

THERIGĀTHĀ See THERA-THERĪGĀTHĀ

THĪNAMIDDHA, 'Sloth- and -torpor', is one of the five hindrances, those detrimental mental states which the Buddha singled out for their propensity to 'hinder' the proper functioning of the mind (*D.I.*, 246). Sloth-and torpor, though counting as only one out of the five hindrances, in actual fact covers two distinct mental factors¹. These two distinct mental factors appear to have been subsumed under the heading of a single hindrance due to their similar effect on the mind.

The *Vibhaṅga*, the second work in the Pali *Abhidhamma*, explains sloth- and- torpor to imply 'inability' or 'unreadiness' (*Vibh.*254). Similar to the nuance of 'inability' or 'unreadiness', proposed in the *Vibhaṅga*, the discourses characterize a mind under the influence of sloth- and-torpor as 'internally stuck' (*S.V.*, 279: *ajjhataṃ saṅkhittam*).

The same *Vibhaṅga* explains moreover that while sloth (*thīna*) is a mental type of inability (*cittassa akalyatā*), torpor (*middha*) refers to its bodily counterpart (*kāyassa akalyatā*). That torpor (*middha*) is related to bodily inability can also be inferred from the Pali discourses (e.g.*D.* III, 238), which depict someone who, after overeating, indulges in the pleasure of sleeping (*seyyasukha*), the pleasure of lying down (*passasukha*), the pleasure of torpor (*middhasukha*). The three expressions occurring in this context are used as near synonyms, thereby indicating that torpor stands indeed for a bodily type of inability, namely sleepiness.

A *Dhammapada* verse likewise relates overeating out of gluttony to the arising of torpor (*middha*), a deplorable condition this verse compares to a fat pig wallowing and lolling about (*Dhp.*325). Other discourses indicate that, apart from overeating as a particular condition for the arising of torpor, the hindrance sloth- and torpor can arise due to discontent, boredom, laziness and because of a depressed state of mind (*S.V.*, 64):

The effect the hindrance sloth- and-torpor has on the mind can be illustrated with the example of a bowl full of water, used as a mirror in order to see the reflection of one's face (*S.V.*, 121). If the water in the bowl should be overgrown with moss, the natural reflecting ability of the water will be impaired. Similarly, if the mind is 'overgrown' with sloth-and-

torpor, its natural ability to function properly will be impaired. The same imagery moreover depicts quite vividly that the long-term result of sloth- and -torpor is stagnation, similar to water overgrown by moss. In contrast to this predicament, to be free from sloth-and-torpor is like being released from a prison (*M.I.* 275). This complementary simile indicates that sloth-and - torpor 'imprison' the mind, bringing to mind again the *Vibhaṅga's* gloss on 'inability as a characteristic quality of this hindrance.

According to the *Visuddhimagga* (*Vism.*141), the hindrances sloth- and -torpor stands in direct opposition to the *jhāna* factor of initial mental application (*vitakka*). The intention of this explanation could be that the clear grasp of an object through initial mental application counteracts the lack of clarity and mental fogginess caused by sloth- and-torpor. Initial mental application as a *jhāna* factor provides a directional and energizing input and may seem to be in particular an expression of the quality of energy. Energy is in fact the one of the seven factors of awakening (*bojjhaṅga*) which, according to the Pali discourses, stands in direct opposition to sloth- and torpor (*S.V.*, 104+105).

Another antidote to sloth- and-torpor, mentioned on frequent occasions in the Pali discourses, is the development of 'perception of light' (*ālokasaññā*) together with mindfulness and clear comprehension (e.g.*D.I.*, 71). Some discourses associate the expression 'perception of light' with a mind that is 'open' (*vivaṭa*) and 'uncovered' (*apariyonaddha*) by day and by night, and indicate that such 'perception of light' will lead to knowledge and vision (*D.* III, 223). This suggests the expression 'perception of light' to refer to the development of mental clarity. Such a way of understanding finds support in the *Vibhaṅga* (*Vibh.* 254), which glosses 'perception of light' to be a perception that is 'open' (*vivaṭa*), 'pure' (*parisuddha*) and 'clean' (*pariyodāta*). The commentaries take the expression more literally and suggest employing actual light to overcome this hindrance, by looking at the moon, for example, or at the sun (*MA.I.*, 284).

Such 'perception of light' takes place with the aid of mindfulness and clear comprehension (*sampajāna*), which brings into play two qualities as a remedy against sloth- and-torpor that indeed lead to an increase of mental clarity. This is not the only role mindfulness

has to play in relation to the hindrance of sloth-and-torpor. The *Satipatthāna Sutta* describes the tasks of mindfulness in relation to this hindrance to range from clear recognition of its presence or absence to understanding what has led to the arising of this hindrance, what will lead to its removal, and how a future arising of sloth-and-torpor can be prevented (*M.I*, 60).

The *Aṅguttara Nikāya* dedicates an entire discourse to discussing the hindrance torpor (*middha*), offering a variety of remedies (*A.IV*, 85). Initially, presumably while still maintaining the formal meditation posture, the meditator should attempt to counter torpor by changing the meditation subject, or else by reflecting on or reciting passages from the Buddha's teachings. Should this not work, he or she may pull the ears, massage the body, get up, sprinkle the eyes with water and look up the sky. If torpor still persists, walking meditation should be practiced.

The need to energetically overcome and remove this particular hindrance should not be underestimated, since the presence of sloth-and-torpor in the mind obstruct understanding one's own good or that of others (*A.III*, 63). Due to sloth-and-torpor, one does what one should not do and fails to do what should be done (*A.II*, 67). Sloth-and-torpor is one of the factors indicating that a monk lives the celibate life without satisfaction

(*S. III*, 106). To withdraw into solitude in the forest will be of little benefit if one is still under the influence of sloth-and-torpor (*M.I*, 18). Hence to meditate while the hindrance sloth-and-torpor pervades the mind is a form of mis-meditating, a way of practicing that did not meet with the Buddha's approval (*M.III*, 14). Being under the influence of sloth-and-torpor is to be under Māra's control (*Ud.38*). In sum, as long as sloth-and-torpor is present in the mind, liberation will remain out of reach (*A.V*, 195).

The opposition between sloth-and-torpor and liberation finds a fitting illustration in the case of the monk *Bhagu* (*Thag.* 271-274). According to his own report, he had decided to go out of his dwelling because he had been overwhelmed by torpor. His torpor must have been quite strong since, when stepping out, he stumbled and fell down. Getting up and collecting himself, he took to walking meditation. Continuing to practice walking meditation with firm determination he was not only able to free himself from torpor and

develop concentration, but on that same occasion he carried his practice all the way through to liberation. Hence the removal of sloth-and-torpor has a considerable potential, and to properly understand this hindrance and the way to overcome it can yield unexpected result. (See also *JHĀNA*, *NĪVARAṆA*).

Analayo.

Reference

- ¹ This can be seen in *S.V*, 110, which differentiates between sloth and torpor as single hindrances.

THŪPĀRĀMA (1)

Preliminaries: The oldest historical *thūpa* put up by King Devnampiyatissa (247-207 B.C.) at Mahāmeghavana in Anurādhapura, enshrining the 'right collar bone' (*Dakkhiṇa akkhaḍḍu*) of the Buddha. It is sited to the North of the Mahavihāra boundary, four hundred yards to the north of Ruwanwelisāya, close to the Basavakkulama tank. The *Dīpavamsa*, the *Mahāvamsa*, the *Thūpavamsa* both Pāli and Sinhala, Pāli commentaries¹ and inscriptions are the sources available for the study of the *thūpa*. The road into Anurādhapura passed by the southern gate of Thūpārāma, eastwards and then northwards, as per the *Udāna* commentary and the *Vibhaṅga* commentary. The remains of the building where the tooth relic of the Buddha was deposited is found to the South of the *thūpa*. Behind the Thūpārāma was the shrine of *yakkha* Maheja, built by king Paṇḍukābhaya.

The *thūpa* stands on a circular platform 164 feet 6 inches in diameter, raised about 11 feet 4 inches above the original level of the ground and sustained by a massive retaining wall of bricks. The platform could be ascended by a set of plain stone steps in two flights, lower flight being about 17 ft. and the upper 9 ft. in width. There are two "moon stones" (*sandakada pahana*) found in front of each flight and also two sets of guard stones at the base of each flight. The monolithic cistern² outside the boundary wall is a significant feature, probably contained water to wash feet before proceeding to the *thūpa*. The present height of the *thūpa* is 63 ft. and the circumference is 194 ft. and is of bell shape.

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