

Meditation on the repulsiveness of the body

Asubha Bhāvana

(A translation of Pali stanzas))

1. It is the body that we call “myself.” So do others refer to as “me.” On seeing the body, which is often unconscious though sometimes conscious one should reflect on its repulsive nature.
 2. The body that consists of 32 unpleasant parts: solids, liquids, gases and empty space is repulsive in respect of colour, shape and smell.
 3. Things that are within the body are more disgusting than what comes out of it. Even though the contents that fall off the body are supposed to be filthier than those inside.
 4. Just like a worm born in filth, the body is also born in filth, like a cesspit this body is full of filth.
 5. Just as fat pours out of a pot even so impure matter flows out of this body.
 6. Like a cesspit, this body is a host to millions of putrefying organisms.
- Rationale for contemplating the repulsiveness of the body:

- The Buddha has referred to 32 parts of the body for reflection during meditation (MN 119): The Blessed One said: "How is mindfulness of the body developed, how is it pursued, so as to be of great fruit & great benefit? "Just as if a sack with openings at both ends were full of various kinds of grain -- wheat, rice, mung beans, kidney beans, sesame seeds, husked rice -- and a man with good eyesight, pouring it out, were to reflect, 'This is wheat. This is rice. These are mung beans. These are kidney beans. These are sesame seeds. This is husked rice.'" In the same way, the monk reflects on this very body from the soles of the feet on up, from the crown of the head on down, surrounded by skin and full of various kinds of repulsive things:

'In this body there are head hairs, body hairs, nails, teeth, skin, muscles, tendons, bones, bone marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, lungs, spleen, bladder, large intestines, small intestines, stomach, contents of intestines, brain, bile, mucus, pus, blood, sweat, fat/oil, tears, ear-wax, saliva, nasal mucus, fluid in the joints, urine.'

- This meditation helps overcome the normal lustful adoration of the body, especially during sexual engagements. It also helps overcome feelings of inferiority and superiority in comparison with other bodies.
- When we are attracted to the human body covered with fashionable clothing, jewelry, perfumes and makeup, we often forget the real nature of the body. This meditation reminds us of the real nature of the body.
- The purpose of this meditation is not to develop hatred to people but to reflect on the disgusting nature of the human body. If this meditation turns into a hatred for others, one should recognize the disgusting nature of one's own body and practice *mettā* meditation towards all beings.
- This meditation practice can be deepened by using visual aids such as diagrams and pictures of human anatomy.
- The reader is encouraged to refer to the *kāyagatāsati sutta* in the Middle Length Sayings of the Buddha (MN, 119), for further details.

Decaying corpse meditation

Kalebara Bhāvanā

The Buddha once said, *Bhikkhus*: “If seeing a corpse thrown into the grave, which is one, two, or three days dead, swollen, bloated, bluish-black, full of filth; one should draw this conclusion regarding one's own body: This body too has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape it!”

If one should see a corpse thrown to the burial ground, gnawed and partly eaten by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs or jackals, and creeping with all kinds of worms and maggots; one should draw this conclusion regarding own body: This body too has this nature, will also become exactly like that, and cannot ever escape it!

If one should see a chain of bones, flesh hanging from it, splattered with blood, held together by the sinews... or bones disconnected and scattered in all directions, here a hand-bone, there a foot-bone; here the pelvis, the spine, the skull.... or bones, now bleached, pale white and looking like sea-shells... or black rotting bones finally crumbling into dust; One should think: This body too has this nature, has this destiny, and cannot escape..it! Source: MN 10, DN 22

Rationale for contemplating the decaying corpse:

Which Object are suitable for who?

Swollen Corpse: Those who lust after beauty of form.

Discoloured Corpse: Those who lust after beauty of the skin and complexion.

Festering Corpse: Those who lust after a sweet-smelling body, using perfumes.

Fissured Corpse: Those who lust after the firmness and solidity of the body.

Mangled Corpse: Those who lust after fullness of the flesh, such as the breasts.

Dismembered Corpse: Those who lust after graceful movements of the body.

Cut & Dismembered Corpse: Those who lust after perfection of the joints of the body.

Blood-stained Corpse: Those who lust after beauty produced by adornments.

Worm-infested Corpse: Those who are attached to the idea that the body is "me" or "mine."

Skeleton: Those who lust after perfection of the teeth and nails.