



**Contemplation of Anger: An Application of The *Satipaṭṭhāna* Sutta In  
Dispelling Anger**

Rev. Y. B. M. Thakuri

Postgraduate Institute of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Peradeniya

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\*Corresponding author

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ybm888@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT**

*One of the widely written literature on the contemplative aspects of Buddhism is mindfulness, and Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta is one of the most important discourses related to mindfulness practice. Although the Sutta itself clearly suggests dispelling anger as one of the benefits of cultivating mindfulness, the application of mindfulness practice in dispelling anger is a very little studied subject. There are two sections in Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta that are closely related to contemplation of anger, namely 'contemplation of mind' (cittānupassanā) and 'contemplation of hindrance' (nīvaraṇapabba). According to these sections, the contemplation of anger helps in dispelling anger in three main ways, that is by enabling one to know the presence of anger, to abandon it, and to avert verbal and bodily expressions of anger. This paper examines these two sections and their application in dispelling anger. The examination is based mainly upon the Pāḷi canonical texts. Some commentarial texts and works related to mindfulness practice are also used whenever deemed practically relevant.*

## 1. Introduction

Dispelling anger is one of the central goals in Buddhist practice. This can be known from the fact that 'cessation of hatred' (*dosakkhaya*) is included in one of the definitions of Nibbāna (S.iv, p.251), (The references to Tipiṭaka books are to PTS edition unless otherwise mentioned as 'B' (Burmese) the highest stage aimed by Buddhists. Hence, it is not surprising that methods to prevent the arising of anger and to abandon it are frequent themes of contemplation in the Pāli canon. The methods given in the Pāli canon can be broadly classified as either preventive or curative. The methods such as four higher-abidings (*brahmavihāra*) (M.ii, p.88) are primarily preventive. For instance, it is impossible for ill will to arise in a person who has cultivated amity (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) well (D.iii, p.247). On the other hand, methods such as becoming skilled in stilling thoughts (M.i, p.119), which are helpful in removing unwholesome thoughts, are curative. If one is skilful in the methods of stilling thoughts, one is able to dispel anger whenever it arises. Contemplation of anger is one of the methods that fall under the latter category.

The concept of 'dispelling anger' can be found in the Pāli canon through expressions such as 'eradicates' (*byantī karotī*), 'abandons' (*pajahati*), and 'puts it out of existence' (*anabhāvaṃ gameti*). According to commentarial analysis (M-a.i, p.22), they can be understood through three kinds of eradication (*pahāna*): momentary (*tadaṅga*), suppression (*vikkhambhana*) and uprooting (*samuccheda*). The eradication achieved by the first two is temporary. In the first, anger is abandoned by applying insight knowledge – understanding anger in terms of the characteristics of impermanence (*anicca*), painfulness (*dukkha*), and absence of self (*anatta*). The second kind of eradication is achieved through higher stages of concentration such as first *jhāna* (M-a.i, p.23). Particularly, the well-cultivated amity and compassion have the capacity to abandon ill

will (D.iii, p.247; S-a.iii, p.174). Furthermore, *jhāna* attained through any kind of serenity, meditation (*samatha bhāvanā*) is also capable of suppressing ill will (Vism.i, 122 B). The third kind of eradication involves complete uprooting of the proclivities of anger through the attainment of Noble Path. In commentary, particularly the latter two are pointed out as escape (*nissaraṇa*) from anger (S-a.iii, p.174). In this paper, 'dispelling anger' is used for temporary abandonment of anger through meditative exercises implied in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

According to the analysis of three levels of defilements, anger can be understood through its three stages: latent (*anusaya*), obsessive (*pariyuṭṭhāna*), and transgressive (*vītikāma*) (Buddhaghosa, 1999, para. I: 13; Silva, 2014, p. 18). Although this stratification is not used explicitly in the Pāli canonical texts, it is helpful in explaining approaches that should be taken to dispel anger. According to this analysis, the latent stage of anger refers to the potential of anger to arise. In this context, anger is represented by the term 'aversion' (*paṭigha*). The concept of 'latency' signifies that anger has not been eradicated completely through the attainment of third stage of enlightenment, that is the Path of Non-returner (*anāgāmi magga*) (Vism.ii, p.326). In terms of eradication explained above, this kind of eradication is of the third kind. As long as anger has not been uprooted, it has the potential to arise whenever supporting conditions exist. This potentiality can be compared to the sound which may arise from a lute when conditions are favourable.

The second level of anger, namely the cogitative stage, denotes the active stage of anger as a mental state or thought process. In the Pāli texts, this is shown primarily through two kinds of wrong thoughts, namely the thought of ill will (*byāpāda vitakka*) and thought of harm (*vihiṃsā vitakka*). Sometimes, the cogitative anger is shown simply as a mental state (A.i, p.201 et al.). The

contemplation of anger found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is mainly aimed at knowing these thoughts or state of mind. This is also the primary aim of the two sections from the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* with which this paper is concerned.

The third stage refers to the manifestation of anger in verbal or bodily actions. It is called 'transgressive' because some forms of moral precepts related to speech or bodily actions are breached when anger or other unwholesome states of mind manifest in speech or action (D-a.iii, p.985). For instance, if one is unable to restrain hateful thoughts, one may break the precept of abstaining from harsh speech. The method of dealing with the transgressive stage of anger is mainly through undertaking moral precepts that restrain unwholesome verbal and bodily actions. Moral precepts in Buddhism are aimed at curbing them (D-a.i, p.20). From Buddhist point of view, dispelling anger involves applying strategies to tackle anger at all the three levels. In this paper, 'dispelling anger' denotes methods of dealing with cogitative anger and preventing it from reaching the stage of transgression.

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (D.ii, p.289), there are three terms that are related to anger, namely 'displeasure' (*domanassa*), 'hatred' (*dosa*), and 'ill will' (*byāpāda*). Among them, *domanassa* is often used for the mentally experienced unpleasant feeling (*vedanā*) (D.ii, p.306; M.iii, p.250; Thera, 2008, p. 80; Bodhi, 2016, p. 36). In some contexts, however, it can also be used as a synonym of anger. This usage of *domanassa* can be found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* itself. This is true particularly in instances where the term *domanassa* is compounded with *abhijjhā* (covetousness). In such instances, the compound of *domanassa* and *abhijjhā* represents five hindrances (D-a.iii, p.759). Since the feeling that is associated with anger is always the painful feeling, the term *domanassa* represents both emotional and affective aspect of anger.

One of the reasons behind using different terms is to highlight diverse characteristics of the mental state or to provide its variant perspectives. For instance, the usage of the term 'displeasure' (*domanassa*) highlights that the affective component of anger is unpleasant feeling (*vedanā*) (Thera, 2008, p. 80; Bodhi, 2016, p. 36). To put it another way, when a person is angry, he or she experiences unpleasant feeling. Similarly, hatred as a root (*mūla*) or cause (*hetu*) suggests that anger is a motivating factor of actions (A.v, p.86; D.iii, p.214). In the same way, the term 'ill will' (*byāpāda*) is used as a hindrance (*nīvaraṇa*) signifying that anger hinders higher stages of concentration and insight knowledge (S.v, p.92; A.iii, p.63; Vin.iii, p.92; Vin-a.ii, p.489; A.iii, p.92). In this paper, the terms such as *byāpāda*, *paṭigha*, *dosa*, and *domanassa* are considered as a class of mental states representing anger.

To show that these terms are related, as an example, the term 'ill will' can be interchanged with 'aversion' (*paṭigha*) (D.iii, p.264; M.i, p.433). The term *dosa* is also translated as 'anger' instead of the usual 'hatred' (Anuruddha, 1910, pp. 88, 96, 250; A.F. Rhys Davids, 1900, p. 19). Similarly, *byāpāda* is also translated as 'anger' instead of mostly used rendering 'ill will' (Soma, 2003, p. 122). Sometimes the anger terms are differentiated based upon the intensity with which they arise. For instance, *dosa* and *paṭigha* are differentiated thus: "*Dosa* is the weak form of anger (*kodha*) which arises at the beginning, but is unable to take up stick and so on [becomes violent]; *paṭigha* is the stronger form of anger which arises at subsequent times and is able to do those" (S-a.iii, p.63). Generally speaking, the anger terms can be considered as synonyms.

There are numerous works written on *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the practice of cultivating mindfulness. For instance, see Bodhi (Bodhi, 2011), Gethin (Gethin, 2011), Anālayo (Anālayo, 2010, p. 44ff), and Thanissaro (Thanissaro, 2012) for discussion

regarding the meaning of *sati* and how the term 'mindfulness' came to be used for it. See Sun (Sun, 2014) for mindfulness in Buddhist and western context. Also Soma (2003, pp. 115–116) for commentarial notes, and Silānanada (Silānanda, 2002) for practical viewpoints. Most of these works, however, are written either from the textual point of view or on its practical application to meditation in general. Despite *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* being one of the popular discourses in Buddhism well-known for mindfulness practice, the application of this *Sutta* in dispelling anger is not sufficiently highlighted.

There are four sections in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, namely contemplation of body (*kāyānupassanā*), contemplation of feeling (*vedanānupassanā*), contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*), and contemplation of phenomena (*dhammānupassanā*). Among them, this paper studies the contemplation of anger based upon the methods given in the third and fourth sections. In the fourth section, there is a section on 'contemplation of bases (*āyatanapabba*) which is also somehow related to contemplating anger (Soma, 2003, pp. 131–132). But as it is similar to contemplation of hindrance, it is not examined here separately.

This research aims to study the contemplation of anger and its use in dispelling anger. The research rests upon the supposition that the *Sutta* itself provides clear hints about the efficacy of mindfulness practice in dispelling anger. At the very beginning of the *Sutta*, seven benefits of cultivating mindfulness are mentioned. One of them is 'cessation of suffering and displeasure' (*dukkha-domanassānaṃ atthaṅgamāya*). Similarly, it is also said that one who undertakes mindfulness is able to dwell with the mind free of covetousness and displeasure (*vineyya loke abhijjhādomanassa*). In both of these instances, 'displeasure' signifies anger. These

two instances indicate the effectiveness of mindfulness practice in dispelling anger.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This is a textual study based upon two sections of *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (D.ii, p.289; M.i, p.55), namely contemplation of mind (*cittānupassanā*) and contemplation of 'phenomena' (*dhammānupassanā*). In doing the study, the instructions related to mindfulness of anger given in the two sections are summarized into eight specific points. Analytical methods are used in examining passages from Pāli canonical texts and their relevant commentaries that are related to these points. As for the commentaries, mainly Ācariya Buddhaghosa's commentaries including the *Visuddhimagga* are used.

## 3. Results and Discussion

Among the four divisions of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, there are two sections which are closely related to contemplation of anger. The first section is 'contemplation of mind.' According to this section, one who is undertaking mindfulness practice is supposed to know one's mind from ethical point of view – whether they are based upon wholesome or unwholesome root (*hetu*). With relation to anger, the mind that is associated with the root 'hatred' (*dosa*) has to be known. As the name of the section suggests, the emphasis here is on contemplating anger as a component of mind. This makes the scope of this contemplation very wide, for it incorporates contemplation of other states of mind associated with anger such as thoughts and intentions. Second, according to the section on hindrances (*nīvaraṇapabba*), one knows anger specifically as a hindrance, a harmful state of mind. The relevant points related to these two sections which pertain to contemplating anger and are also taken here for examination can be summarized in the following eight points:

1. Knows (*pajānāti*) a hateful mind [*sadosaṃ cittaṃ* (mind associated with anger)] as hateful mind, and a mind free of hate (*vitadosaṃ cittaṃ*) as mind free of hate,
2. If ill will is present internally, knows (*pajānāti*) that it is present,
3. If ill will is absent internally, knows that it is absent,
4. Knows the manner through which unarisen ill will comes to arise,
5. Knows the way through which ill will is abandoned,
6. Knows how the non-arising in the future of the abandoned ill will comes about,
7. Dwells endowed with ardent effort (*ātāpī*), clear comprehension (*sampajāno*), and mindfulness (*satimā*),
8. Dwells restraining (*vineyya*) covetousness (*abhijjhā*) and displeasure (*domanassa*) in the world.

In simple terms, the first point refers to knowing the presence or absence of anger. It tells that one should know one has a hateful mind when one has a hateful mind. Furthermore, when the hateful mind has passed away or is abandoned, one should know that the mind is free from hatred. In terms of root (*hetu*), the term 'absence of hatred' (*vitadosa citta*) signifies absence of hatred and the presence of its opposite root non-hatred (*adosa*). From this viewpoint, it can be said that one knows the mind that is rooted in hatred and the mind that is rooted in non-hatred. The root non-hatred represents wholesome types of mind (D-a.iii, p.776). Among them, states that are antidotes to hatred are mental states such as amity (*mettā*) and compassion (*karuṇā*) (Bodhi, 2016, p. 48). These two mental attitudes are often pointed out as states of mind that can dispel anger (M.i, p.424; A.iii, p.185). Thus, besides knowing the presence or absence of hateful mind, one should also know the states of mind that are antidotes of hateful mind.

One of the key words in the above list that pertains to the manner of contemplation is 'knowing.' As it can be observed in the first point, rather than saying 'one is mindful' of hateful mind, it is said: 'one knows.' This is actually the case throughout the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*. Although the term 'establishment of mindfulness' is used as the title of *Sutta*, in the actual guideline, 'knows' is the key term. 'Mindfulness' (*sati*) is mentioned in the *Sutta* only as a quality essential in the overall practice.

Although the term *pajānāti* is often translated as 'knows,' in Buddhist usage, it represents the reflective aspect of 'knowing' derived from direct observation. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, 'knowing' primarily denotes objective observation without any kind of identification with self or ownership (D-a.iii, p.766). The term *pajānāti* is also used for the kind of knowing that comprehends the characteristics of impermanence, painfulness, and absence of self (S.iii, p.57 et al.). Though the actual insight of this type comes only at a higher stage of practice, the term *pajānāti* conveys the presence of such an understanding even if it may be in a nascent form. From this viewpoint, the emphasis on 'mindfulness' in the extant works related to mindfulness practice seems to be disproportionate. See *Mindful Revolution* (2011), for instance, which is a collection of essays on mindfulness written by several authors. In this work, the significance of 'knowing' is given very little attention compared to 'mindfulness.'

In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, 'knowing' indicates the presence of 'knowledge.' Hence, *pajānāti* may also be translated as 'understands' (Ñāṇamoli & Bodhi, 1995, p. 150). In Buddhism, various levels and forms of 'knowing' are explained. For instance, in commentary (Vism.ii, p.66 B), difference between three kinds of knowing is pointed out, namely knowing of 'perception' (*saññā*), 'consciousness' (*viññāṇa*), and 'knowledge' (*paññā*). According to this comparison, the knowing attributed to consciousness is more

sophisticated than perception; and the knowing of knowledge is more sophisticated than the knowing of perception. They can be compared to an ignorant child, a villager, and a jeweller knowing the value of a coin respectively. In this regard, regarding the term *pajānati*, which is a noun form of *paññā*, Professor Premasiri says: “The *paññā* perspective takes into account the known empirical facts and their multifarious relationships” (Premasiri, 1987, pp. 63–64). He suggests that ‘knowing’ related to knowledge takes into account the data that are gained through personal observation and also the way they are causally related to one another. In a practical sense, ‘knows’ can be understood in the present context as the reflective aspect of knowing which has experiential basis.

The section on four foundations of mindfulness in the *Paṭisambhidāmagga* (ii, p.223) gives a slightly different perspective to contemplation of mind. Here, the emphasis is on understanding the three universal characteristics of mind, namely impermanence, painfulness, and absence of self. The text gives altogether seven aspects of contemplation. The other four are abandoning delight (*nibbindati*), abandoning craving (*virajjati*), causing to fade away (*nirodheti*), and relinquishing (*paṭinisajjati*). The latter four are used as action verbs, which likely indicate the outcome of comprehending the three characteristics. The noteworthy additional point here is that understanding the three universal characteristics has the potential to generate disenchantment. This suggests that as a result of comprehending the three characteristics, one becomes dispassionate and is inclined to make effort to dispel anger. In other words, the ‘knowing’ with which we are concerned here has to bring about some positive cognitive changes within oneself.

A noteworthy point that can be gleaned from the first point listed above is that when anger arises, one is supposed to know the anger arising internally – one should not pay

attention to the sense object that triggered anger. Although contemplation of anger arising in other beings is also a part of mindfulness practice, most importantly one has to be skilful in knowing one’s own anger. In the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the contemplation of internal and external elements is shown in relation to all the four sections. The contemplation of sense objects becomes the mindfulness practice in the fourth section of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, namely ‘contemplation of *dhamma*’ (*dhammānupassanā*). Under the sense bases (*āyatana*) of this section, anger is implicitly indicated by the term ‘ill will’ as a fetter which arises based upon sense bases and sense objects. Otherwise, the instructions are similar to those which are given in the section on hindrances. One of the applications of the section on sense bases in relation to present study is that one should know the objects of senses, particularly to prevent the arising of anger when coming across undesirable objects (*anittārammaṇa*), a primary trigger of anger (S.iv, p.189). On the other hand, the contemplation of hateful mind mentioned under the section of ‘contemplation of mind’ becomes significant when anger has already arisen. In that case, one should not pay attention to the undesirable object that triggered anger but to the anger arising within.

In practice, knowing anger whenever it arises (D-a.iii, p.766) can also be accompanied by making a mental note of it (Khantipalo, 1994, p. 35). This way of knowing and noting is particularly emphasized in the tradition of the Burmese meditation teacher Mahāsi Sayādaw. For example, when anger arises, one should know it and also make a mental note as ‘anger, anger’ (Mahāsi, 2008, p. 305). This method of making a mental note is based on the Pāli usage in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* where the particle *iti* (thus) is used in explaining the manner of knowing. For example, in the first statement: “One knows the hateful mind as hateful mind;” or “One knows the hateful mind thus: “Hateful mind” (*sadosaṃ cittaṃ sadosaṃ cittanti pajānāti*).

The method of naming the emotion has been found to be useful also in a psychological study (Anālayo, 2010, p. 171). Labelling anger as 'anger' or 'angry mind' helps in acknowledging the presence of anger. In some tradition of mindfulness practice, however, only the knowing without any labelling is recommended.

The contemplation of anger as a component of mind broadly refers to contemplation of various aspects of hateful mind, among which are thought processes, intentions, and other secondary emotions rooted in hatred. From the perspective of Abhidhamma, in connection with the 'mind associated with hatred' it is said that the two kinds of mind which are rooted in hatred should be understood (M-a.iii, p.776). According to Abhidhamma, when someone is angry, it follows that the mind rooted in hatred (*dosa*) has arisen in that person. There are two kinds of anger-rooted consciousnesses (*dosamūla citta*) (Abhi.i, pp. 100-101; Bodhi, 2016, pp. 36-37; Thera, 2005, p. 2). Hatred (*dosa*) refers to a mental state (*cetasika*) that arises with these two consciousnesses. There are also other mental states which may arise with it as co-nascent states.

Some of the noteworthy mental states which belong to 'hatred class' or 'anger class' are jealousy (*issā*), stinginess (*macchhariya*), and remorse (*kukkucca*) (Bodhi, 2016, sec. II.4). Since these states are inseparable from hatred, this means that knowing these mental states also amounts to knowing the hateful mind. For example, when one is mindful of jealousy, one is also mindful of the hateful mind. In support of this, Venerable Silānanda (Silānanda, 2002) says that "Consciousness [*citta*] and mental factors [*cetasika*] cannot be separated. When you observe consciousness [mind], you also observe mental factors." Most importantly, this implies that the ability to know jealousy and other mental states and also the ability to deal with them in a wholesome way is imperative in dispelling anger. It, however, does not mean that whenever anger arises jealousy and so on

also arise. But it is true the other way around – whenever there is jealousy, for instance, there is also anger.

In Buddhist analysis, the contemplation of 'hateful mind' most importantly constitutes knowing one's hateful thoughts. Knowing one's thought, its arising and passing away relates to the practice of mindfulness (A.ii, p.45; A.iv, p.32). Besides, although the term *citta* is translated here as 'mind,' it can also be translated as thought (*The Book of the Kindred Sayings (Saṃyutta Nikāya)*, 1922, p. 66). In *Suttanta*, the wrong and right thoughts also come with the name *saṅkappa*. In the translation works, often the terms 'intention' or 'aim' is used for *saṅkappa*. Although *saṅkappa* can have these meanings in some contexts (M.i, p.21; Dhṛp-a.i, p.127; Ap. i, p.71), in relation to Noble Eightfold Path, it is a synonymous term of *vitakka*, and is preferable to translate it as 'thought' or 'thinking' (D.iii, p.180 et al.; It-a, p.5; Nyanaponika, 1962; Buddhaghosa, 1999; *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Dīgha Nikāya*, 1996). It may be preferable to reserve the term 'intention' for *cetanā*.

There are two kinds of thoughts that are rooted in hatred: 'thought of ill will' (*byāpāda vitakka*) and 'thought of malevolence' (*vihiṃsā vitakka*). In the context of Noble Eightfold Path, the opposite of these two kinds are shown as right thought. This implies that the two kinds of hateful thoughts are 'wrong thoughts.' In the texts, the presence of hateful thoughts is often suggested through the mental activity generated by hatred. For instance, "one dwells with the mind obsessed with anger" (M.i, p.434). Sometimes the intention generated by hatred is highlighted: "When one's mind is obsessed by hatred, one intends to hurt oneself, hurt others, and hurt both" (S.iv. p.339). The hateful mind may also manifest as malevolent thoughts such as wishing beings to get destroyed, be killed, or be wiped out of existence (M.i, p.287). Among the two kinds of wrong thought that are

related to anger, it can be said that the second kind of thought is the developed form of the first. At the initial stage, it is simply the thought of ill will. If it is not abandoned, it can build up into thought of malevolence, and then into violent actions (Nidd.i, p.215; Nidd-a.i, pp.321-322). The thought of malevolence is concerned more with the intention to act out anger.

In the contemplation of mind, there are altogether sixteen modes of observation (D.ii, p.299; Soma, 2003, p. 9). Among them, there are ten modes which are not specific to any particular mind but are general attributes. Among them, the attributes 'constricted' (*saṅkhitta*), 'scattered' (*vikkhitta*), and 'unconcentrated' are related to hateful mind. The attribute 'constricted' or 'contracted' (Anālayo, 2010, p. 169) suggests the presence of sloth and torpor (*thina-middha*) (D-a.iii, p.766). In some instances, sloth and torpor can arise together with hatred (Bodhi, 2016, pp. 95–96). In simple terms, it means that anger can make a person sluggish and slothful. The scattered mind refers to the agitated state of mind caused by restlessness (*uddhacca*). The third attribute indicates that the mind is unable to concentrate when there is anger. These attributes can be considered as different moods generated by anger. Paying attention to the existence of these attributes can be helpful in detecting the presence of anger or hateful thoughts.

### 3.1. Knowing Intentions

Although it is not explicitly mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, the practice of knowing one's intentions or volitions (*cetanā*) is suggested clearly in commentaries. It is said that when there is intention to do something physically, even if it may be as simple as bending or stretching one's limbs, one should not simply follow the mind suit, but know the intention first (D-a.i, p.192-193). For instance, when intention to do something arises (*citte uppanne*), instead of just succumbing to what the mind wants to do, one should know the intention first (D-a.i,

p.184). One is supposed to generate this kind of knowing even in a simple act of seeing (D-a.i, p.193). As explained below, knowing one's intention also involves judicious examination of actions one is about to perform.

According to Buddhist analysis, intentional physical movements and speech are directed by the mind. For instance, in the act of walking, the mind arises first wanting or intending to walk, then the body walks. In practice, 'intention' usually manifests as urges or impulses to say something or do something with the body. It may also appear as a wish. For instance, when pain arises in the body, intention to move the body or to change the posture may arise (Mahāsi, 2016, p. 267). Instead of immediately following suit, one should observe the intentions (Nyanaponika, 1962, p. 42 ff). As mind is the source of every intentional verbal and bodily actions (A.iii, p.415), the ability to know one's intention has the potential to increase one's capability to restrain the verbal or physical manifestations of anger.

In practice, the training of becoming aware of one's intention begins usually by knowing bodily movements. Whenever there is desire to adjust hand, feet, or body, the mind that wants to make adjustments should be known (Mahāsi, 2016, pp. 267–268). One may also make a mental note of such a mind as 'desire, desire' or 'wanting, wanting.' One may also use the term 'intending' (Kornfield, 1977, pp. 60–61). Similarly, whenever one changes posture, "one should make a note of the action, and the intention which impelled that action" (Ñāṇārāma, 2000, pp. 52–53). When one wants to change or adjust the posture also, one should do so after noticing the intention (Nyanaponika, 1962, p. 93). Practitioners are also instructed to pay attention to other types of intentions such as wanting to drink water, to sit down, and to walk (Kornfield, 1977, p. 61). While walking, the intentions related to lifting the leg, turning around, and so on are mindfully observed (Nyanaponika, 1962, pp. 61–67). Goldstein (1976, p. 48) explained the practice



similarly using the terms ‘volition’ and ‘intention.’ After sufficient practice, the urges and impulses become evident whenever there is intention to speak or to move the body (Mahāsi, 2008, pp. 10–11; Tharmanaykyaw, 2013, p. 17; Nyanaponika, 1962, p. 71). When one trains to know one’s intentions in this way, one’s ability to do so is likely to continue also in day to day activities.

Knowing one’s intentions can be from a certain perspective described as the process of increasing the time between impulse and action. Venerable Nyanaponika calls it “wholesome slowing down” (Nyanaponika, 1997, p. 26). Goleman presents a similar notion: “Catch the impulse before the expression comes about” (Goleman, 2003, p. 171). Similarly, Venerable Anālayo says that the key element in removing instinctive reaction is slowing down of mental reactivity (Anālayo, 2018, p. 28). In the same vein, Goldstein (Experience of Insight, p.48) says that when there is awareness of intentions, there is freedom to do or not to do the action. By knowing one’s intentions, one increases the chances of restraining verbal and bodily expressions of anger. As examined below, however, knowing alone may not be sufficient in exercising restraint.

Becoming mindful of one’s intentions and urges before enacting them is suggested in the *Suttanta*. For instance, in the *Ambalaṭṭhikarāhulovāda Sutta* (M.i, p.415), it is said that the actions of body, speech, and mind should be done after due reflection (*paccavekkhitvā*). Here, ‘reflection’ refers to the consideration as to whether the action causes harm to oneself, others, or to both. If the action is harmful, then it should not be done. This is allusion to knowing one’s intention in the light of one’s values and ethical principles. In the case of hateful thought, one is supposed to restrain the intentions of acting it out, for it causes harm to oneself and others. By training to be aware of one’s intentions, instead of just impulsively following the desire and urges, one is in a position to choose whether to act or not.

### 3.2. Contemplation of anger as a hindrance

According to the section on hindrances, ‘knowing’ anger includes knowing anger as a hindrance or as a harmful state of mind. In the Pāli texts, ‘hindrance’ as a category of unwholesome mental states signifies that anger causes obstruction to wholesome states, particularly to concentration and higher insight. Anger prevents right concentration, thereby obstructing the path that leads to cessation of cankers (S.v, p.92). Without overcoming the hindrance of anger, one is unable to attain the superhuman states (*uttarimanussadhammā*) (A.iii, p.63). The higher attainments of *jhāna*, Path (*magga*), and Fruition (*phala*) are called superhuman states (Vin.iii, p.92; Vin-a.ii, p.489). By hindering the progress of concentration and wisdom, one moves away from the path leading to attainment of Nibbāna (A.iii, p.92). In mindfulness practice, understanding the harmful nature of anger is important.

In the list provided above, the second and third points are similar to the first point given in the contemplation of mind. The remaining three points add further dimensions to the practice of contemplating anger. Unlike the section on mind, specific attention is given here to the mechanics through which anger arises and passes away. Besides knowing the presence or absence of anger, the section on hindrances also suggests making efforts to abandon anger. Furthermore, the fifth point indicates application of methods helpful in preventing anger. To give some examples from the texts, the primary cause of anger is pointed out as ‘improper attention’ (*ayoniso manasikāra*) (A.i, p.4); and the way to remove anger is cultivation of amity (A.iv, p.353). The latter mostly has the function to prevent anger (D.iii, p.247). In this regard, cultivation of amity affects anger at the latent level. The section on hindrances tells that contemplation of anger requires knowledge of methods which prevent anger and also the methods that are helpful in dispelling anger.

### 3.3. Ardent Effort

The last two points listed above suggest that mindfulness practice is predicated upon three more things: (i) making ardent effort, (ii) having clear comprehension, and (iii) a resolve to restrain craving and displeasure. Among several qualities necessary in the practice of mindfulness, these three are the most essential ones. There are also other qualities essential in practice. For instance, in the *Bhikkhu Sutta* (S.v, p.143), virtue and straightening views are shown as essential factors. These are the foundations upon which mindfulness practice should be undertaken. To examine them, however, is not within the scope of this paper. Based upon the last two points, when one is said to be practicing mindfulness, one is also supposed to engage in exercising the above three qualities.

Among the three essential mental qualities, the Pāli term for ardent effort is *ātāpa*. It has the literal sense of 'burning off defilements' (D-a.i, p.104) and refers to 'right effort' (*sammāvāyāma*) or 'right exertion' (*sammāppadhāna*) (D.ii, p.312 et al.). As explained in the context of Noble Eightfold Path, 'ardent effort' signifies effort to cultivate wholesome states and to abandon unwholesome states. In the present case, it means making an effort to prevent or abandon anger and also exerting oneself to cultivate wholesome states that are antidotes of anger.

The 'ardent effort' is also used for making an effort to remove unwholesome thoughts. For instance, according to the *Cara Sutta* (A.ii, p.13), whether one is in a sitting, walking, standing, or lying down posture, if he or she lets the unwholesome thoughts of ill will and malevolence to continue, does not exert effort to dispel, cut off, and remove them totally, he or she is a lazy and indolent person. In the present context, this means that one should exert effort to abandon the thoughts of ill will and thought of malevolence. Making an effort

to abandon them is a part of mindfulness practice.

According to the relation of right effort with mindfulness practice, it is evident that the primary purpose of knowing one's hateful thoughts is to abandon them. An example of dwelling on unwholesome thoughts is like failing to remove flies' eggs from the cattle's body; it will just multiply and cause infection (A.v, p.351). To give some examples to underline this point, in the *Girimānanda Sutta* (A.v, p.109), the Buddha instructs monks not to keep hateful thoughts, to abandon them, and to remove them completely from the mind. Similarly, in the *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta* (M.i, p.114), thoughts are divided into two groups based upon ethical lines as wholesome and unwholesome; and applying right thought in order to abandon wrong thought is recommended. Similarly, in the *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta* (M.i, pp.167-170), five methods of abandoning unwholesome thoughts are given. Skilfulness regarding methods such as these is essential in dispelling anger.

### 3.4. Clear Comprehension

*Sampajañña* is yet another state of mind that is essential in mindfulness practice. In the present case, it is particularly helpful in applying wise judgements concerning intentions generated by anger. The term *sampajañña* is translated variously as 'clear comprehension' (Soma, 2003, p. 60; Sīlānanda, 2002); 'full awareness' (Ñānamoli and Bodhi, 1995, p.973); 'clear knowledge' (Anālayo, 2010, p.40). In the ultimate analysis, *sampajañña* is a kind of 'knowledge' (*ñāṇa*) (D-a.iii, p.982; M-a.i, p.245). Etymologically, it is closely related to *pajānāti*, with an additional prefix *saṃ* which conveys the sense of totality or completeness. In the Pāli texts, *sampajañña* represents very diverse kinds of knowing.

The concept of 'knowing' is shown in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* in various ways. One of them is the phrase 'comprehends clearly'

(*sampajānakārī hotī*), which is related to clear comprehension. In the *Sutta*, besides *sampajañña* being an essential quality of mind in the practice of mindfulness, it is given a separate section of its own under contemplation of body (*kāyānupassanā*). Furthermore, the section on four postures (*iriyāpatha*), which is also given a separate place in the *Sutta*, is also a kind of *sampajañña*. According to passages related to these two sections, *sampajañña* can be understood practically as a sustained form of knowing various aspects of physical body.

The concept of *sampajañña* adds ethical dimension to mindfulness practice. In the canonical texts, *sampajañña* is shown as an essential step in the practice of cultivating wholesome states and abandoning unwholesome. One example of this can be seen in the *Mahāsuññatā Sutta* (M.iii, p.13-14). It is said that one applies *sampajañña* to restrain wrong actions, wrong speech, and wrong thoughts. *Sampajañña* is also explained as one of the factors that increases wholesome states and decreases unwholesome (A.i, p.13). This suggests that *sampajañña* involves knowing the actions or activities in the light of one's ethical values and thereby helping to cultivate wholesome ones. This point becomes clear below where the commentarial gloss on *sampajañña* is explained. *Sampajañña* is also a factor opposing sloth and torpor (*thīnamiddha*) (D.i, p.71), indicating that *sampajañña* involves clear knowing. *Sampajañña* is also a helpful factor in forbearance (S.i, p.28) and essential in the practice of 'restraining sense faculties (*indriyasamvara*)' (A.v, p.115). Thus, the concept of *sampajañña* bears a very dynamic characteristics encompassing both ethical and contemplative practices.

From a practical point of view, the significance of *sampajañña* in dispelling anger is primarily in being vigilant to prevent the angry outbursts through speech and bodily actions. In this regard, as explained in commentary, *sampajañña* involves four kinds of knowing (D-a.i, p.184): (1) knowing what is

beneficial (*sāttaka*), (2) knowing what is suitable (*sappāya*), (3) knowing the domain (*gocara*), and (4) non-delusionary knowing (*asammoha*). Among them, the first two kinds of clear comprehension require knowing one's intention.

Knowing what is beneficial and knowing what is suitable involve application of wise consideration regarding the action one is about to do. If any wish or intention to do something arises, instead of being influenced by what one wants to do and following suit, considering if there is any benefit or welfare in doing so is the first kind of clear comprehension. This kind of clear comprehension requires ethical values against which one may evaluate the action or make judgements regarding the beneficial or unbeneficial nature of the action. It is noteworthy that here 'beneficial' does not refer to any material kind of benefit, but the benefit in the task of freeing the mind of unwholesome states itself. In the present context, this means judging actions based upon whether it will increase one's anger or help to dispel it.

According to the second type of clear comprehension, one considers the suitability of action. For instance, if intention arises to go somewhere, he or she has to consider if it is suitable. It means that even if it is helpful according to the first consideration of clear comprehension, one has to further examine its suitability. For example, even if visiting a *cetiya* is beneficial for a faithful monk, if going might cause him to break certain moral precepts because of the place being very crowded or due to other reasons, then it may not be suitable.

In the case of hateful thoughts and intentions, there is clearly no welfare or benefit in translating one's thoughts into actions, for whatever an angry person says or does is against his or her welfare (A.i, p.263). "One who is angry does not know what is beneficial" (A.iv. p.96). Besides, it is also harmful to the persons towards whom anger

is directed. Furthermore, since acting out on hateful thoughts is harmful, further consideration as to whether the action is suitable or not does not apply. The consideration of suitability, however, may give further incentive to restrain anger in situations where it is not suitable to vent one's anger.

The third kind of clear comprehension refers to applying effort to know one's meditation subject. In the present case, it can be understood as knowing the presence or absence of anger and so on. In this connection, knowing whether one is paying attention to practices such as amity, which dispels anger, can also be considered as clear comprehension. According to the fourth kind of clear comprehension, knowing signifies the presence of insight pertaining to absence of the notion of 'I', 'mine', and 'self.' Thus, *sampajañña* also represents the knowing that is similar to that of insight knowledge (*vipassanā*) (D-a.i, p.192). Since the presence of insight signifies absence of delusion (*moha*), abandoning ignorance is essential in dispelling anger. In the context of this study, in simple terms, the non-delusionary clear comprehension refers to not identifying anger as oneself or as one's property, and not considering anger as something permanent.

### 3.5. Restraining Covetousness and Displeasure

Besides 'knowing' anger or the hateful mind according to the ways mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*, one has to pay attention to certain mental states that have to be developed and certain mental states that have to be abandoned. According to commentary, the states mentioned in the seventh statement such as 'ardent effort' represent factors that should be cultivated, whereas the last statement indicates the two states that should be abandoned (*pahānaṅga*) (D-a.iii, p.758), namely covetousness and displeasure. As noted above, this is allusion to suppression of hindrances, particularly the hindrance of desire for sensual pleasure and

ill will (D-a.iii, p.759). In the context of present study, it can be said that one has to make abandoning craving and anger one's task or objective of mindfulness practice. In simple words, one should have the desire or resolution to abandon them. In many cases anger is a result of not obtaining one's object of craving (M.iii, p.218; M-a.i, p.143). Hence, knowing craving too becomes crucial in dispelling anger. To deal with this point, however, is not within the scope of this paper.

Wanting to abandon anger or hateful thoughts is crucial, for the consideration that one arouses based upon knowing one's intentions is likely to work only if one wants to abandon anger. If one does not have desire to abandon anger, even if one may become aware of one's intentions to act out anger, one may not be able to restrain it. In the Buddhist system of training, this factor is taken into consideration when undertaking moral precepts. For instance, taking a moral precept to abstain from harsh speech provides the motivation to restrain outbursts of anger through speech. On the other hand, if one does not have the training to know one's intentions, one may fail to restrain oneself despite having undertaken the precepts.

Usually the prevention of craving and aversion based upon perceiving six kinds of objects at the six doors is explained in Buddhism as the moral practice of 'guarding sense-faculty' or 'restraining sense-faculties' (*indriya-saṃvara*) (D.i, p.70; S.iv, p.176; Vism.i, p.20 B). In this context, often the verb forms of the two terms are used, namely *sārajjati* and *byāpajjati* for the arising of craving and ill will (M.i, p.266). This again suggests that *byāpāda* and *domanassa* can be interchanged. From this viewpoint, restraining covetousness and displeasure mentioned in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* may also be understood as restraining sense faculties or becoming vigilant to prevent the arising of the two unwholesome states of mind. This explanation is, however, not given in commentaries. In any case, this is an example

of the Buddhist practice where there is unison of moral practice and meditation.

According to the practice of restraining senses (D.i, p.70; D.iii, p.288; A.iii, p.163), in the context of dispelling anger, it involves not paying attention to or not giving unwise attention to certain features or aspects pertaining to objects that one finds unpleasant or undesirable. The concept of having 'wise attention' or 'proper reflection' is very wide. In simple terms, any kind of attention or reflection that generates unwholesome states such as craving and aversion can be considered as unwise. On the other hand, any kind of attention or reflection that helps in preventing them or abandoning them can be considered as wise. For instance, anger might arise if one has unwise attention while coming across hateful object (*paṭigha-nimitta*) (S.v, p.64). Here the arising of anger signifies that one may have failed to know the object, or one may have failed to cultivate wholesome states that are antidotes of anger, or one does not possess attainments which suppress anger.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Although mindfulness practice helps in dispelling the three unwholesome roots of craving, hatred, and delusion, this paper has examined only dispelling hatred. The contemplation of anger as per the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* is helpful in dispelling anger in several ways. First, it helps to know the presence of anger whenever it arises. One can then have a chance to apply methods that dispel anger. For instance, one may exert effort to use methods such as stilling one's thoughts. Second, the contemplation of anger as a hindrance suggests that one needs to understand clearly the harm that is brought about by dwelling in angry thoughts and acting them out. Third, it tells that one needs to cultivate states of mind which are either helpful in dispelling anger or are antidote to anger – for example, amity and compassion. Fourth, one has to train to know of one's intentions to act through speech or bodily actions. Knowing intentions is crucial, for it

makes one able to curb aggressive verbal and physical manifestations of anger. Intentions generated by hateful thoughts are always harmful. Hence, the goal is always to restrain them. In order to do so, one needs to have a resolution to not vent one's anger. This resolution itself is further contingent upon understanding the harmful nature of anger and undertaking moral precepts.

#### Abbreviations

a	Aṭṭhakathā
A	Aṅguttaranikāya
Abhi.i	Dhammasaṅgaṇī
Ap	Apadāna
Abhidh-a	Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha
D	Dīghanikāya
Dhp	Dhammapada
It	Itivuttaka
M	Majjhimanikāya
Nidd.i	Mahānidessa
S	Samyuttanikāya
Sn	Suttanipāta
Vin	Vinaya
Vism	Visuddhimagga Aṭṭhakathā

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