna is also dancing as it were in its diverse operations[10]. The only reason things seem as subject and object is illusion. All seeming manifestations of being and not being are deceptive. Nothing exists outside of consciousness or the mind because consciousness is creative. While consciousness is creative, this does not imply that it has the capacity to produce actual things that are real. The world is constantly changing, and nothing is static. Every situation is fleeting. Thus, there is no inherent nature in the physical objects. All things depend on relationships, which are solely a product of the mind, to exist. They reject the idea that there is an ever-present reality. Everyone is by default momentary in their eyes. They claimed that nothing exists beyond this fleeting consciousness, no soul, no matter. A graphical illustration of the soul can be found in the Yogācāra literature. Asaṅga denounces the soul, claiming it to be an illusion that is neither independent of itself nor dependent. Nothing comparable to the soul or ego as the only constant substratum is present in the world. Asaṅga detests the empirical ego, or the sense of "I and me," not the Absolute self. All the individual souls arrive and integrate into the Absolute self, which is like an endless ocean. The concept of a soul is really a fabrication of illusion. Ātman does not exist in reality. There is nothing beyond our consciousness. Self is nothing more than consciousness and ego combined. We merely differentiate the self-luminous consciousness into the subject and the object, the self, and the world, due to ignorance. Since consciousness is merely an expression of illusory existence, nothing objectively exists. The subjective consciousness ceases to exist simultaneously with the destruction of this erroneous notion. In the transcendental state, which is the very essence of everything, simply the pure consciousness or the pinnacle of reality remains. According to Diṅnāga, physical objects are dependent on the mind for their existence. These extraterrestrial things are how consciousness is organized. When internalized through introspection, such organization or coordination appears as an external object. Our imagination creates such connections, which serve as the guiding principles of understanding illustrating how empirical facts are related to one another. Since all relationships lack self-existence, they are all contingent upon the other. Both subjects and objects are internal and non-dual. Dharmakīrti reduces the external objects to sense data. No one is able to perceive or deduce physical objects other than from these sense data, which are merely sensations. An individual never perceives a thing as an external object. We only use our sense organs to comprehend things like tastes, smells, colours, and temperatures. The mind itself cannot detect external objects, and neither can sense organs. When their true essence is revealed to us, they evaporate into oblivion, leaving only their cognitions behind. Yogācāra defines cognition as being self-luminous. It reveals itself and has self-awareness. No real distinction between the subject and the object exists within cognition. Given that cognition is one, it cannot be split apart. Our perception of the outside world is merely an expression of our cognition, which is itself an alteration of consciousness in general. Since we can witness that all creations are mental as a consequence of their existence, there is only our mind. Because human experience never accurately captures the true essence of things, the empirical understanding of the world as a whole which is derived from the five senses, is not accurate knowledge. The empirical reality is therefore not acknowledged as the real universe. The empirical universe is solely a manifestation of our consciousness as a consequence of existence [13, 14].

According to Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, the Absolute reality is pure consciousness or Vijñāptimātratā. The objects of the external world are the self-formations of this pure consciousness, in its manifestations in the form of. The nature of pure consciousness is eternal, unchangeable, beyond all experiences, and even unthinkable. It is also the ground and essence of Ālayavijñāna. The Yogācāra School of Buddhism places a strong emphasis on achieving mental and physical emancipation from suffering. The reality of the external world happens as a result of the transcendental illusion. As a result, ignorance of the true nature of the world leads to misery. The only way to end this pain is to liberate yourself from the duality of subject and object by discovering pure consciousness. It can be achieved to cultivate this consciousness through the practice of meditation. According to them, Nirvnna is a state of complete liberation in which the mind reverts to its original purity, and consciousness [15-17].

Mindfulness in Buddhist Psychology

A happy and fulfilled existence is the message that Buddhist psy-

[6]Varela, F., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E. (1991). The embodied mind: Cognitive science and human experience. MIT Press. P 67.

[7]This section is developed from the article by Shaun Gallagher. Antonino Rafone. Aviva Berkovich-Ohana. Henk P. Barendregt. Prisca R. Bauer. Kirk Warren Brown. Fabio Giommi. Ivan Nyklíček. Brian D. Ostafn. Heleen Slagter. Fynn-Mathis Trautwein. David R. Vago. (2023). "The Self-Pattern and Buddhist Psychology". Mindfulness. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12671-023-02118-3.

[8]This section is inspired and developed from Begum, J.2022. 'Concept of Mind in The Yogācāra School: A Study'. Journal of Positive School Psychology, Vol. 6, No. 4, 12051-12059

[9]Li, J. 2016. 'Buddhist phenomenology and the problem of essence'. Comparative Philosophy, Volume 7, No. 1. P, 60.

[10]Dasgupta, S. N. 1969. History of Indian philosophy. Allahabad. P 43.

chology aspires to convey to people, and the practice of mindfulness is a key component of that manifestation. Eliminating human pain and suffering can only be accomplished through diminishing our mind's attachment (upādāna) or yearning (tṛ́ṣṇā) to different objects. Mindfulness meditation is one of the most important elements of the Buddha's noble eightfold path to end suffering and teach wisdom. The noble eightfold path of the Buddha to alleviate suffering and impart wisdom includes mindfulness meditation as one of its most essential elements. The fundamental concept underlying mindfulness in Buddhist teaching is that it is a significant avenue to illumination, or enlightenment which allows one to evolve into a believer no self, as well as the root causes of suffering. Buddhist philosophy and practice place a high value on mindfulness (Pali sati and Sanskrit smṛti). A large number of contemporary Buddhist philosophers, especially those who embrace Theravada, encourage mindfulness. Although mindfulness is a psychological function or excellence, it is frequently defined as an ability that must be acquired through training. The initial step on the Noble Eightfold Path which eventually leads to the highest spiritual aspiration is exercising the right mindfulness. In the words of a single piece of literature, people who consistently adhered to the four pillars of mindfulness have truly walked the noble path. As a result of this, one might consider mindfulness (sati) as a discipline of meditation. The Pali word sati, which originates from the Sanskrit ellipsis smṛti, literally means memory. However, early Buddhism assigned the term a new significance, and therefore employing the term as a synonym for memory is not adequate in a lot of circumstances. Thomas William Rhys Davids, a British scholar of the language, first translated the Pali word for "sati" as "mindfulness" in 1881. Davids built this adaptation on his interpretation of the Mahāsatipaṭṭhāna Sutta, which highlights the Buddhist practice of witnessing how objects arrived to being and pass away. David added that, sati is literally 'memory' but is used with reference to the constantly repeated phrase 'mindful and thoughtful' (sato sampajâno); and means that activity of mind and constant presence of mind which is one of the duties most frequently inculcated on the good Buddhist[11].

Even before its usage within the contemporary Buddhist context, the term "mindfulness" already existed in widespread usage in English[12]. In 1530, it initially appeared as pensee by John Palsgrave (French for "mindfulness"), followed by mindfulnesse in 1561 and mindfulness in 1817. Former terms with similar morphologies are mindful (first known in 1340), mindfully (1382), and the outmoded mindiness. A variety of terms, including "conscience," "attention," "meditation," "contemplation," and "insight," have been employed for translating sati. Smṛti may further denote two fundamental aspects; that is either to recollective memory, more broadly, memory of the past or "mindfulness," as it is most frequently articulated. The term sati is always referred to as "right mindfulness" (Sammā Sati) in the Theravadin Abhidhamma because it is mentioned as an influencing aspect that only emerges when there is good consciousness and hence is invariably called "right mindfulness" (Sammā-sati), whereas in the Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma literature sati is enumerated in the inclination that is invariably found in every mental event. Even though "wrong mindfulness" (micchā-sati) appears in some of the earliest Buddhist texts, only in instances in which no further explication can be found. Basically, Buddhism endured a protracted process of theoretical evolution. The concept of sati cannot be an exemption. Despite divergent opinions, mindfulness is generally understood to be a specific method of concentrating attention in addition to an approach of empathetic or non-judgmental awareness; an approach that is accommodating and transparent. The art of mindfulness meditation is an important aspect of the practice of mindfulness. It involves a technique of dis-identification or decentering with regard to the contents of the mind and an experiential measure into a broader domain of consciousness that may assist us in becoming conscious of who we actually are somewhat underneath our own ego's representation. Such disengaged consciousness decreases an individual's attachment to those concepts and memories associated with them as beings. This kind of paradigm shift is often coined as Re-perceiving. In the final analysis, it could be suggested that cultivating mindfulness, which is a technique prevalent in both Buddhism and psychology, is important for grasping the very essence of the self and attaining spiritual equilibrium.

Mindfulness as Vipassanā Meditation and the Self

A swift pair of messengers would ask the gatekeeper: "Where is the lord of this city?" and deliver a message of truth to the lord of the city. As mentioned before, "gatekeeper" stands for mindfulness and the "city" stands for the individual (kaya) according to the Buddha. He also explains that "the swift pair of messengers" is a designation for serenity (samatha) and insight (vipassanā); "the lord of the city" is a designation for consciousness; "a message of truth" is a designation for Nibbāna[13].

Samatha and Vipassanā are regarded as the two key elements of Buddhist meditation. According to the earlier scriptures, these two can bring about Nibbāna or redemption in one's consciousness if it is delimited or developed by sati. Although, self-transformation, self- experience, and self-exploration are the dominant framework within which mindfulness is developed, practiced, and implemented, it possesses far more varied contexts. In line with this, a plethora of research has been conducted on mindfulness and the self, connecting it to traits like self-acceptance, self-compassion, self-perspective transformation, self-consciousness, self-deconstruction and reconstruction, self-referential processing, and beyond. Most people agree that practicing mindfulness meditation provides a beneficial, substantial effect on one's ability to develop personally, enhance one's general state of well-being, along transform one's awareness of oneself and self-indulgent functioning pattern. It is generally believed that the cultivation of Vipassanā facilitates the acquisition of wisdom, whereas the cultivation of Samatha culminates in the development of states of mind (citta). The three main categories of Buddhist practice are ethical conduct (Sīla), concentration (Samādhi), and wisdom (paññā). Here, the development of states of mind and wisdom causes all the last two categories. It should be noted that concentration is also known as acquiring more profound states of mind (Adhicitta- sikkhā) or achieving excellence in states of mind (cittasampada). The practice of mindfulness, especially Satipaṭṭhāna, is widely considered to be the core of insight or Vipassanā meditation by practitioners and philosophers. Ven. Gunaratana commented that, Vipassana is the oldest of Buddhist meditation practices. The method comes directly from the Satipatthana Sutta, . . .[14],

The four foundations (body, feelings, mind and dhamma) of mindfulness, or Satipaṭṭhāna, provide the fundamental frame-

work for cultivating insight practice. Strangely, it appears that no work has been done to explain how sati and Vipassanā relate in the oldest Scholastic literatures. It is said that the development of Vipassanā leads to the attainment of wisdom (paññā). Numerous illustrations found in the Nikāya demonstrate that mindfulness serves as a prerequisite for the cultivation of wisdom. mindfulness serves as the method for the development of wisdom according to canonical passages that explain wisdom or Vipassanā. The faculty of wisdom is explained as "wisdom directed to rise and fall15" It subsequently ruminates on the nature of appearing in the body, the nature of disappearing in the body, or the essence of both surfacing and dissipating in the body. The same holds true for dhammas, thinking, and feelings. The process that determines how paññā emerges could be that sati guides saññā in an orientation that is consistent with Buddhist doctrine, enabling one to witness the ambivalences in each of the four aspects (body, feelings, mind and dhamma).

The Buddhist ontological notion of Vipassanā is the perception of all things as fleeting, inadequate, and not- self. Without comprehending the reality that all dependent things (Saṅkhāra) are ephemeral and inadequate and that everything (dhamma) is not-self, it is unattainable to fully appreciate the perks of Arahantness16, and so forth. When one can perceive the five aggregates as short-lived, inadequate, and consequently not-self, they are prepared to appreciate the essence of not-self about the five aggregates, irrespective of whether they are within or outside, past, future, or present. This way of life corresponds with each of the four Satipaṭṭhānas. Human experience can be defined depending on each of the five aggregates and the four primary subjects of Satipaṭṭhānas. Thus, practicing meditation on the body, mind, feelings, and dhammas entails attempting to meditate on the aggregates. Contemplation of these four Satipaṭṭhāna elements is frequently believed to be executed within as well as outside. It follows that evaluating the rise and fall of the aforementioned four objects equates to perceiving the aggregates as transient, which implies that they are also unacceptable and not-self. Consequently, it would make sense to consider the four Satipaṭṭhānas exercises to be Vipassanā.

The Mindful Self

The long-term mindfulness meditation regimens17 or interventions are particularly associated with improvements in constructive self-attitudes including non-attachment, self-compassion, and equanimity in addition to deeper empathy for oneself as well as for others. Some of the above improvements in self-perception can be witnessed or acknowledged in a qualitative way as well. On top of that, it has been claimed that mindfulness tends to reduce the defensive impulses of the ego as it is associated with lessened self-perception through self-images. In this regard, it fosters self-knowledge, which involves a recognition of one's inherent qualities along with the relationship between one's self and what one experiences. Moreover, it facilitates the experience of the self as an evolving, interconnected, ephemeral phenomenon rather than as an immovable, immutable entity. Given in another context, it transforms implicit self-concepts and perspectives on the self over time in a qualitative way, which leads to an overall reduction in self-referential functioning and an increase in first-person awareness. A propensity to identify with the phenomenon of experiencing the self without psychological defense mechanisms emerges instead of its affiliation with an unchanging static self. It has been recommended that mindfulness meditation yields clarity and accuracy in people's perceptions and decisions by teaching one to be, completely and without any prejudice, aware of what is happening with no judgment, or aversion for what appears. Decentering, or releasing oneself from the identification with any unaltered sense of self, is made easier by the meditator's knack for looking at the evolution of a continuously emerging sense of self within this enhanced clarity. There is a hypothesis that indicates constructive deconstruction of the self takes place when one becomes conscious of the fleeting nature of this sense of self.

The idea of the Mindful self often gets associated with the concept of self-actualisation. The selfless technique is considered an essential method, that can be attained through mindfulness, which eliminates anguish in the Buddhist tradition, where experiential self- reference is regarded as a root of suffering. Eliminating self-centeredness, fostering cognitive changes, acquiring wisdom, and ultimately attaining an undistorted self-image have been the primary objectives associated with mindfulness. While self-actualisation reinforces the value of positive self-esteem and self-identification, the mindful self undermines the self-reference process and the position of self-identification by accentuating the relevance of self-flexibility, decentering, non-attachment, and equilibrium. Hence, the idea of the Mindful self is not identical to self-actualisation.

Ego development and the Mindful Self are not the same thing. Five subliminal attributes have been considered to be indicative of a mature trait in ego development: individuality, self- awareness, complexity, wholeness, and autonomy. The concept of ego development is designed to clarify the different phases of psychological growth through which individuals evaluate their own experiences in addition to their interactions with the world around them. The more advanced stages of ego development correspond to the Mindful Self. These ideas are closely related to developing oneself but from different perspectives.

Final Remarks

Living in the present moment is what mindfulness is. It boils down to living a more conscious and awake life at all times. The key is to deliberately live in the present while devoting entire attention to anything and everything that is currently going around you within as well as outside of yourself. This entails relinquishing old patterns of evaluation and criticism and embracing everything encountered with an attitude of inquisitive acknowledgment, and compassion. The journey of self-transformation may encompass certain aspects of the self that are extremely personal, objective, subjective, and social. They reveal how more subtle subjective changes could be responsible for modifications within the realm of an individual's identity, self-worth, and comprehensive sense of self. One must first develop the ability to remain concentrated in the present moment to engage in mindfulness. But in the end, it's all about forming an affiliation to an infinite consciousness that is fully aware of everything we go

[11]T. W. Rhys Davids, tr., 1881. Buddhist Suttas. Clarendon Press. P 145

[12]"Mindfulness, n.". Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford University Press, September 2023, https://doi.org/10.1093/OED/5972187471.

[13]Kuan, Tse-fu. 2008. "Mindfulness in Methodical Meditation". Mindfulness In Early Buddhism: New Approaches Through Psychology and Textual Analysis of Pali, Chinese and Sanskrit Sources. Routledge. P 57.

through. When we develop an aptitude to focus our attention, we become able to distinguish between what we are aware of and what it is that are aware of at any given time. As we connect with this awareness, we begin to see that although its awareness is ever-changing, the awareness itself never changes. Moreover, if we look closely, we will see that it has an inherent openness to everything experienced and a quality of acceptance. We respond and relate with greater compassion and empathy when we adapt this welcoming and receptive awareness to ourselves and others. Our relationships begin to shift as we emerge kinder and calmer. Our ability to experience this open, unobstructed awareness in all instances enables us with the ability to keep ourselves emotionally balanced amidst any circumstance.

Happiness, according to Buddhism, is attained when one can acknowledge reality for what it is, that is, devoid of any mental constructions we impose upon it. Such authentic joy is achieved by dwelling in a profoundly balanced mental state that embraces all of the pleasures and sorrows of life and permeates all emotional states. Genuine contentment cannot be just discovered, rather, satisfaction is attained by mental conditioning that alienates the mind from detrimental emotions like aversion and relentless desire, and above all, by eliminating ignorance. At the beginning of my paper, I asked for submission. As a final thought, I would like to suggest that you can probably begin your quest toward happiness if and only if you are willing to fully devote yourself to exercising mindfulness meditation.

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[14] Ibid. P 58.

[15] In Sutta 10 of the Indriya Samyutta (SN V 199)

[16] In early Buddhism, an arhat (Sanskrit) or arahant (Pali) is defined as the "worthy one", was the highest ideal of a disciple of the Buddha. S/he was an individual who had completed the path to enlightenment and achieved nirvana.

[17] This section is developed from Xiao Q, Yue C, He W and Yu J-y (2017) The Mindful Self: A Mindfulness- Enlightened Self-view. Frontiers in Psychology,8:1752. P 3. Doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01752.