VIII

HINDRANCES

With the sixth spoke in the wheel of practice presented here, we move into the domain of the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*, contemplation of dharmas. In a way the fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* is a continuation of contemplation of the mind, by way of selecting specific mental states and factors: the hindrances and the awakening factors. In the mode of practice presented here, the three body contemplations under the first *satipaṭṭhāna* have their counterpart in three contemplations concerned with the mind, found under the third and fourth *satipaṭṭhāna*.

CONDITIONALITY

The distinct difference between the third and fourth *satipaṭṭhāna* is a direct working with conditionality. With the practice done so far, conditionality already came up with contemplation of the elements and contemplation of death, in the form of the realization of the dependency of the body on the elements, and in particular on a constant supply of oxygen, whose termination equals the ending of life. Conditionality then came to the forefront of attention with the second *satipaṭṭhāna*, by way of becoming directly aware of a crucial link in dependent arising: feeling as the condition for the arising of craving. Conditionality is also a significant undercurrent in contemplation of mental states, which soon enough makes it patently clear that we are not in control even in our own mind. Instead, the state of our mind is the product of causes and conditions, only some of which fall within the sphere of our direct influence.

With contemplation of dharmas an active exploration of conditionality is an explicit part of the instructions. What are the conditions that lead to the arising of the hindrances or the awakening factors? What are the conditions for overcoming the former and fostering the latter? Mindfully exploring these conditions is the central task of contemplation of dharmas.

The resultant thrust of these two contemplations of dharmas can in a way be seen as an exemplification of the famous dictum that one who sees dependent arising sees the Dharma and one who sees the Dharma sees dependent arising (MN 28; Anālayo 2003: 186). Directing our meditative seeing to conditionality comes in the present *satipaṭṭhāna*

with a specific focus on those mental conditions that will lead to a state of mental balance in which the breakthrough to awakening can take place. Needless to say, the realization of Nibbāna is the converging point of all the teachings, the Dharma. Thus the combination of practically applied conditionality with the overall direction of progress to awakening seems to capture the gist of these two contemplations of dharmas.

Applied to situations outside of formal meditation, this gist can be actualized by taking into account whatever conditions present themselves in any situation and then relating these in one way or another to the liberating teachings. Although not every situation will be conducive to a cultivation of the awakening factors, there is hardly a situation or experience that cannot be considered from the viewpoint of the teachings. Reflections along the lines of, for example, "all things are impermanent" can provide just the input needed to ensure that the taste of the Dharma comes to pervade all of our experiences.

The actual instruction for contemplation of the first of the five hindrances proceeds as follows (MN 10):

> If sensual desire is present within, one knows: "sensual desire is present within me"; or if sensual desire is not present within, one knows: "sensual desire is not present within me"; and one knows how unarisen sensual desire arises, one knows how arisen sensual desire is removed, and one knows how removed sensual desire does not arise in the future.

This type of instruction applies to each of the five hindrances, which are:

- sensual desire,
- anger,
- sloth-and-torpor,
- restlessness-and-worry,
- doubt.

Comparable to the two-stage procedure apparent in contemplation of feelings, contemplation of a hindrance also seems to proceed through two stages. The first stage is the recognition of the presence or absence of a hindrance in the mind. The second stage involves the distinct flavour of contemplation of dharmas in the form of a practical exploration of conditionality. Such exploration concerns the conditions

that led to the arising of a particular hindrance, the conditions that can lead to its removal, and the conditions that can prevent its recurrence.

This two-stage procedure can conveniently be related to the fact that a hindrance can manifest in different degrees of strength. In the case of a weak occurrence of a hindrance, mindful recognition may be enough for it to disappear. In such a case, from a practical viewpoint we might just resume our main practice. After all, conditions for its arising must have been rather weak and the condition leading to its removal has clearly been mindfulness in itself.

At other times a hindrance can come up with greater strength. Becoming aware of it does not in itself suffice. This seems the appropriate situation for proceeding to the second stage of contemplation of the hindrances. In this way the presence of a hindrance in the mind can become a learning opportunity. The learning opportunity it affords concerns the conditionality of our own mind, in particular those conditions that led to the arising of the hindrance as well as those conditions most helpful for emerging from it and preventing its recurrence.

FACING A HINDRANCE

The type of attitude that I would recommend for this type of contemplation is similar to that of a good chess player. Imagine playing a game of chess with a good friend. Our friend has just made a threatening move, attacking our queen (*gardez!*). We will not get angry because of that. After all it is just a game and the other player is our good friend. Yet at the same time we do want to win.

With this type of attitude, wanting to win without getting angry, we examine the situation: "Let me see, how did I get into this? How come I am now in the situation of being about to lose my queen?" On examining how this happened, we keep a lookout for the type of move that will save our queen. In other words, we try to identify the condition that will lead us out of this situation.

For contemplation of the hindrances I recommend the same type of attitude. This involves almost an element of playfulness, combined with a strong intention to win the game. The more experienced we become with this type of game, the better chance we will have to win in the future, even to the extent of avoiding that our queen be put in

danger in the first place. When viewed from this perspective, the occurrence of a hindrance becomes an occasion to train our skills, rather than a trigger for frustration and negative self-evaluation.

By cultivating such an attitude, we learn to take a hindrance less personally. The honest recognition that a hindrance is present does not mean that we have to own it and make it "mine". It can just be seen as something that has manifested in the mind, requiring appropriate action to be taken.

Taking a hindrance less personally not only eases possible tenseness of the mind when the presence of a hindrance is recognized, it also pays off in relation to its future recurrence. The degree to which this particular mental condition can actually function as a "hindrance", in the sense of obstructing our inner clarity, is inexorably interwoven with the degree of our identification with the images and associations it conjures up in the mind. The more we grow accustomed to no longer taking it personally, the better our chances that the next time it manifests we will be less easily caught up in the tendrils of identification. For this very reason we are more easily able to step back from believing in the conjured-up images and realize what is taking place.

Similar to the case of contemplation of mental states, it is helpful to explore the texture of the mind that is under the influence of a hindrance, to savour it distinctly and get a clear sense of its flavour.

As mentioned in the previous chapter on contemplation of the mind, when a hindrance is present our mind is neither great, nor concentrated, nor liberated. However, it is also surpassable, and learning how to surpass this obstructive condition will lead in the direction of the mind increasingly becoming greater, more concentrated, and more liberated. Whenever this happens, we can similarly explore the texture of the mind from which the hindrances are absent, to savour this condition distinctly and get a clear sense of its flavour.

Strictly speaking, actual removal of a hindrance is not a task of *satipaṭṭhāna*. Instead it belongs to the realm of right effort. As also mentioned in the previous chapter, for *satipaṭṭhāna* to lead to awakening it needs to be practised within the framework of the noble

eightfold path. A discourse in the *Satipaṭṭhāna-saṃyutta* explicitly clarifies that the path leading to the cultivation of *satipaṭṭhāna* is the noble eightfold path (SN 47.40).

This noble eightfold path requires an initial appreciation of right view and the arousing of right intention, which leads on to building a foundation of moral conduct in its mental, verbal, and physical dimensions. Based on this foundation and a clear sense of direction by way of right view, right effort stands in its proper place, ready to assist when mere mindful contemplation is insufficient.

Needless to say, the employment of right effort does not stand on its own. It requires mindful monitoring in order to avoid both excess and deficiency in its deployment (Anālayo 2013: 183).

SENSUAL DESIRE

As already mentioned in an earlier chapter, the first hindrance of sensual desire (*kāmacchanda*) needs to be differentiated from desire as such (see above here). Desire (*chanda*) can perform wholesome functions, such as the desire for liberation or for the welfare of others. The type of desire that is reckoned a hindrance is sensuality, the search for happiness through sex and sensual indulgence.

At times mindful recognition of the presence of sensual desire, or else an investigation of the causes that have led to its arising, can suffice to emerge from it. Should this not be the case and should we wish to respond to the occurrence of sensual desire by remaining within the framework of the *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation presented here, the next step could be to give emphasis to the impermanent nature of pleasant feelings. Pleasant feelings are bound to change; they do not last. Recognizing this will undermine the tendency to search for happiness through sensuality. Pleasant feelings are not only bound to change, but their disappearance will also sooner or later make room for the arising of painful feelings. To whatever degree we attach to the body during pursuits of sensuality, to that same degree we will be afflicted when pain manifests. Keeping in view this inherent danger helps to fortify our willingness to withstand the attraction of sensuality.

Should this still not suffice, we may bring in the standard antidote to the presence of sensual desire in the mind, which is to give attention

to the lack of inherent attraction of what has triggered such desire (Anālayo 2003: 194 and 2013: 183). In the case of sexual desire this would be contemplation of the anatomical parts. Proceeding through the three body scans for skin, flesh, and bones will give the mind something to do and establish mindfulness of the body. Its main contribution, however, is to inculcate an attitude of non-attachment. Although this *satipaṭṭhāna* exercise is in particular about the notion of physical beauty leading to sexual attraction, it also arouses a general sense of non-attachment with all matters related to the body. This in turn undermines the basis on which the majority of our sensual desires thrive.

Other supporting conditions for dealing with the frequent occurrence of sensual desire are restraint of the senses and moderation with food (Anālayo 2003: 200). Both can in turn be undertaken as modes of cultivating mindfulness. Restraint of the senses has the same purpose as *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, according to the part of the discourse that I like to refer to as the "definition". As mentioned in Chapter 2 (see here), the definition relates *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation to dwelling free from desire and discontent with regard to the world. Similarly, restraint of the senses has the purpose of avoiding the arising of these two conditions. This confirms that, from a practical perspective, there is an overlap between *satipaṭṭhāna* and sense restraint (Anālayo 2003: 60).

When mindfulness is established at the sense-doors, it can exercise its protective function. Whether it be seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, or touching, in each case mindfulness can alert us quickly when data comes in through a sense-door that stands a good chance of leading to detrimental repercussions in the mind. Restraint of the senses means cognizing the actual sense data without allowing further proliferations to occur. Such restraint of the senses can be supported by adopting a particular conduct, such as keeping the eyes downcast and living in seclusion. But it is not confined to such modes of behaviour. In fact, when moving out into the world, it will hardly be possible to maintain such a type of conduct.

Just trying to curtail sense experience will not be sufficient in itself, as can be seen in the *Indriyabhāvanā-sutta* (MN 152; Anālayo 2017c: 192). A brahmin student had proposed in front of the Buddha that the

cultivation of the sense faculties involves not seeing and not hearing. The reply he received to this proposition was that, if this were the case, those who are blind and deaf should be reckoned accomplished practitioners. In other words, proper cultivation of sense restraint is not the mere avoidance of sense contact. Instead, it requires training in mindfulness. This can be supported by particular types of behaviour and by seclusion. These are means to an end, however, not ends in themselves.

Another way of forestalling the arising of sensual desire is to cultivate mindfulness with eating. The task is to remain aware that the purpose of food is to nourish the body, not to stimulate the taste buds. According to the *Brahmāyu-sutta*, when eating the Buddha experienced the taste of food without experiencing desire for the taste (MN 91; Anālayo 2017c: 202). The example set by the Buddha in this way can serve as an inspiration for cultivating mindful eating. In particular chewing properly before swallowing, so as to make sure the food is well masticated, can become a task for mindful monitoring. Doing so will increase health and at the same time counter the tendency to overeat (SN 3.13; Anālayo forthcoming a).

The potential of cultivating mindful eating and the insight that can arise from such practice is easily underestimated. According to a discourse in the *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, penetrative understanding of food can lead to going beyond sensual desire and thereby beyond further rebirth in the sensual realm (SN 12.63; Anālayo 2017c: 71). This goes to show that partaking of food can become a training ground for the cultivation of liberating insight.

One approach that can be helpful in this respect is mixing our food. In this form of practice, all the food is put into one bowl or container and then briefly stirred. This has the interesting effect that naturally sweet food items like raisins, for example, remain tasty. But artificial sweets like chocolate or cookies lose all their attraction on being mixed with soup, rice, and vegetables. The practice of mixing the food helps to let go of artificially sweetened food and find satisfaction with more natural and healthy food. In a very practical manner it brings home that the main task of eating is to nourish the body, rather than to entertain the taste buds.

For those wishing to take the same mode of practice a little further,

there is the option of chewing our food and then, before swallowing it, taking it out of the mouth again for a brief moment of inspection. Another related dimension is the way the food looks when it leaves the body again as faeces and urine. Here an option would be to inspect both for a brief moment, sufficiently long to establish the connection in the mind between the visual and olfactory appearance the food eaten earlier has acquired by now and only then flush it down the toilet. In this way the whole picture of partaking of food is allowed to emerge before the watchful eye of investigation. This makes it easier to overcome a one-sided concern with its appearance before it enters the mouth and with its fleeting taste during the first few moments of chewing. Obsession with particular food is after all based on just these two fractional aspects of the entire process of feeding the body.

In addition, mindful investigation can also be applied to the experience of taste itself. Although the previously described approaches have already disclosed the degree to which the actual experience of taste corresponds only to a fraction of the whole process of food assimilation, closer inspection of this fraction further reveals the insubstantial nature of the experience of taste.

Slow eating with mindfulness soon enough shows that what the mind interprets as a seemingly continuous experience of pleasant taste in actual fact is a series of moments of tasting that are not invariably of the same degree of pleasantness. The realization dawns that, in the end, the degree of deliciousness of a particular meal is to a considerable extent a matter of mental projection. It is the mind that strings up moments of tasting, in combination with the anticipation evoked by visual and olfactory apperception, into the experience of a delectable meal. Appreciation of the contribution made in this way by the mind helps divest the attraction of taste of much of its ability to ensnare us with its deluding promise of true satisfaction through delicious flavours.

ANGER

The instructions for the hindrance of anger are:

If anger is present within, one knows: "anger is present within me"; *or if anger is not present within, one knows: "anger is not present within me"; and one knows how unarisen anger arises, one knows how arisen anger is removed, and one knows how removed anger does not arise in the future.*

Here, again, mindful recognition or else investigation of what

triggered the anger may at times suffice for it to go into abeyance. If this is not the case, we could direct attention to the impermanent nature of painful feelings. Whatever painful feelings there might be because of having been hurt or slighted by others, all such feelings are anyway bound to pass away. This understanding will diminish the subjective sense of a pressing need to take strong action on the external level against whoever has prompted our experience of painful feelings.

If contemplation of the impermanent nature of painful feeling is not sufficient to emerge from the arisen anger, the contemplation of the elements can offer additional help. Proceeding through the four body scans to discern earth, water, fire, and wind will keep the mind occupied and root mindfulness in the body, as well as arouse the perception of emptiness. Combining this with insight into the empty nature of the mind can go a long way in undermining the sense of a hurt ego that often nourishes anger. The same undermining of a sense of ego also helps to get out of the tendency to compare ourselves with others, resulting in subtle manifestations of anger in the form of competitiveness and envy.

The standard antidote to a tendency to anger is the cultivation of *mettā* (Anālayo 2003: 195 and 2013: 184). This reflects the opening of the heart mentioned in the previous chapter. In fact the *Sedaka-sutta* relates *mettā* to *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, whereby we protect ourselves as well as others (SN 47.19; Anālayo 2003: 276, 2013: 244ff, and 2017a: 13ff). The cultivation of mindfulness and that of *mettā* share this quality of protection (Anālayo 2013: 24ff and 2015: 29f). The same nuance of protection through *mettā* is of relevance for external manifestations of anger. Mindful recognition that someone else is under the influence of this particular hindrance can naturally lead over to the appropriate response to this situation by way of cultivating *mettā*.

SLOTH-AND-TORPOR

The next two hindrances, sloth-and-torpor and restlessness-and-worry, are distinct in so far as both combine two mental conditions. The *Pariyāya-sutta* offers a mode of presentation according to which the five hindrances become ten (SN 46.52; Anālayo 2013: 186f). Here the first two hindrances can have an internal and an external

dimension. The next two hindrances are divided into their individual parts. In other words, the third hindrance could involve either sloth or torpor; the fourth either restlessness or worry. It seems that in each case two mental conditions have been grouped together because their effect on the mind is similar. Here are the instructions for sloth-and-torpor:

If sloth-and-torpor is present within, one knows: "sloth-and-torpor is present within me"; *or if sloth-and-torpor is not present within, one knows: "sloth-and-torpor is not present within me"; and one knows how unarisen sloth-and-torpor arises, one knows how arisen sloth-and-torpor is removed, and one knows how removed sloth-and-torpor does not arise in the future*.

In the case of the third hindrance, at times we may simply be tired and need to take a rest. Although there is a need to watch out for self-deception in this respect, there is a similar need to beware of being too hard on ourselves by denying the body rest when it really needs it. In the hot season the Buddha himself would at times take a rest during the day, when this seemed appropriate (Anālayo 2017c: 203). There is nothing intrinsically wrong with taking a nap when the body is too tired for meditation.

At other times, however, this particular hindrance may manifest as sluggishness or boredom. In other words, the present contemplation requires recognizing whether the tiredness is more of the body or more of the mind. We might also try to observe where the energy has gone, why it feels as if it has been used up, and how come it is at such a low level right now. At times, an undercurrent of anger can be discerned as what leads to sleepiness or drowsiness. At other times the cause could be avoidance, in the sense of not wanting to face things due to feeling overwhelmed. Another thing to check is our attitude towards the practice, which sometimes can lead to a lack of balance resulting in tiredness or a loss of inspiration. In general, rather than just fight this particular hindrance, we can try to understand its conditionality and, based on that, find creative ways to counter it.

A standard remedy for sloth-and-torpor is perception of *āloka*, a term which I take to mean mental "clarity" in this context rather than its literal meaning of "light" (Anālayo 2003: 197 and 2013: 184). On this interpretation, the task is to bring clarity into our meditation practice. A body scan with attention given to details of the anatomy would be a good example. At times meditating with eyes slightly open can also be helpful.

Brightening up the mind by recollecting a particularly inspiring teaching or by rejoicing in our virtues and meritorious deeds can also aid in overcoming this hindrance. In general, whatever arouses inspiration and energy is an appropriate means for emerging from this hindrance. In terms of the *satipaṭṭhāna* practice presented here, giving importance to the joy of being in the present moment can go a long way in arousing the type of joyful inspiration that directly counters boredom and sluggishness. If this should not suffice in itself, a potential remedy could be found in recollection of our own mortality, the third spoke in the wheel of practice. Giving attention to the inhalations with the understanding that this breath could be my last can stimulate the energy and effort that lead out of sloth-and-torpor.

For the case of torpor in particular, a discourse in the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* offers a series of remedies (AN 7.58; Anālayo 2003: 197). These are changing the meditation object, reflecting on or reciting the teachings, pulling the ears and massaging the body, getting up to sprinkle the eyes with water and looking at the sky, cultivating clarity of perception, and doing walking meditation. If these various methods should not have the desired effect, the time has come to lie down and take a rest.

RESTLESSNESS-AND-WORRY

The instructions for what in a way is the opposite type of hindrance, restlessness-and-worry, are:

If restlessness-and-worry is present within, one knows: "restlessness-and-worry is present within me"; *or if restlessness-and-worry is not present within, one knows: "restlessness-and-worry is not present within me"; and one knows how unarisen restlessness-and-worry arises, one knows how arisen restlessness-and-worry is removed, and one knows how removed restlessness-and-worry does not arise in the future.*

In the case of restlessness-and-worry, anything that calms the mind will be helpful. A useful tool here is again attention to the joy of being in the present moment, in particular with emphasis on resting in whole-body awareness. Relaxing into this joy will allow body and mind to become calm and tranquil, thereby directly opposing the tension and stress of restlessness-and-worry. The same type of practice will also help to emerge from the attitude of being too pushy and expending too much effort. Some degree of effort is indeed needed, but overdoing it will be detrimental to progress. It is important to cultivate contentment with our practice and its results. We meditate

because this is simply the most meaningful thing to do, not because we desperately yearn for results. If goal-orientation can be left behind, meditation just progresses so much better.

A helpful example is the simile of a lute (AN 6.55; Anālayo 2003: 38), already mentioned briefly in Chapter 6 on the contemplation of feeling (see here). If the strings are too tight, it will not be possible to play music. The same holds if the strings are too loose. Only when they are properly tuned is the lute ready for the performance. The same applies to the mind, which should be neither too tight nor too loose.

If the mind still remains agitated by restlessness-and-worry, we could rely on the third spoke in the wheel of practice by directing mindfulness to the breath, giving importance to the exhalations and to relaxing and letting go.

At times worries might manifest that actually need to be addressed. In such cases it is best to set aside the issue for the time being, promising ourselves that we will attend to it later. Here it is of crucial importance not to cheat ourselves. Once the meditation session is over, we should indeed attend to the worrying matter and think it over. Only if we keep our promise will the mind continue to be willing to set aside worrying matters during formal meditation on the next occasion.

DOUBT

The last hindrance is doubt:

> If doubt is present within, one knows: "doubt is present within me"; or if doubt is not present within, one knows: "doubt is not present within me"; and one knows how unarisen doubt arises, one knows how arisen doubt is removed, and one knows how removed doubt does not arise in the future.

Similar to the case of restlessness-and-worry, some types of doubt are best set aside when we are engaged in formal meditation, in order to be addressed later. This applies, for example, to fundamental types of doubt regarding the teachings. Here, too, we need to keep our own promise, in that once the meditation session is over the doubtful issue needs to be attended to with wise reflection.

Other types of doubt, however, can be concerned with how to proceed in our practice. There is an uncertainty about what to do with what has manifested and a wish for someone else with expertise to tell

us. If a suitable guide is not available, we can at least try to become our own guide. This echoes the famous dictum that by practising *satipaṭṭhāna* we become self-reliant and an island to ourselves (SN 47.14; Anālayo 2013: 1).

Building up such self-reliance has its starting point in a mindful shift of perspective. Somewhat like flipping a coin over to the other side, we shift from the feeling of hopelessness to stirring up a keen sense of interest and investigation. In early Buddhist thought, the way to deal with doubt is investigation (Anālayo 2003: 199 and 2013: 207). Based on sufficient acquaintance with the teachings to serve the purpose of orientation, we investigate what is happening with mindfulness. We try out one possible solution. On finding that this does not work, we try out something else. Sooner or later something will work. In future we know how to deal with this situation, based on our own investigation and experience. We learn to trust ourselves and our ability as meditators. This is the fruit of our own investigation, based on having cultivated a clear distinction between what is wholesome or skilful (*kusala*) and what is unwholesome or unskilful (*akusala*).

Another dimension of doubt concerns our own abilities as well as the potential of the meditation practice we have adopted. Such doubt requires sustained investigation over a period of time. Not all meditation practices are equally suited for each practitioner. It follows that practice of a particular method is best monitored with mindfulness in order to see whether over time it yields results.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the question here is less about getting into extraordinary experiences. Instead, the question is whether our ability to face difficulties and handle problems improves. Patience and understanding, as well as a gradual opening of the heart and a willingness to reach out to others, are important signposts. Finding that over longer periods of sustained and dedicated practice no significant result has manifested, it might be worth considering whether another meditation practice is perhaps better suited to our personality and needs.

Contemplation of the hindrances is not confined to the sitting posture. In fact the standard descriptions of walking meditation in the discourses speak of purifying the mind from obstructing states while

sitting and walking (Anālayo 2003: 140). Thus recognizing (and overcoming) a hindrance can well take place during walking meditation or other activities.

THE ABSENCE OF THE HINDRANCES

Having investigated the presence of the hindrances and their conditionality, eventually there comes a time when no hindrance is present in the mind. Just as with contemplation of wholesome mental states, this is an occasion for arousing joy. Two sets of similes from the discourses are helpful in this respect.

One of these involves a bowl full of water used to see the reflection of our own face (SN 46.55; Anālayo 2003: 189 and 2013: 190f). A mind free from the hindrances has a crystal-clear quality just like pure water. Only pure water that is not mixed with dye, not heated up to the point of boiling, not overgrown with algae, not stirred by wind, and not muddied and placed in the dark will properly reflect the condition of the face.

The state of mental clarity that comes with the absence of the hindrances is similarly no longer coloured by the dye of sensual

desire, which makes things appear quite differently from how they truly are. Such mental clarity is also not boiling with anger, which burns us and others. Nor is such a mind overgrown with the algae of sloth-and-torpor, resulting in stagnation. This type of mind is also not tossed around by the wind of restlessness-and-worry, resulting in a great deal of movement that does not lead anywhere. A mind like this is also not muddied and in the darkness of doubt, which prevents seeing reality as it is. Recollecting these vivid images can serve as an aid in recognizing the hindrances and in rejoicing in their absence.

The imagery of looking into a bowl of water to see the reflection of our face occurs not only in relation to the hindrances. As mentioned in the last chapter, the motif of looking into a mirror also describes contemplation of mental states (of others). The mirror imagery underscores the similarity between these two *satipaṭṭhāna* contemplations. Both require that we hold up the mirror of mindfulness. Inasmuch as such recognition is concerned, the task of mindfulness is to reflect clearly and accurately what is there, without reacting.

Just as a mirror shows up our external appearance the way it is usually only seen by others, in the same way the mirror of mindfulness provides us with an accurate reflection of our own mental condition, as if viewed from an uninvolved observation point. This inner mirror reveals to us the actual appearance of our mind which, due to our subjective investment in our own thoughts and ideas, is otherwise not so easily discerned. Yet it is only when a correct apperception of the actual state of affairs within has been gained, through looking into the mirror of mindfulness, that the proper foundation is laid for subsequently taking the appropriate action. This is why the third *satipaṭṭhāna* of contemplation of the mind is just about recognition as such. In the case of contemplation of the hindrances, the same mirroring function of mindfulness then probes further. As if magnifying the image reflected in the mirror, *sati* accurately reveals the conditions that have led to, and those that will lead out of, the particular hindrance whose presence the mirror within has disclosed.

The theme of absence of the hindrances is explicit in the second set of similes (DN 2; Anālayo 2003: 189 and 2013: 192f). Being free from sensual desire is like having settled a debt; both share a constant sense

of being in need and wanting something. Recovering from anger is like recovering from a disease; in fact being angry is quite literally a form of dis-ease. Emerging from sloth-and-torpor as well as from restlessness-and-worry compare to being released from prison and slavery. Both predicaments involve a lack of personal freedom. Having safely crossed over doubt is like having safely crossed a dangerous desert. The time of exhaustion is over and safety has been reached. Emerging from all of these difficulties is indeed an occasion for rejoicing.

OPEN PRACTICE

Based on the foundation built by the first three *satipaṭṭhāna*s, and imbued with the clarity of the mind that comes with the absence of the hindrances, we proceed to an unstructured mode of practice by way of open awareness. Firmly rooted in the strong post of mindfulness of the body we open up to the changing process of experience in whatever way it unfolds. Nothing can really disturb us, because whatever happens is food for mindfulness. In this way we continue progressing towards the final goal of a mind forever free from hindrances and defilements.

In terms of the simile of the wheel of practice, the contribution made by contemplation of the hindrances to the hub of this wheel is the mental clarity that accompanies our whole-body awareness. This is the mental clarity of being free from defilements, described in the series of similes related to a bowl of water. The contribution made to the rim comes to the fore in the other set of similes, according to which with the absence of the hindrances we are no longer in debt, diseased, imprisoned, enslaved, and in danger. This in turn facilitates dwelling independently, without clinging to anything.

SUMMARY

With contemplation of dharmas we embark on an active exploration of conditionality. Recognition of the presence of a hindrance in the mind leads on to examining what conditions have led to its arising and what conditions help us to emerge from it and prevent its recurrence.

Should we decide to respond to a hindrance from within the framework of *satipaṭṭhāna* meditation, then sensual desire could be countered by giving attention to the impermanent nature of pleasant feelings and with the help of contemplation of the anatomical parts;

for the case of anger attending to the impermanent nature of painful feelings could be employed and contemplation of the elements.

The joy of being in the present moment can be of help if sloth-and-torpor or restlessness-and-worry manifest, by way of balancing out lack of energy just as much as its excess. Arousing inspiration and energy is the appropriate means for emerging from sloth-and-torpor in particular; an example would be attention given to the inhalations with the understanding that this breath could be my last. Giving attention to the exhalations combined with relaxing and letting go would then be an example for calming the mind as the appropriate means for emerging from restlessness-and-worry. The way to deal with doubt is investigation, either during actual practice or else subsequently.

The absence of the hindrances also deserves our attention. At such a time the mind has become clear like pure water that is not mixed with dye, not heated up to the point of boiling, not overgrown with algae, not stirred by wind, and not muddied and placed in the dark. Emerging from being overpowered by a hindrance is an occasion for joy, similar to having settled a debt, recovered from a disease, been released from prison and slavery, and having safely crossed a dangerous desert.