

Buddhaghosa's View on the Transformation of Human Behaviour for the Promotion of Mindfulness and Cognitive Wellbeing

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Abstract:

This research examines the classical Theravāda Buddhist philosopher Buddhaghosa's systematic framework for the transformation of human behaviour as the essential foundation for cultivating mindfulness (*sati*) and achieving cognitive wellbeing (*paññā*). Drawing primarily from his seminal work, the *Visuddhimagga* (The Path of Purification), the analysis posits that Buddhaghosa views behavioural change not as a peripheral activity but as the indispensable groundwork for all subsequent mental development. His model is fundamentally a two-stage process of purification (*visuddhi*), beginning with the purification of conduct (*sīla-visuddhi*).

Buddhaghosa argues that intentional moral discipline (*sīla*), encompassing bodily and verbal actions, directly creates the conditions for cognitive tranquillity. By consciously restraining harmful actions and cultivating virtuous ones, the practitioner stabilizes the mind, reduces the agitation caused by remorse and relational conflict, and establishes a baseline of psychological security. This ethical foundation is presented as the prerequisite for the successful practice of concentrated meditation (*samādhi*), which in turn deepens mindfulness. For Buddhaghosa, mindfulness is both the guardian of this ethical groundwork and the key instrument for introspective insight (*vipassanā*). It is through sustained, moment-to-moment mindfulness that one directly apprehends the impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and non-self (*anattā*) nature of all phenomena, including one's own behavioural impulses and cognitive patterns.

Ultimately, Buddhaghosa's view presents an integrated psychospiritual trajectory: transformed external behaviour pacifies the mind, allowing for the cultivation of mindfulness; this sharpened mindfulness then deconstructs the cognitive distortions that perpetuate unskillful behaviour, leading to a virtuous cycle. The endpoint is cognitive wellbeing—a profound, unshakeable understanding (*ñāṇa*) that liberates the mind from suffering. His system thus offers a holistic paradigm where ethical action, attentional training, and transformative insight are inextricably linked in the promotion of lasting mental health and freedom.