

Extracts from *The Way of Mindfulness* by Soma Thera

Mindfulness is said to have ‘non-superficiality’ as its salient characteristic, the ‘absence of confusion’ as its function, and the ‘state of being turned towards the object’ as its manifestation. It is also called the ‘non-negligence’ which indicates the state of unremitting alertness of the person who is proficient in spiritual endeavor.

Clear and strong mindfulness is conjoined with wisdom and is called the ‘prudence of mindfulness’. It is then pure cognition, the cognition which is free from discrimination that proceeds from delusion. It is such a cognition that is indicated in the teaching of the buddha to Bahiya Daruciriya, which says that to one there must be in what is seen just the seen, in the heard just the heard, in the contacted just the contacted, in the apperceived just the apperceived, so that one may be free from lust, hatred and delusion and from bondage to this or any other world.

This ‘objective’ way of looking at a thing, freed from considerations of the personal reactions to that thing, is the pith of the method and constitutes what is called ‘knowing as it is’. Also, by its quality of reckoning just what is present, mindfulness cuts down discursive thought and prepares the mind to take in the actual characteristics of the cognized objects. In this sense, mindfulness lets the objects speak for themselves and unfold their nature. (...)

Lack of freedom consists of subjection to hate, lust and ignorance. Virtuous conduct wipes out hate; the calm of skillful concentration casts out lust; and wise understanding of the world within oneself dispels ignorance. The Way of Mindfulness does all this; it is designed for the attainment of fullest inner freedom. (...)

The Way of Mindfulness is the objective way of viewing anything whatsoever... By its patient pursuit of the meaning of things, its readiness to see every side of any thought or experience, and by its breadth and tolerance, it predisposes the mind to receive the impressions of truth, induces inner pliancy and the mood of spiritual receptivity, necessary for highest intuition.

Continued practice of the arousings of mindfulness instils into the meditator the habit of systematic or proper attention regarding the details of a thing and accustoms him to test all phenomena for their inherent characteristics of transience and so forth. Thus, he gradually learns to turn away from the worldling’s view of things and look at them by way of condition, cause, dependent origination, element, etc., and becomes, in spirit, one with the Dharma. (...)

The use of it [the *Satipatthana Sutta*] as a deathbed discourse [in the Theravada tradition] points out that mindfulness besides being one of the foremost qualities needed for holy living, is also a quality that makes for holy dying.

You can download the full text of Soma Thera’s commentary on mindfulness here:

<https://www.accesstoinight.org/lib/authors/soma/wayof.html>