

III

ANATOMY

The first of the seven spokes in the wheel of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice described in this book takes up the anatomical constitution of the body. The instructions in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* are as follows (MN 10):

One examines this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin and full of many kinds of impurity: “In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, mesentery, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints, and urine.”

The present and the other two body contemplations taken up in the next two chapters are meant as aids to cultivate ways of relating to the body without clinging. Elsewhere I have discussed in more detail how early Buddhist meditation theory shows a range of perspectives on the body (Anālayo 2017a: 43ff). The deconstruction of the perception of the body as sensually alluring, which underpins the present exercise, is not the only perspective. It finds its complements in the practice of mindfulness of the body as a neutral way of relating to the body and in the experience of the body pervaded by bliss and happiness during absorption.

THE NATURE OF THE BODY

It is against the background of these complementary perspectives that the evaluative element in the present exercise is best appreciated. In the extract translated above this evaluation takes the form of directing attention to the body as being “impure” (*asuci*), which could alternatively also be translated as “dirty”.

In order to appreciate this type of qualification, it can be helpful to turn to a standard recollection to be practised by monastics in relation to their requisites (Anālayo 2017a: 47). This recollection draws attention to the fact that requisites become dirty through contact with our own body. On reflection this turns out to be actually true. Clothes and bedding do become dirty through use, and a major source of that dirt is our own body. Although this is an aspect of the physical body that in contemporary society we are not accustomed to paying attention to, it can hardly be denied. Actually the main thrust of this exercise is precisely to question the way we have become accustomed to relating to human bodies.

An alternative qualification of the same type of exercise speaks of the body as being “not beautiful” (*asubha*). The significance of this qualification in the present context is the notion of beauty as something that is sexually attractive and alluring. It is the type of beauty that arouses the wish to touch, kiss, and have sex. The target of the exercise is not to put into question aesthetic beauty in general. In fact in a discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* the Buddha eulogizes the physical beauty of a monk he happens to see at that moment (SN 21.5; Anālayo 2017a: 52). This passage clearly shows that there is no problem with beauty as such. The problem rather lies in sensual desire.

Only a minority of human beings fit the tight mould of modern expectations of physical beauty. It is simply unfair that the majority of human beings are discriminated against because they are too plump or too thin, too short here or too long there, because they have this or that skin colour. All human beings should in principle have an equal right to acceptance and respect, regardless of the shape of their body. Racial discrimination is particularly harmful. Skin after all is just skin, whatever its colour. It carries no implication whatsoever about the person itself. It has no relation to whether the person is intelligent or not, honest or not.

SENSUALITY

Racial discrimination is not the only issue. Sexual desire can get really out of hand and lead to horrible things, such as rape, child pornography, and so on. These examples should make it clear that sexual desire cannot simply be equated with love. Rape, for example, is quite definitely not a form of love. On the contrary, it is a dangerous form of mental sickness that brutally inflicts incredible harm. There are times when the rapist even kills the victim. This is the very opposite of love.

Even apart from such extreme manifestations of sensual desire, it seems quite meaningful to be able to curtail or eliminate sexual desire when it occurs in inappropriate situations. Someone might experience the arising of sensual desire towards the partner of their best friend, for example. It would be useful in such a case to be able to quench the flame of lust at the beginning, when doing so is still manageable. If not reined in, the small flame can become a fully fledged fire that burns us

and others. Here just reminding ourselves that the body is a combination of anatomical parts can help to get a reality check, to distinguish what is really there from what the mind has made out of it.

The disadvantages of sensual desire find illustration in several similes in the *Potaliya-sutta* (MN 54; Anālayo 2013: 74ff). One simile likens indulging in sensuality to carrying a burning torch against the wind, with the result that the carrier will get burned. Indulging in sensuality is like unskilfully taking hold of a burning torch in such a way that we get burned ourselves. The issue is not the search for pleasure as such; in effect the simile does not imply that there is something wrong in principle with using a torch. The problem is holding the torch in the wrong direction. Applied to the quest for pleasure, the problem is similarly the wrong direction, namely by way of sensual indulgence.

The fire imagery also comes up in the *Māgandiya-sutta* (MN 75; Anālayo 2013: 73). This discourse describes a leper who cauterizes his wounds over a fire. Even though such cauterization will give him temporary relief, it worsens his condition. The same holds for sensuality. The more we indulge in it, the stronger sensual desire will become. In contrast, a healed leper will no longer want to go anywhere near the fire. He would even resist with all his might if he were forcefully dragged to the fire. This illustrates one who has left the fire of sensual desire behind for good. Such a one will not want to be anywhere near indulgence in sensuality, simply because sensual pleasures have completely lost all their former attraction.

Another simile in the *Potaliya-sutta* depicts a hungry dog chewing on a bone, unable to satisfy its hunger. Sensual indulgence similarly is incapable of yielding lasting satisfaction. Just as the taste of the bone seems promising to the dog, so too the pursuit of sensuality seems promising. Yet both fail to live up to their promise.

Still another simile in the same discourse describes a bird that has got hold of a piece of meat and is pursued by other birds trying to get that piece of meat. Unless the bird lets go of the piece of meat, it risks being hurt or even killed by the other birds. This simile illustrates the competition among those who are in quest of sensual gratification. We might think of two men in love with the same woman who may even go so far as to kill each other.

Sensual attraction is closely related to our own sense of identity. This comes to the fore in a discourse in the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (AN 7.48; Anālayo 2013: 71). The discourse describes how a male tends to identify with his sense of masculinity and find joy in it, just as a female tends to identify with her sense of femininity and find joy in it. Having identified with masculinity within, the man seeks femininity outside, just as the woman, having identified with femininity within, seeks masculinity outside. In this way, yearning for sexual union prevents them from transcending the narrow confines of their sense of identity. Although not explicitly mentioned, the presentation in this discourse could also be applied to the case of same-sex sensual desires. The basic principle remains that letting go of a limited and limiting sense of identity, which is what fuels sensual desire, opens up the path to freedom.

The present exercise offers a training to reach such freedom. It involves a shift of perception away from the default notion of the human body as sexually attractive, in which our society has amply trained us. Think of all the time and resources invested in beautifying and adorning the body. This is such a waste of time and resources, which could be used for better purposes. All that is required is to emerge from the obsession with the body as sexually alluring. Just keeping the body clean and in working order is so much more simple and appropriate.

Strictly speaking, sensual desire falls under the header of the five hindrances. Nevertheless, it might be worth pointing out already here that desire as such is not necessarily a hindrance. The desire to develop ourselves and to progress on the path is certainly praiseworthy. There is no question about this. The problem with sensual types of desire is simply the mistaken belief that true happiness can be found by gratifying the senses. With progress in practice it becomes increasingly clear that it is more worthwhile to cultivate the mind in such a way that it gives rise to wholesome joy and happiness. The joy and happiness experienced during deepening concentration or insight are rooted in a condition of the mind that is aloof from sensual desire. The primary function of the present exercise is to facilitate such seclusion. It is a medicine, a cure to enable the experience of a greater and more refined happiness than we could ever

achieve through sensual indulgence. In a way it offers a shift towards developing intimacy within, rather than embarking on the quest for intimacy through external sexual union.

THE SIMILE

As already mentioned in the previous section, the actual contemplation of the anatomical parts as impure or dirty, or as bereft of beauty, is not a form of mindfulness in itself. Instead it is an “examination”. This difference needs to be kept in mind. The evaluative element introduced with this examination is not a form of mindfulness itself; it is a practice that is meant to lead to establishing the balanced stance of mindfulness.

The topic of balance and freedom from desire and aversion comes to the fore in the simile that accompanies the present exercise in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*:

It is just as a man with good eyes who has opened a double-mouthed bag full of different sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, which he would examine: “This is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, and this is white rice.”

Looking at various grains in such a bag, apparently used for sowing, would hardly provoke a reaction. We would not think of rice or beans as sexy or want to devise ways of beautifying them. They are simply rice or beans.

The aim of this exercise is to cultivate a similar attitude towards different parts of the body. In effect the list of anatomical parts includes aspects of the human body that are generally considered attractive, such as hair, nails, teeth, and skin. Alongside these come parts that are generally considered as disgusting, such as faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, and so on. In the *Madhyama-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* the instruction is to contemplate the body “according to what is attractive and what is repulsive”, thereby explicitly noting that the listing of anatomical parts comprises both aspects (Anālayo 2013: 63). The task is to emerge from attraction and from disgust, learning to perceive the parts of the body with the same attitude that we would have when looking at various grains.

This contemplation could be combined with an acknowledgement of each part’s functionality. Such an aspect of practice is mentioned explicitly in the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*,

which introduces the list of anatomical parts by encouraging contemplation of “this body according to its nature and functions, from head to feet and from feet to head” (Anālayo 2013: 64). It is indeed important to have a functioning human body in order to be able to practise the path. This is worth keeping in mind, as developing aversion towards the body or not taking proper care of it when it is sick can also become an obstacle to progress towards liberation, just as is the case for sensual indulgence.

A PRACTICAL SIMPLIFICATION

For actual practice of this exercise I would like to introduce a simplification. This simplification involves summarizing the different anatomical parts under three headings. These are skin, flesh, and bones. The idea for such a simplification came to me from the *Sampasādanīya-sutta* (DN 28; Anālayo 2013: 72). The relevant passage describes a progression from contemplation of the anatomical parts to being aware just of the bones, leaving aside skin and flesh. This implies that the list of anatomical parts can be summarized under these three aspects. The simplification I am proposing here is just meant as a starting point, leaving it open to each practitioner to change to a more detailed contemplation later on.

The mode of practice I recommend to get started takes the form of body scans. One body scan to become aware of the skin, another to become aware of the flesh, and a third to become aware of the bones.

By way of background to the scans, I would like to say a few words about the relationship between a map and reality in meditation. Our meditative experience is conditioned by both. The teachings passed on by oral transmission are maps to be used for practice. The application of these maps to the reality experienced in meditation becomes mental cultivation (*bhāvanā*). Maps are clearly important, but they are only tools. They are similar to a raft, which is useful for crossing over but afterwards can be discarded. The use of a map as such is not problematic, as long as we make sure beforehand that this map accords with reality. In other words, using a map does not mean giving free rein to any type of imagination. Instead, we make sure that our map is in accordance with reality. Such a map has the potential to lead to knowledge and vision of things as they really are (*yathābhūta*).

Using concepts as aids for the cultivation of insight works well as

long as our overall map is in accordance with reality. It not only works well; concepts are actually required. Without the use of any concept, we would hardly be able to know that there are “skin”, “flesh”, and “bones”. We would not even be able to know that “there is a body.”

Regarding the correctness of the map, the fact that the human body has the anatomical parts listed in the instructions is beyond doubt. The same holds for the proposition that the body has skin, flesh, and bones. There can hardly be any question about the accuracy of this particular map inasmuch as just the anatomical parts are concerned, leaving aside for the time being the evaluation of these as impure.

When doing a body scan with attention given to skin, flesh, or bones, it is not essential to be able to sense each and every part distinctly. As a matter of fact, the listing in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* is not comprehensive. Elsewhere the discourses reflect awareness of the brain, for example, which is not mentioned in the instruction for contemplating the body’s anatomical parts. Only with later tradition does the brain come to be added to the list (Anālayo 2003: 147n119, 2013: 67, and 2018c: 152).

Whatever anatomical parts are selected for contemplation, we already know that these are in the body. So there is no need to conduct a personal research project aimed at proving their existence and certifying our map. Rather, we are just trying to cultivate a general sense of the constitution of our body. Just knowing that this body is made up of skin (including hairs and nails), of flesh (comprising muscles, tendons, and organs), and of bones (covering also the teeth) is enough.

By way of preparation, we could simply touch our face with the hands to get a feel for skin. Then we could touch the gums with our tongue and get a sense of flesh. Next we could move the lower jaw from one side to the other and forward and backward to get a sense of bones. This much should be within the reach of personal experience for each of us.

Just this much is enough as a starting point. During the actual scanning of the body we might at times have an actual sense of the physical location of some of its parts; we might feel them. But even without a distinct feel, it suffices just to know that they are there. The

purpose of the exercise is served by just knowing, without needing to strain ourselves to get a distinct feel.

For the actual scan I suggest starting with the head and moving down to the feet for contemplating the skin. For the flesh I suggest moving up from the feet to the head, and again from the head down to the feet for the bones. This is just one way to do it and practitioners should feel free to change and adjust according to personal preference (an alternative for those who are not comfortable with the scanning method at all would be, for example, to direct awareness to the entirety of the skin, then of the flesh, and then of the bones of the whole body).

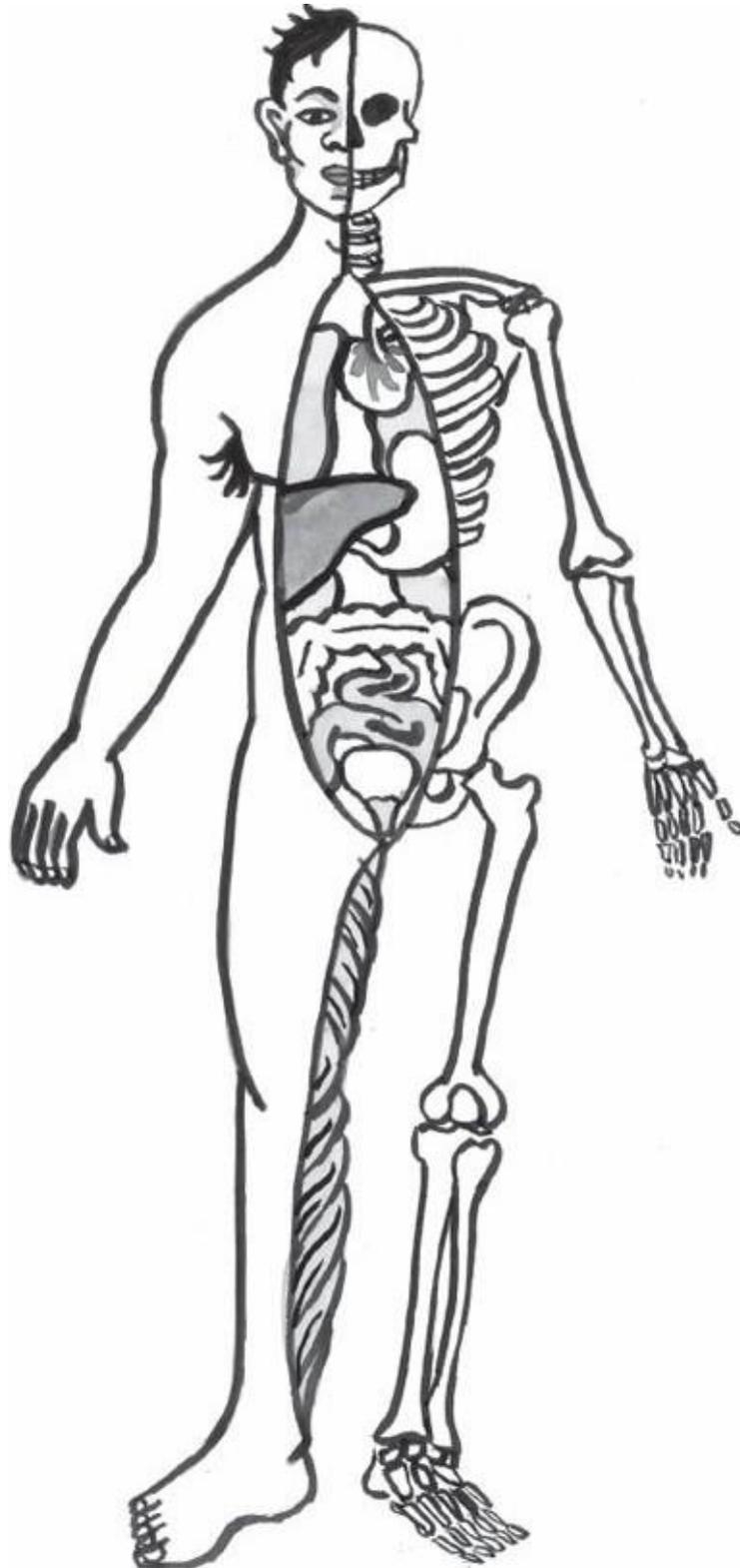
During each scan, even though there is a clear focus on either skin, flesh, or bones, it would be ideal if such focus came together with a general sense of the presence of the whole body. The three scans for skin, flesh, and bones involve a progression from the more external to the more internal. This gradually builds up a more three-dimensional apperception of our own body as a whole. Such three-dimensionality in turn provides a firm spatial grounding in whole-body awareness as a tool for the maintenance of present-moment awareness.

A DETAILED APPROACH

Based on sufficient familiarity with this simplified approach of taking up just skin, flesh, and bones as a starter for this exercise, a detailed scan could be developed that takes into account all of the items mentioned in the discourse. In what follows I present one way in which this could take place. Due to being combined with the scan, the order of organs differs from the list in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta*.

When doing the first scan we become aware first of the *head hairs* and then turn to the *skin* in the head area. Attention given to the skin in the face area can be accompanied by noting the *grease* that lubricates the skin in general, together with the occasional manifestation of *pus*, evident in the formation of pimples, such as on the forehead or cheeks. Coming to the eyes in particular can serve as an occasion for noting *tears*, the nostrils for noting *snot*, and the mouth for noting *spittle*. Moving further down, awareness can turn to *body hairs*, which are especially prominent in the armpits, as well as later on when reaching the genital area. The same locations can also be employed for attending to *sweat* as manifesting with particular prominence in the

arm pits and genital area, in the awareness that perspiration of course takes place through the pores of the skin of the whole body. When coming to the skin of the hands and later of the feet the *nails* can be noted. When reaching the buttocks, attention given to the skin can come in conjunction with noting subcutaneous *fat*.



During the second scan, from the feet onwards awareness of *flesh* can be combined with noting also the *sinews*. These are in fact quite evident right away when starting with the feet. On reaching the genital area, the bladder containing *urine* and the *bowels* containing *faeces* can come in for specific attention. Contemplation could proceed by turning to the *mesentery*, the *kidneys*, the *spleen*, the *contents of the stomach*, and the *liver* with its *bile*. Next come the *diaphragm* and the *lungs*, which can be related to the manifestation of *phlegm*. Turning to the *heart* can come in conjunction with noting the *blood* that the heart pumps throughout the body. Contemplation continues with the fleshy parts and the sinews in the arms as well as in the head.

The third scan could begin with the *bones* of the skull and the *teeth*, and then move on to the bones and the *bone-marrow* of the remainder of the skeleton. When coming to a joint between two bones, the *oil of the joints* could also be noted.

This is just one possible way a detailed scan could be carried out, based on the anatomical parts listed in the instructions, albeit in a different sequence. Perhaps this suggestion could serve as a starting point for each practitioner to develop a mode of contemplation that best suits individual needs and preferences. In general, however, my recommendation is to begin by at first just using skin, flesh, and bones. That much suffices for progressing to the goal of the practice.

KEEPING AN EYE ON BALANCE

As far as the evaluation is concerned, the question of whether the body is indeed impure, dirty, or not beautiful is not as self-evident and acceptable for many practitioners as the fact that it is made up of these various anatomical parts. Whereas a map based on these parts can hardly be put into question, whether the evaluation should become part of the map used for practice depends on our personal assessment. Therefore I would leave it up to each practitioner to decide to what extent an element of evaluation feels appropriate. Although for monastics dedicated to a life of celibacy a strong version of the evaluative element would be quite appropriate, the same is not necessarily the case for a lay practitioner living the family life. Yet, according to the discourses, several lay disciples were accomplished practitioners of *satipaṭṭhāna* (Anālayo 2003: 275). In view of the diversity of situations from which practitioners can come, it seems best

to allow for different modalities of the present exercise.

An important starting point for this practice is mindful recognition of the type of relationship we have towards our own body. If this relationship is one of aversion towards the body, it is important to avoid doing anything that further strengthens such aversion. If we already tend to feel frustrated or even depressed because our body does not meet current standards of physical beauty and attractiveness, it would be unwise to employ the evaluation. Instead we might turn attention just to the fact that the body is made up of skin, flesh, and bones, which perform their function independent of what society considers to be good looks. So the apposite approach would be to do the scan just to arouse an attitude of balance, similar to looking at various grains. A reflection along the lines of non-attachment will be appropriate, especially for practitioners who are negatively disposed towards their own body. After all, it is just skin, flesh, and bones.

There is no problem in deciding to go for this option. On the contrary, it is an essential part of proper mindfulness practice to recognize clearly where we are and where we want to go. Such mindful monitoring can lead to the realization that the evaluative element does not fit our present situation. The type of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation I am presenting here covers three different body contemplations. This leaves room for each practitioner to choose which of these three should be given more emphasis. It is perfectly fine to approach this particular body contemplation softly. There is no need to force ourselves to do something that turns out not to be beneficial.

The same holds even more if we are the victim of abuse or of other body-related traumas. In such a case we first of all need to find a way of inhabiting the body without giving rise to negativity. The employment of an evaluation that increases negativity would be counterproductive and could even be damaging. In such a situation it is appropriate to opt just for the simple practice of being aware of skin, flesh, and bones, together with a continuous monitoring of how this affects our present relationship to the body. Based on such continuous assessment through mindfulness, we will then be able to decide how to proceed.

At times even skin, flesh, and bones may be too much and it might

be best to start just with the bones, being aware of the skeleton only, as this is an area that is usually not emotionally charged and at the same time allows us to centre ourselves and inhabit the body. Alternatively it could also be an option to work just with a part of the body that feels safe. This could be, for example, the feet. So we just direct attention to that part of the body for the scans and only gradually and softly expand to other parts of the body, inasmuch as and only to the extent that these also begin to feel safe.

The overall aim of the practice is to arrive at a balanced and healthy attitude towards the body, an attitude that is just as much free from sensual desire as it is free from aversion or disgust. Therefore the degree to which an element of evaluation is brought in depends on mindfully monitoring where we are at present and what is required in order to foster balance.

Based on such an assessment, some of us might feel ready to confront a tendency to sensual obsession in relation to the body. In such a case, it would be appropriate to bring in the element of evaluation. We might decide to use the terminology found in the discourse, “impure” or “dirty”, or else “not sexually attractive”. For those who wish to go even further, here I offer some additional suggestions. But it should be clear that these are only meant for those who really want to confront sexual desire head-on. The same also holds for reading the next two paragraphs, which some readers might prefer to skip.

A way of strengthening the impact of such practice is to keep in mind, during the first scan concerned with the skin, that the outer skin is dead matter. The outer part of the skin is made up of dead cells which keep flaking off. The body exudes grease which keeps the dead cells in place. This mixture of dead skin cells and grease attracts bacteria. Every square centimetre of our skin is a feeding ground for millions of bacteria. Just below this feeding ground for bacteria, as soon as things become alive, it gets bloody right away.

Another way of strengthening the impact of this meditation could be by introducing an exercise found in the *Ekottarika-āgama* parallel to the *Satipaṭṭhāna-sutta* and also in a Pāli discourse (AN 9.15; Anālayo 2013: 40f). This exercise draws attention to the dirty liquids that come out of the nine orifices of the body. The nine orifices are the eyes, the

ears, the nostrils, the mouth, the urethra, and the anus. The eyes discharge mucus, the ears wax, the nostrils snot, the mouth bile and phlegm, the urethra urine, and the anus faeces. During the scan, when passing each orifice, we can for a moment become aware of its specific discharge. This mode of practice has some overlap with the detailed approach described earlier. It differs in so far as it involves attending specifically to liquids exuded by the body.

Whichever of these modes of practice we feel more comfortable with, it is of crucial importance that it leads to balance. A discourse in the *Samyutta-nikāya* reports an episode where a group of monastics overdid this exercise. Having engaged in this type of practice without wisdom and a proper understanding of its purpose, they cultivated disgust with their own bodies to the extent that several of them committed suicide (SN 54.9). Elsewhere I have studied this episode in detail, finding that the Pāli account shows signs of later expansion and exaggeration (Anālayo 2014b). Leaving aside apparent exaggerations, however, the story as such still serves as a strong warning. This type of practice should never be allowed to unbalance the mind. In this way, already the first of the body contemplations requires paying some attention to the condition of our own mind, a topic that will become particularly prominent with the third *satipaṭṭhāna*.

Maintaining balance is central for all *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation. The task of mindfulness is precisely to supervise and monitor how the practice affects us. If we turn a blind eye to negative repercussions of our meditation practice, then this is actually a loss of mindfulness. In a way we miss a main point of *satipaṭṭhāna* practice. Should contemplation of the anatomical parts lead to negativity or a sense of aversion towards the body, the presence of mindfulness can immediately alert us to the loss of balance. We then counterbalance by shifting to mindfulness of the body as our good friend, letting go of any form of evaluation we have been using at this point. In this way, we gradually learn to dwell independently without clinging to anything.

Another dimension of balancing out the practice relates to its internal and external application. Contemplation of the anatomical parts starts off with our own body. Once this has been well developed, the basic understanding gained in this way (combined with whatever

evaluation we have decided to adopt) can then be applied to the bodies of others. This eventually leads to a comprehensive understanding of the nature of the human body, be it our own or that of others.

FROM SCANNING TO OPEN PRACTICE

Besides serving as a basis for whatever mode of evaluation we might decide to adopt, gradual scanning through the body has the function of collecting the mind. It is particularly helpful when the mind is distracted. The step-by-step procedure of moving in sequence from one part of the body to the next helps to keep the mind engaged with the meditation practice. It also makes it easy to notice when the mind has wandered away. We might start with the head, move on to the neck, and all of a sudden find we have already reached the feet. Something has gone missing. Due to the sequential procedure of the scan, it becomes easier to notice when the mind has wandered off.

At first it would be helpful to do these scans slowly in order to grow accustomed to this type of practice. But with growing familiarity they can at times be done more quickly. In the beginning we might take up arms and legs singly, but later the two arms or the two legs can be done simultaneously. Needless to say, the foregoing is not meant to imply that quick scanning is a marker of proficiency. Even after much practice of this exercise, chances are that we will still find slow scanning to be beneficial, simply because it allows the mind to savour more fully the contemplation. In the end it all depends on our present state of mind and preference. Recognizing the most appropriate way to practise at any given moment is the task of mindfulness and clearly knowing.

Genuine *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation is not about stoically repeating the same thing over and over again, to the extent that the mind just becomes dull. Instead, it requires constant alertness to the condition of our mind. How is the mind right now? What does it require?

When the mind tends to distraction, it might be best to proceed slowly and in much detail when doing the scan. When the mind is collected, it might be better to move more quickly. It is not the case that there is one right way of practising that is applicable at all times. Rather, the right way of contemplating comes about by clearly understanding what is required at any given moment.

Having done the scans, whether slow or fast, we move on to just being aware of the body in the sitting posture as made up of skin, flesh, and bones. With the continuity of our attitude of non-attachment we become ready to open up to just being aware of the present moment in whatever way it unfolds. Having stabilized the mind through the scans and introduced a healthy dose of non-attachment, we move on to an undirected mode of practice. Mindfulness is firmly rooted in the body and we stay receptively open to whatever manifests with any of the senses. We are fully present and aware of anything that manifests, aware of it as a changing phenomenon. This is what constitutes the difference from the cowherd's mindfulness: recognition of impermanence. This holds for the body whose anatomical constitution keeps changing all the time. It holds as well for anything we experience; whatever happens is a process, a flow, a flux. Aware of change in all dimensions of our experience, we are planting seeds of wisdom and insight that will ripen in liberation from all sensuality and unwholesome states.

Whenever distractions occur, as soon as we recognize that this has happened, smilingly we come back to the present moment. With shorter distractions we just come back to resting in open awareness in the here and now, coming back to the presence of our good friend *sati*. She is always there, ready to be with us. In the case of longer distractions, it might be opportune to take up the body scans again. Proceeding once more through skin, flesh, and bones will help to regain the continuity of mindfulness.

When the time has come to move on to walking meditation, the same knowing of the body as made up of skin, flesh, and bones can continue. This is similar to the awareness of the whole body in the sitting posture after the completion of the three scans. From skin, flesh, and bones seated we proceed to skin, flesh, and bones walking or else just the bones walking. Based on attending to aspects of the walking body, walking meditation can lead to a general sense of the whole body combined with an opening of awareness to whatever manifests at any sense-door. The gist of contemplation of the anatomical parts is to inculcate an attitude of non-attachment towards the body and to cultivate a rootedness of mindfulness in the body. The same attitude and rootedness can carry over from sitting to walking and eventually to any activity to be performed.

In the simile of the wheel that I like to use to illustrate this approach to *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, the first spoke of contemplating the anatomical parts makes distinct contributions to both the hub and the outer rim. The contribution made to the hub of mindfulness of the body is that, owing to the gradual scanning through different parts of the body in sequential order, we develop a distinctly felt sense of the body as a whole. This serves to root mindfulness more firmly in the body. The contribution to the outer rim of dwelling independently without clinging to anything lies in the cultivation of non-attachment towards the body's external appearance.

SUMMARY

Contemplation of the anatomical constitution of the body comes with an evaluative element that needs to be carefully adjusted to our personal situation and needs. The main thrust of the exercise is towards engendering non-attachment, such that different parts of the body can be regarded with the same attitude we would have when looking at various grains. For practical purposes, the listing of anatomical parts can be simplified by employing just the three categories of skin, flesh, and bones. These can be explored with the help of body scanning, which at the same time serves to root mindfulness firmly in the body.