

Breakfast at Last!

Bhante Bodhidhamma · Tips of the Day · 2 min read

If you have a young family or for some other reason you cannot practise this mindful eating, then do make sure you have that quiet cup of tea, just by yourself, you with your body. And of course, it can be done whenever we have a drink or eat, though that first break-fast is a special time for it sets the attitude for the day. Consider the importance of the body especially so that the Buddha pointed to this form of existence as the best to attain liberation. Here we have joys and woes and the intelligence to seek and find the escape. Let us remind ourselves that we cannot be here without a body, that through the body we come to receive knowledge, that we can communicate, relate, take part in society, create good kamma and practise meditation. To feed the body is to nourish a space, sacred specifically to ourselves. The Buddha says that this fathom long body is the world, and it is here we can find the causes of suffering and the end to it. So, having made your cup of tea and holding it before you, now is the chance to reinforce your commitment to the Path of Dhamma. Here at Satipanya we have devised a reflection based on the one the Buddha gave to the Sangha. Wisely reflecting, I eat this food not to indulge sensual pleasure or to seek comfort. Being mindful of every mouthful, I shall undermine unwholesome habits and develop appreciative joy. I eat only to sustain and nourish the body, thinking thus: I will allay hunger without overeating so that I may continue to live blamelessly and at ease. This offering brings me health, long life, strength and happiness. May the merits of my practice support the happiness, health, long life, rebirth in the heavenly realms and ultimately Nibbana of those who have kindly provided this food. The final paragraph is a grateful acknowledgement of the efforts of thousands of people and plants, and the sacrifice of animals if you are not a vegetarian, that have brought this food to our table. Even if we only do the following exercise once a day and that with just a cup of tea, it will keep alive within us the spiritual practice around food. To continue: Closing the eyes, contact the body and get in touch with feelings of thirst or hunger. Acknowledge that some of those feelings will be natural appetite, the body manifesting its needs. But that insidiously intermingled are those feelings of greed. Making a very clear resolution to nourish the body, take the first sip or bite and simply sit back within yourself and observe, feel and experience the arising and passing of different tastes, the action of tasting and chewing, all the while mindful of arising delight. Purposefully intend the action of swallowing, follow the beverage or food and stay with whatever feelings arise. Momentary satisfaction of appetite insidiously intermingled with the gratification of greed! Wait till 'More!' arises and repeat the process. At some point there will be feelings of 'Enough' coming from the body and here it may be that greed steals quietly from its hiding place. Go on, just this once. Just that one more piece of toast! Just sitting till that sensual desire passes, means we have got the better of the habit of indulgence. Our self-discipline has been strengthened. Our body is healthier for putting its needs first. When the 'More' passes, there may arise contentment – the heart without greed.

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Discerning the difference between contentment and gratification is crucial. One leads to Nibbana, the other to Realm of Hungry Ghosts! And that realm is right here manifesting as a feelings of unsatisfactoriness, of never enough, nagging compulsions and dictatorial addictions. Buon appetito!

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