

MAPPING THE TERRITORY: UNDERSTANDING HINDRANCE

THINGS THAT GET IN THE WAY: 5 HINDRANCES

Hindrances keep us in a state of distractedness. Freedom from hindrance is a state of absorption: samādhī or dhyāna

IMBALANCED ENERGY

Restlessness and Anxiety



Sloth and Torpor

EMOTIONAL PULLS

Sense craving



Ill Will

DOUBT

Hindrances are states of reactivity: wanting our experience to be different, indicated by the term Tṛṣṇā or 'craving'. They are characterised by tightness in physical experience and contraction in awareness.

2 SUBTLE HINDRANCES

When we are free of the 5 main hindrances we are in access or neighbourhood concentration. Two subtle hindrances continue to keep us from full absorption (samādhī)

DRIFT OR PROLIFERATION

A subtle tendency to distraction

SINK OR DECAY

A subtle tendency to dullness

2 VEILS

Veils keep us in a state of ignorance: Complete freedom from the veils is enlightenment, but they are evident on more immediate levels

The Veil of Views: Jñeya varanā

Eg thoughts of blame

Eg self-view: I'm no good at this

The Veil of Emotions: Kleśa varanā

Eg anger

Eg doubt

A REACTION TO SUFFERING



Dukkha -> Tṛṣṇā: We react because we feel hurt, not arbitrarily. Bringing wise attention to dukkha, not reacting to it, it no longer fabricates Tṛṣṇā. This is being in the gap

Tṛṣṇā -> Dukkha: Unskillful mental states lead to suffering in the future. Considering the consequences in this way can cut through a reactive cycle, but the pitfall of this antidote is getting caught up in a sense of 'should'

Tṛṣṇā also has a painful feeling tone in the present. Being with that vedana in the present is also a way of being in the gap, not fabricating the 'second arrow' of further Tṛṣṇā

Tṛṣṇā also reinforces the experience of dukkha one is reacting to. When craving is attenuated there is an experience of relative release, freedom, relief and more spaciousness

RESOLVING HINDRANCE INTO SENSITIVITY

Through welcoming and turning towards what we have called 'hindrances', being with them empathically and feeling in to the nuance and subtlety of them, there is the possibility of resolution in to the sensitivity of awareness. This approach is pointed to by Rumi's poem The Guest House:

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.