

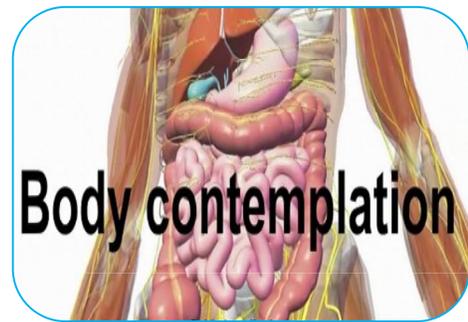


A CONTEMPLATION ON THE BODY

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ABSTRACT:

The method of contemplation the loathsomeness of a corpse mentioned above can be used for contemplation the loathsomeness of a living body such as swollen living body, pus oozing living body, and bloody living body. In reality, a living body is as foul as a dead body. People, who are clouded by the darkness of ignorance, regard the body to be desirable, lovely and pleasant because the body is decorated with various adornments. But by nature the body is an aggregate of bones, tendons, flesh which are knitted with a wet skin and covered by integument. It is also a resort of multitudes of worms, abode of disease, and basis of suffering. The excrement, urine, mucus of the nose, saliva, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat oozing out from the nine doors and from the hairy sockets of a living body are as repulsive as those which are not yet flowing out. If the body is not adorned with various beautifying means, it will be seen as impure, smelling and loathsome and there is no difference between the body of a king, a beggar and a body of an outcast. If the body is skinned and the flesh expose, it will be quite a job to drive away vultures and crows, which come to gnaw it.



KEYWORDS : swollen living body , bones, tendons, flesh.

INTRODUCTION:

If one can reflect on the truly repulsive nature of the body for just a short moment while cleaning the impurities of one's body, one will surely gain many benefits. The practice of meditation on the skeleton means reflecting on the repulsiveness of the bones, those which are one of thirty-two parts of the body. This kind of practice is called *āhika asubha kammahāna*.

Here meditating on a skeleton means reflecting on all bones of the body excluding the teeth. A meditator can reflect on one bone or all bones or skeleton. One who contemplates the repulsiveness of the skeleton must learn the name of thirty-two parts of the body by heart and must reflect on them several times first. This is because the bones are constituent parts of the thirty-two parts of the body.

A meditator who wants to meditate on a skeleton must first reflect thoroughly on the bones. Secondly he must note the characteristics of the bones, their colour, shape, etc. Thirdly he must reflect on the loathsomeness of the colour, etc. The method of meditation on the skeleton is as follows: A meditator should meditate thus:

- (a) Nothing is desirable and pleasant inside my body.
- (b) There exist only repulsive bones. This is the brief method. In detailed practice he should reflect repeatedly thus:

“Nothing is desirable and pleasant inside my body. Indeed the bone of the big toe, the bone of the second toe, the bone of the middle toe, the bone of the fourth toe, the bone of the little toe, the bone of right leg, the bone of left leg, those which are formed together inside the instep, the bones of the right and the left hand, the soft bones inside the body, the bone of the right and the left ribs, the bones of the spine, the bones on the right and left the chest, the skull, the neck-bones, the right and left ankle bones, the right and the left knee bones, the right and the left knee joints, the right and the left thigh-bones, the right and the left arms-bone, the right and the left collar-bones, the bones of the upper and the lower jaws, the ear-bones, the eye-bones, the forehead-bone, the bone of the crown, etc., exist inside my body”.

A meditator proceed his contemplation of the skeleton thus: “All of the bones are white in colour and different in shape; the bones of front-toe-joints are bigger in the end and smaller in the middle part; the neck bone of the middle joint resembles the seed of the jack-fruit, the bone of third joint resembles a small drum, the bone of the fourth joint resembles a land-lily bud with its top cut off, the bone of the fifth joint resembles a land-lily bud with its base and top cut off, the bones of the sixth and seventh joint resemble a land-lily bud which is cut off at its stalk.

The heel-bone resembles a shell of a toddy palm fruit with a slight curve; the ankle-bone resembles two small marbles put together; the shins rest on the knee-joint which is of concave shape resembling the peeled sprout of the march-date palm; the minor shin bone resembles the shank of a small bowl, the major shin-bone resembles the withered back of a snake, the knee-bones are convex on top and concave below resembling multi-perforated piece of foam.

The thigh-bone resembles a slightly twisted-handle of axe; where the thigh-bone meets the hip-bone, the shape of the bone resembles a disc shaped nut with which children play; where the thigh-bone and the hip bone meet the shape of the bone resembles a big truncated *punnāga* fruit, each of the hip-bones resembles the strap of a blacksmith’s hammer, etc. The meditator keeps on contemplating the other bones in the same manner mentioned above.

The shape of a skeleton resembles are scarecrow figure knitted and wound around by rattan twine, stuffed with straw and smeared with wet cow-dung (*Saṅghāna*). The bones are present in both the upper and the lower reason. They are placed over the whole body. The bones of the head are joined to those of the neck, the bones of the neck to the back-bones, the back-bones to the hip-bones, the hip-bones to the thigh-bones, the thigh-bones to the knee-bones, the knee-bones to the shin-bones, the shin-bones to the ankle-bones, the ankle-bones to the bones of the upper part of the foot. The remaining bones are also joined to their respective bones and flesh (*Okāsa*).

Although the head bones are connected with the brain, flesh, blood, marrow, oil of the joint, they do not mingle with them. The head bones remain separately. A meditator must contemplate repeatedly on the bones thus: “Although the bones are placed on together like the other constituents parts of the body such as hair, they constitute separate parts of the body (*Pariccheda*).

As mentioned above, one meditates repeatedly on the original object of meditation by reciting verbally or mentally. When he has done so, the colour, the direction, the position (*Okāsa*), and the limitation (*Pariccheda*) of the bones gradually appear in the mind as they really exist in nature as if they were seen with the naked eyes. This is called the visualized image (*Uggahanimitta*). Here, the *Uggahanimitta* is an exact mental replica of the original object. It means the object which arises clearly and distinctly in the mind of a meditator as a visualized object.

Then, a meditator continues his meditation as follows, so that the repulsive perception appears. The bones in my body resemble the skin of a person who suffers from leucoderma. It is the same as a skeleton without flesh and sinews that lies in a cemetery. Thus they have a very repulsive colour (*vaṅṅa*).

The bones of my body have remained in my mother’s womb amidst stench of the flesh and blood, urine and excrement for nine or ten months. They have never been washed since that time till now. Thus they have a foul smell (*gandha*).

The bones of my body resemble the bones of a corpse which have been bitten and gnaw by crows, vultures and dogs and consequently they have no flesh and sinew but are smeared with rotten blood, urine and excrement. Thus, they have a very repulsive appearance (*saṁhāna*).

The impure parts of the body such as the flesh, the blood, and the bone arise out of the internal and external nutriment. They resemble the vines which grow out of the excrement-pit. So they are very repulsive with respect to the cause of their arising. (*Āsaya*)

The bones of my body are in contact with the thirty two constituent parts of the body. They resemble the spears and the sticks which are planted in the excrement-pit near the gate of the beggars' village. Thus, they are very repulsive with respect to their location (*Okāsa*).

Thus, the bones are repulsive with respect to their colour, smell, appearance, cause, and location. Therefore one meditates on bones repeatedly thus: these bones are not a person or being. There is no difference between the bones of a living being and the bones of a dead body. Indeed, in the ultimate sense, there is nothing which can be designated as bones. They represent one part of the thirty two constituent parts of the body. They are neither a being nor a soul.

When one meditates on bones repeatedly in the above-mentioned way, one will visualize one's skeleton as repulsive as the skeleton of a corpse. It is called conceptualized image (*Paṭibhāga-nimitta*). Here, *Paṭibhāga-nimitta* means just a similar image of the original object. In fact, *Paṭibhāganimitta* is exactly the same in the shape and size as *Uggahanimitta*. However, the meditator visualizes it as if the skeleton were inserted into his body, as if the head bone of the corpse were inserted into his head bone. Then, as he reflects on it from the head bone to the leg bones again and again, from the leg bones to the head bone whenever he looks at all persons, he visualizes them as the skeleton only. If he visualizes like this, the *Paṭibhāganimitta* becomes more and more vivid. The conceptualized image is as distinct as a white heron flying out of dark clouds.

When a meditator contemplates the conceptualized image again and again, he will attain the first *jhāna*. If a meditator attains *Uggahanimitta*, *Paṭibhāganimitta*, he must proceed his contemplation with perseverance until he attains the first *jhāna*. By doing so, he will surely attain the first *jhāna*.

People continually seek ways to increase their happiness, inner peace and harmony. According to public opinion, happiness is got through wealth, power, and social status. They seek solutions to their problems through their family, jobs, partners, friends, etc. They try to change external conditions in their physical, social and political environment this and that way, because they believe that when the world finally becomes perfect, they become happy and peaceful. But they forget that conditions change all the time and unceasingly. Just before the fulfillment of their dreams, things change and the promise of happiness fades away like the morning mist at daybreak. The harder one tries to reach out for happiness, the more it seems so elusive like a fluttering butterfly which is enticingly near, but impossible to catch.

The catch is that most people adopt the wrong methods to find peace and harmony. They seek them outside themselves into the external world, instead of looking within themselves. Many are beginning to discover the real source of their happiness and troubles: the mind. And to turn their attention to the 'inner man', the mind, meditation is the way. The task of meditation is to understand the nature of the mind and to use it effectively in daily life. The mind is the key to happiness, and also the key to misery. To understand the mind and use it well is a task that transcends racial, cultural and religious barriers. Meditation can indeed be practiced by anyone regardless of his religious label.

The purpose of developing a one-pointed mind to bring calmness and tranquility to the mind and be able to gather our attention to one point, so as to stop the mind from frittering away and wasting its useful energy. A calm mind is not an end in itself. Calmness of mind is only a necessary condition to develop Insight. In other words, a calm mind is necessary if we want to have a deep look into ourselves and to have a deep understanding of ourselves and the world.

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