

Anapanasati

Stage 9: Experiencing the mind I breath in / out

- Aware of a mind in hindrance as a mind in hindrance: of a mind free of hindrance as a mind free of hindrance.
- If our thinking is light, there is no problem: we just consistently return to the focus
- Hindrances, conversely have a strong emotional charge: they have a hold on us and drive our thoughts
- We need to get under the thoughts to their emotional basis and recognize what drives them

Check for the 5 hindrances

1. Restlessness and Anxiety
2. Sense Desire
3. Ill Will
4. Sloth and Torpor
5. Sceptical doubt and indecision

The mind has a thinking/rational and a feeling aspect. Awareness has a quality of clarity, and a quality of sensitivity. There are two approaches to resolving hindrances in to awareness:

Resolving hindrance in to clarity

The hindrances are rooted in the 3 poisons: Greed, Hatred, and Delusion. Greed, Hatred and Delusion are all rooted in Desire. For example, delusion is wilful ignorance: a desire not to know or be involved with. Torpor (mental dullness) and sceptical doubt often have an underlying resistance rooted in this.

. Dudjom Rimpoche describes how we can use our rational mind to resolve hindrance in to clarity:

“Desire is being attached to something you consider pleasant. It pervades all the other delusions ... the desire of anger ... is the wish to be free of something unpleasant, while that of close-mindedness is the desire to remain unaware or uninvolved with something.

The purification of such fixation ... is individualising pristine awareness. It merely singles out an individual object without mixing it with anything else and understands its void nature as non-truly existent.

In other words, by recognizing the nature of desire, you strip it of your grasping for true existence. In so doing you make manifest the pristine awareness ... that desire has been purified in to”

Hindrances are characterized by a strong sense of ‘me’ and ‘mine’, and a tendency to see things in a fixed way. Along with that they contain an appreciative clarity. For example, jealousy is an appreciation of the good fortune of another along with a desire that it should be one’s own. We purify hindrance by letting go of this self-reference, and we do this first by noticing that it is a process that part of us is engaged in, not a fixed identity.

Resolving hindrance in to sensitivity

Alternatively, we can use the innate feelingfulness of our mind to resolve hindrance in to sensitivity: this is where we get more poetical:

This being human is a guest house.
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,
Some momentary awareness comes
As an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all
Even if they are a crowd of sorrows,
Who violently sweep your house
Empty of its furniture,
Still, treat each guest honourably.
He may be clearing you out
For some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice:
Meet them at the door laughing and invite them in.

Be grateful for whatever comes,
Because each has been sent
As a guide from beyond. (Rumi: The Guest House)

The basic poetic metaphor: mind as a guest house

- Hindrances – old familiar friends – arrive as unbidden visitors
- We need to welcome and entertain them: say ‘hello’: adopt a friendly attitude
- i.e. bring awareness and attention to them: notice they have entered: greet them at the door instead of pushing them away. Recognize and acknowledge that they are there: we can’t shut them out: they have a claim on our attention.

Be grateful for whoever comes

- They’ve come to take the opportunity to resolve themselves: habitual patterns insisting on intimacy with us
- Bringing awareness and attention to them gives the opportunity of resolution
- When pushed away, they become more insistent: what’s kept out controls
- We don’t want to identify with them – which would cause them to grow – but we can recognize, bring awareness and attention to, and act as host to them

Each has been sent as a guide from beyond

- Our mind returning to us what is unresolved
- Trust the wisdom in and rightness to what is arising

- Hindrances are frustrated or thwarted emotions with an inner wisdom: that they will continue to present themselves until resolved.
- It is important to entertain them for as long as necessary:
 - Not be impatient with them
 - Not think that our meditation is elsewhere: if the hindrances have knocked on our door, that's where our meditation is
- It is equally important to know the difference between entertaining and indulging:
 - Indulging is identifying with and hence cultivating and developing
 - Entertaining is being aware of: holding in a kindly awareness with forbearance
- 'Every feeling would most dearly and deeply like to be fully felt through: then it will become a happy, integrated feeling' (Prakasa)
 - Hindrances manifest in a painful way
 - But their inner nature is a sensitivity which has become distorted.

Example: we find ourselves blaming another

- Become aware of the chain of thoughts
- Under this, become aware of the view: that they have done us wrong
- Become aware of the emotion behind this: anger. The blaming is a way of shielding us from the painfulness of experiencing anger, and the pain of acknowledging that sometimes we're an angry person
- Staying with awareness of anger reveals the underlying hurt (feeling)
- Staying with the hurt, sympathetically, it resolves in to our natural sensitivity: raw at first.

Blame <- Anger <- Hurt <- Sensitivity

- Bringing hindrance to resolution requires patience, kindly awareness, and honesty
- We need to steer a middle way between getting caught up in the hindrance and pushing it away: between identifying and rejecting
- We need to take an interest in our guest and approach sympathetically, not confrontationally – looking for the nuance in the experience, seeing if it will reveal what drives it.
- Strong hindrances may not be resolvable in one meditation. It may take years – but don't worry: they will return if they need to – in an endless series of opportunities. Just work as appropriately as you can, and if the hindrance withdraws, return to the focus.

Stage 10: Gladdening the mind I breath in/out

- To end on a lighter note, we turn the mind to what is pleasant in our experience
- Taking delight in each breath
- And in the pleasurable quality of awareness itself.