

Chapter Thirteen: The Four Close Applications of Mindfulness

A Compendium of Practices

(*Śikṣasamuccaya*)

By

Śāntideva

Translated by

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[255]¹ Once you have made your mind serviceable in that way, engage in the close applications of mindfulness. In that regard, I have already explained the close application of mindfulness of the body in the preceding discussion of impurity. The *Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra*² presents a brief discussion of its divisions:

Moreover, son of the family, a bodhisattva closely applies mindfulness to the body while contemplating, ‘This body is simply a configuration of feet, toes, calves, thighs, chest, abdomen, navel, spine, heart, ribs, sides of the torso, shoulders, hands, forearms, upper arms, the region between the shoulder blades, neck, jaws, forehead, head, and the skull. They are assembled by the agent that arise from karma, and they are the location of mental afflictions, derivative mental afflictions, speculations, and various ruminations, numbering in the hundreds of thousands. Many types of substances are brought together in it, including the hair on the head, body hair, nails, teeth, bones, skin, flesh, fatty secretions of the flesh,

¹ This translation from the Tibetan was made on the basis of the Derge Tengyur edition of the *Śikṣasamuccaya*, available from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center Library.

² *Sūtra on Chanting the Dharma Together*

sinews, fat, oil, lymph, spleen, liver, urine, excrement, stomach, intestines, blood, phlegm, bile, pus, saliva, brain, and spinal fluid. Thus, it is a compilation of many substances.’

In this regard, one closely applies mindfulness with the question, ‘What is called *the body*?’ When this is analyzed, one considers, ‘This body is like space’ and closely applies mindfulness to the body as being like space. [256] One perceives everything to be like space. In order to thoroughly fathom the body, mindfulness is not closely applied to anything else, it is not focused on any other aspect, and it is not allowed to become distracted.

The same text says:

This body has not come from the past. It does not proceed to the future. It is not present in the past or the future. Other than being something that has arisen from unreal delusion, it is devoid of an agent or one who experiences, it has no beginning, end, or middle, no fundamental location, no master, no owner, and no possessor. It is designated by the transient labels ‘assemblage,’ ‘body,’ ‘enjoyment,’ ‘abode,’ ‘basis,’ ‘dwelling,’ and ‘sense base.’ This body has no essence. It arose from the semen and blood of one’s father and mother, is by nature impure, putrid, and foul-smelling. It is troubled by the thieves of attachment, hatred, and delusion and by fear and despair. Closely apply mindfulness to it, thinking, ‘Always subject to dissolution, separation, dispersion, and destruction, it is a container for a hundred thousand different diseases.’

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra*³ also states:

Alas! One who knows that this body is impermanent, not remaining for long, and that its end is death, does not engage in antagonistic behavior for the sake of the body, but takes the essence of life. One takes three kinds of essences: the essence of the body, of enjoyment, and of life. Considering that the body is impermanent, one agrees to be the servant and pupil of all sentient beings and strives to do whatever one can to serve them. Considering that the body is impermanent, one avoids all faulty physical conduct, including crooked, hypocritical, and contrived behavior. Considering that the body is impermanent, one does not disdain one's own life, nor does one commit evil even at the cost of one's life. Considering that the body is impermanent, one does not crave or cling to enjoyments, but completely offers up everything one has. Son of the family, [257] a bodhisattva meditates by closely applying mindfulness to the body, observing it as a body. Designating the bodies of all sentient beings as one's own body, one thinks, 'I shall establish the bodies of all sentient beings as bodies of the Buddha. Just as the Tathāgata's body is undefiled, so one regards the actual nature of one's own body. By knowing the quality of freedom from defilement, one recognizes the bodies of all sentient beings as having that characteristic...

The *Vīradatta-paripṛcchā*⁴ also says:

³ *Sūtra on the Jewel at the Crown of the Head*

⁴ *Inquiry of Vīradatta*

This body gradually comes into being and is gradually destroyed, it is composed of atoms, hollow inside, flexible, and discharging through nine orifices and pores, like an anthill inhabited by snakes. Like a monkey, it is contentious with its companions. Like a bad friend, it is devious. Like a clot of foam, it is fragile by nature. Like a water bubble, it arises, dissolves, and melts away. Like a mirage, it is deceptive, and like a plantain tree, it has no core when cut down. Like an optical illusion, it is misleading, like a king, it is imperious, and like an enemy, it seeks its chance. Like a thief, it is untrustworthy, like an executioner, it has no affection, and like a foe, it wishes you no good. Like a murderer, it obstructs the life force of wisdom, like an empty village, there is no one there, and like a potter's vessel, it finally breaks. Like a pond, it is completely full of various impurities, and like a container of bugs, it excretes impurities... Like a tree on a riverbank, it fluctuates and shifts, like the current of a great river, [258] it finally ends in the ocean of death, and like a temporary dwelling, it is an abode of all kinds of misery. Like a homeless shelter, it is not owned by anyone, and like a jailor, it can be bribed... Like a little child, it must always be cared for.

The same text says:

He who is proud of the appearance of his body, which is an assemblage of impurities, is manifestly a fool, like someone who mindlessly goes around carrying a pot full of feces. Snot drips from his nose, unpleasant odors are constantly emitted from his mouth, and his eyes are rimmed with worm-like gunk.

Who would be attracted to and cherish that? Although a fool may take a piece of coal and rub it, thinking it will become white, it never turns white but rubs away, for the fool's notion is obviously mistaken. Likewise, when an intelligent, hygienic person decides to clean his body, even if he washes it by anointing it and wiping it off a hundred times, the Lord of Death will annihilate it and it will never become clean.

Similarly:

Thus, a bodhisattva constantly regards the body as subject to destruction, while leaking through nine orifices, and he regards his body as an abode of 84,000 kinds of minute organisms. A bodhisattva regards the body as the food of wolves, jackals, dogs, and other carnivores that devour raw flesh. A bodhisattva regards the body as being like a contraption held together with bones and sinews. A bodhisattva regards the body as arising from food and drink and not as something independent. This is to be understood in detail in that text.

Regarding the close application of mindfulness to feelings, the *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* states:

Son of the family, to summarize a bodhisattva's regarding feelings as feelings by closely applying mindfulness to them, he experiences great compassion for sentient beings who dwell in the feeling of happiness. [259] He practices,

thinking, “One who has no feeling is happy.” In order to eliminate the feelings of all sentient beings, he regards feelings as feelings by closely applying mindfulness to them. In order to bring an end to the feelings of sentient beings, he dons his armor, but he does not bring an end to his own feelings. Whatever feelings he experiences, he embraces and experiences all those feelings with great compassion. Whenever he experiences pleasant feelings, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in attachment, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for attachment. Whenever he experiences painful feelings, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in hatred, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for hatred. Whenever he experiences feelings that are neither pleasant nor painful, he realizes great compassion for all sentient beings who indulge in delusion, and he completely abandons all of his own propensities for delusion.

He does not become attached to pleasant feelings, for he is skilled at vanquishing attachment. He also does not become angry at painful feelings, for he is skilled at vanquishing anger. He also does not become ignorant in response to feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant, for he is skilled at vanquishing ignorance. Whatever feelings he experiences, he knows them all to be impermanent and experiences them as such. He recognizes and experiences them as unsatisfying. He recognizes and experiences them as identityless. He recognizes pleasant feelings as impermanent, he recognizes painful feelings as unsatisfying, and he recognizes feelings that are neither painful nor pleasant as

peaceful. Thus, whatever is pleasant is impermanent, whatever is painful is unsatisfying, and whatever is neither pleasant nor painful is identityless...

The *Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra* states: [260] “

When one is struck by a painful feeling, one arouses great compassion for all sentient beings who are born into miserable realms of existence and who have no leisure... They fixate on feelings, totally identify with them, hold them close, attend to them, misapprehend them, and ruminate about them.

The *Dharmasaṅgīti Sūtra* also states:

We say, “the experience of feelings,” but apart from the feeling, who is the one who feels? If the one who feels it is not other than the feeling, then who feels it? Just as enlightenment is peaceful, pure, and luminous, so do the wise closely apply mindfulness to feelings.

That is a summary of the close application of mindfulness to feelings. The close application of mindfulness to the mind is discussed in the *Ratnacūḍa Sūtra*:

Consider this, “While thoroughly experiencing the mind, what are those minds that become attached, or hateful, or deluded? Do they arise in the past, future, or present? Any mind that is past has vanished. Whatever is in the future has not

come. Whatever arises in the present does not last.” Kāśyapa, the mind is not found to be present inside, or outside, or both inside and outside. Kāśyapa, the mind is formless, undemonstrable, intangible, devoid of a basis, invisible, unknowable, and without any location. Kāśyapa, the mind has never even been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen by any of the buddhas. Apart from phenomena that arise from mistaken identification, how can one know the kind of process of anything that has never even been seen, is not seen, and will never be seen by any of the buddhas? Kāśyapa, the mind is like an illusion, for it apprehends many kinds of events by way of unreal conceptual projections...[261]

Kāśyapa, the mind is like the current of a stream, for it does not remain, but arises, passes away, and vanishes. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the wind, for it goes on for a long time and moves without being able to hold it. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the radiant light of a lamp, for it arises in dependence upon causes and conditions. Kāśyapa, the mind is like the sky, for it is temporarily obscured by mental afflictions and derivative mental afflictions. Kāśyapa, the mind is like lightning, for it instantly vanishes and does not linger... Kāśyapa, because the mind produces all suffering, it is like an enemy. Kāśyapa, because the mind destroys all the roots of virtue, it is like a sandcastle. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes suffering for happiness, it is like a fishhook. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes the identityless for an identity, it is like a dream. Kāśyapa, because the mind mistakes the impure for the pure, it is like a blue-bottle fly. Kāśyapa, because the mind inflicts many kinds of injuries, it is like an adversary. Kāśyapa, because the mind always looks for faults, it is like predatory goblin. Kāśyapa,

because the mind always looks for its chance, it is like an enemy. Kāśyapa, because the mind is imbued with attachment and hostility, it always vacillates. Kāśyapa, because the mind robs all the roots of virtue, it is like a thief. Kāśyapa, because the mind is attracted to forms, it is like the eye of a fly. Kāśyapa, because the mind is attracted to sounds, it is like a battle-drum. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to smells like a pig that likes disgusting odors. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to tastes like a maid who eats leftovers. Kāśyapa, the mind is attracted to tactile sensations like a fly stuck in a dish of oil.

Kāśyapa, even though one looks for the mind everywhere, it is not to be found. Whatever is unfindable is unobservable. [262] Whatever is unobservable does not arise in the past, or in the future, or in the present. Whatever does not arise in the past, or in the future, or in the present really transcends the three times. Whatever really transcends the three times is neither existent nor non-existent...

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa Sūtra* also states:

By looking everywhere for the mind, you do not really see it inside or outside, nor do you really see it both inside and outside. It is not really seen among the psycho-physical aggregates, or among the elements, or the sense-bases. Since the mind is not really seen, you may ask, “From what does the mind arise?” Looking everywhere for the continuum of the mind, you may wonder, “Perhaps the mind arises from the presence of an object.” Or you may ask, “Might the apprehended

object be one thing and the mind something else? Or is that very apprehended object the mind? If the apprehended object were totally different from the mind, then the mind would be split in two. On the other hand, if that very object *is* the mind, then how could the mind see itself? But it's not possible for the mind to see itself. Just as the blade of a sword cannot cut itself, and a fingertip cannot touch itself, the mind can't see the mind...

Son of the family, furthermore, that which moves swiftly, ever so swiftly, without remaining still, like a monkey, like the wind, like a waterfall, and like the flame of an oil-lamp, moves far away. It is incorporeal, craves objects, experiences the six sense bases, and is conscious of one thing after another. "A still mind" [263] is said to be one that is unmoving, single-pointed, not agitated, not scattered, single-pointedly in *śamatha*, and free of distraction.

The *Ārya Akṣayamati Sūtra*:

One resolves, "I shall strive for achievement, and I shall not lose sight of this actual nature of the mind." What is the actual nature of the mind, and what is achievement? The mind is like an illusion. Giving everything away is called the "actual nature of the mind." Giving up all one's possessions and totally dedicating oneself to the purification of all the buddha-fields is called "achievement"...

The contemplation of phenomena is explained in the same text: "A bodhisattva who contemplates phenomena as phenomena and dwells upon this does not see the qualities of a buddha anywhere, enlightenment anywhere, the

path anywhere, liberation anywhere, or deliverance anywhere. Knowing how all phenomena arise, he reaches the entrance to the samādhi of great compassion in order that sentient beings may know freedom from obscurations. He comes to recognize all phenomena and all mental afflictions as illusions. These phenomena are devoid of mental afflictions; they are not imbued with mental afflictions. Why? When considered in terms of definitive reality, mental afflictions are not assembled or aggregated. There is no reality of attachment, or of hatred, or of delusion. Due to fathoming these mental afflictions, there is enlightenment. The essential nature of these mental afflictions is also the essential nature of enlightenment. Mindfulness is closely applied in that way.

The *Ārya Ratnacūḍa* also states:

Son of the family, when a bodhisattva closely applies mindfulness in the contemplation of phenomena as phenomena, he thinks, “When there is arising, only phenomena arise. When there is cessation, only phenomena cease. [264] In them there is no self, or sentient being, or life force, or being that is born, or one who is revived, or person, or individual, or man, or android, or one who is born, ages, dies, transmigrates, or is reborn. This is the actual nature of phenomena. If they are brought about, they are established as existent; and if they are not brought about, they are not established as existent. However they are brought about—whether virtuous, non-virtuous, or unfluctuating—they are established as

being so, but there is nothing that brings about phenomena, nor does anything arise without a cause...”

The same text states:

However little one investigates profound phenomena, one never forsakes the recollection of the bodhicitta of omniscience.

The *Ārya Lalitavistara Sūtra*⁵ states:

Composite phenomena are impermanent and unstable. They are subject to destruction, like an unbaked pot. They are like a borrowed article. Like a sandcastle, they do not last long. These composite phenomena are destructible, like plaster during the rainy season. They are like sand on a riverbank. They are fragile, for they depend on contribution conditions. Composite phenomena are like the diminishing flame of a lamp, for their nature is to quickly arise and pass away. Like the wind, they do not remain. Like a bubble, they are fragile and devoid of an essence. Composite phenomena are unmoving and empty. When investigated, they are seen to be like a mound of plantain trees. Like an illusion, they delude the mind, and they are like an empty fist used to coax a child.

All changes in composite phenomena are brought about by causes and conditions, with one acting as the cause for another, which arises in dependence

⁵ *Detailed Explanation of the Play*

upon it. But childish people do not realize this. For example, a grass rope is made by twisting muñja grass and well-buckets are turned by a wheel, but neither of those is brought about the individual elements. Likewise, all the links of becoming are brought about in dependence upon other links, but they are not brought about individually, [265] nor is their past or future ever perceived. Just as there is a sprout if there is a seed, but the sprout is not the seed, nor is it other than the seed, nor is it [both], so its nature is neither permanent nor annihilated. Ignorance is the cause of composite phenomena, but composite phenomena are not really existent. Ignorance and composite phenomena are empty of inherent nature, and they do not move. The impression of a seal appears from the seal, but no transference of that cause is ever observed. The impression is not in the seal, nor is it anywhere else. So composite phenomena are neither permanent nor annihilated.

Visual consciousness arises in dependence upon the eye and form, but the eye does not depend on form, nor is form transferred from the eye. These are by nature identityless and impure, but they are imagined as having identities and as being pure. Even though that imputation is erroneous and untrue, visual consciousness arises from it. The wise see that consciousness ceases and emerges, arising and passing. The yogin sees that it does not go anywhere nor come from anywhere, like an empty illusion.

For example, fire arises in dependence upon the three factors of a fire drill stick, the basis for that drill, and the manual effort of turning it; but once it has arisen, it does not last long. Then when the wise examine this, looking in all

directions to see where it comes from and where it goes, they find that its coming and going are unobservable. The wise say that the contributing conditions of the psychophysical aggregates and sense-bases are ignorance and craving, and from their assemblage there is a “sentient being.” But ultimately that is unobservable.

{In dependence upon the lips, throat, and palate, from the movement of the tongue emerge the sounds of letters, but they are not in the throat or the palate, and the letters are unobservable in any of them. The speech that depends upon their combination emerges by the power of intelligence of the mind, but the mind and speech are invisible and formless. They are not observed either inside or outside. When the wise examine the arising and passing of the sounds of speech, the voice, sounds, and melodies, they see that all speech is like an echo, momentary, and without an essence.

For example, with the threefold combination of hand movements in conjunction with wood and strings, pleasant sounds arise from such instruments as a lute and flute. Then when the wise look in all the cardinal and intermediate directions to find where the sound arises from and where it goes, they find that its coming and going are unobservable. Thus, all the transformations of composite phenomena arise from causes and contributing conditions. But the yogin who perceives what is real sees that composite phenomena are empty and unmoving. The psychophysical aggregates, sense-bases, and elements are empty inside and empty outside. They are all devoid of an identity and without location. The characteristic of phenomena is the essential nature of space.

The *Lokanātha-vyākaraṇa*⁶ states:

Conditions are empty and nameless. What can be said of a name? Emptiness.
 Nowhere are devas, nāgas, or rākśasas to be found. Men or no men, all are known
 as that. Names are imputed, but they are empty, for in names there is no name.
 Nameless are all conditions, but illuminated by name, for the nature of a name is
 neither seen nor heard, it neither arises nor passes away. Of what do you ask the
 name? Name is a matter of convention, declarations made with labels. This one is
 Ratnacitra by name; that other man is Ratnottama. }⁷

This concludes Chapter XIII, “The Close Applications of Mindfulness,” of *A Compendium of Practices*, concluding the discussion of the close applications of mindfulness.

⁶ *Explanation by the Lord of the World*

⁷ The section in curly brackets is found only in the Sanskrit edition of the text, not in the Tibetan translation.