Year Two

Contents

2.1

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path

Contents

Module compiled by Saccanama, questions updated by Vajrashura and Vadanya

This module of the Dharma Training Course focuses on one of the most widely known formulations of the spiritual path found within Buddhism. In view of the fundamental and comprehensive content of its teachings, it provides a classic introduction to Buddhist thought and practice. Sangharakshita gave these lectures in 1968, in the very earliest days of the FWBO, and as such, they have had a significant impact on the development of the Movement. Whilst the Triratna Buddhist Community has grown significantly in the last 40 years, the key points in these lectures remain as relevant now as they were then. Where important developments have taken place e.g. in the area of Right Livelihood, I have added some references for further reading below.

Primary study material
The primary study material for this term – i.e. the core material that it is essential to read before your group meetings – is the series of lectures by Sangharakshita published in book-form as *The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path*, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579818. It comprises the following lectures:

1. The Nature of Existence: Perfect Vision
2. Reason and Emotion in the Spiritual Life: Perfect Emotion
3. The Ideal of Human Communication: Perfect Speech
4. The Principles of Ethics: Perfect Action
5. The Ideal Society: Perfect Livelihood
6. The Conscious Evolution of Man; Perfect Effort
7. Levels of Awareness: Perfect Awareness
8. The Higher Consciousness: Perfect Samādhi

The book is available from Windhorse Publications.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-buddhas-noble-eightfold-path-2/

Mp3 audio recordings of the original lectures are available from freebuddhistaudio.com. If you have the time, I would recommend listening to the lectures – something of Sangharakshita's humour, energy and inspiration come across through listening to him in a way that you just can't get from books.

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path audio series in on FreeBuddhistAudio.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X07

Background reading

The teaching of the Noble Eightfold Path appears in what is purportedly the Buddha's very first teaching – the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* from the Saṃyutta Nikāya of the Pali Canon. After his Enlightenment, the Buddha wondered whom he might be able to communicate his new vision to and recalled his five former companions in ascetic practice. Finding them at the Deer Park at Sarnath, he gave them the following teaching on the Middle Way (here described as an ethical middle way between the extremes of self-indulgence and self-torment), the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path.

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta

'Thus I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Seers). There he addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five.

"Bhikkhus, these two extremes ought not to be cultivated by one gone forth from the house-life. What are the two? There is devotion to indulgence of pleasure in the objects of sensual desire, which is inferior, low, vulgar, ignoble, and leads to no good; and there is devotion to self-torment, which is painful, ignoble and leads to no good.

"The middle way discovered by a Perfect One avoids both these extremes; it gives vision, it gives knowledge, and it leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nibbāna. And what is that middle way? It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration. That is the middle way discovered by a Perfect One, which gives vision, which gives knowledge, and which leads to peace, to direct acquaintance, to discovery, to nibbāna.

"Suffering, as a noble truth, is this: Birth is suffering, ageing is suffering, sickness is suffering, death is suffering, sorrow and lamentation, pain, grief and despair are suffering; association with the loathed is suffering, dissociation from the loved is suffering, not to get what one wants is suffering — in short, suffering is the five categories of clinging objects.

"The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is the craving that produces renewal of being accompanied by enjoyment and lust, and enjoying this and that; in other words, craving for sensual desires, craving for being, craving for non-being.

"Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is remainder-less fading and ceasing, giving up, relinquishing, letting go and rejecting, of that same craving.

"The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this: It is simply the noble eightfold path, that is to say, right view, right intention; right speech, right action, right livelihood; right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration.

"'Suffering, as a noble truth', is this. Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. 'This suffering, as a noble truth, can be diagnosed.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before. 'This suffering, as a noble truth, has been diagnosed.' Such was the vision, the knowledge, the understanding, the finding, the light, that arose in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'The origin of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, can be abandoned.' Such was the vision... 'This origin of suffering, as a noble truth, has been abandoned.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'Cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be verified.' Such was the vision... 'This cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been verified.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'The way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, is this.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, can be developed.' Such was the vision... 'This way leading to the cessation of suffering, as a noble truth, has been developed.' Such was the vision... in regard to ideas not heard by me before.

"'As long as my knowing and seeing how things are, was not quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, I did not claim in the world with its gods, its Māras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmans, with its princes and men to have discovered the full Awakening that is supreme. But as soon as my knowing and seeing how things are, was quite purified in these twelve aspects, in these three phases of each of the four noble truths, then I claimed in the world with its gods, its Māras and high divinities, in this generation with its monks and brahmans, its princes and men to have discovered the full Awakening that is supreme. Knowing and seeing arose in me thus: 'My heart's deliverance is unassailable. This is the last birth. Now there is no renewal of being.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus of the group of five were glad, and they approved his words.

Now during this utterance, there arose in the venerable Kondañña the spotless, immaculate vision of the True Idea: "Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation."

When the Wheel of Truth had thus been set rolling by the Blessed One the earth gods raised the cry: "At Benares, in the Deer Park at Isipatana, the matchless Wheel of truth has been set rolling by the Blessed One, not to be stopped by monk or divine or god or death-angel or high divinity or anyone in the world."

On hearing the earth-gods' cry, all the gods in turn in the six paradises of the sensual sphere took up the cry till it reached beyond the Retinue of High Divinity in the sphere of pure form. And so indeed in that hour, at that moment, the cry soared up to the World of High Divinity, and this ten thousand-fold world-element shook and rocked and quaked, and a great measureless radiance surpassing the very nature of the gods was displayed in the world.

Then the Blessed One uttered the exclamation: "Kondañña knows! Kondañña knows!" and that is how that venerable one acquired the name, Añña-Kondañña — Kondañña who knows.'

(Translated by Nanamoli Thera)

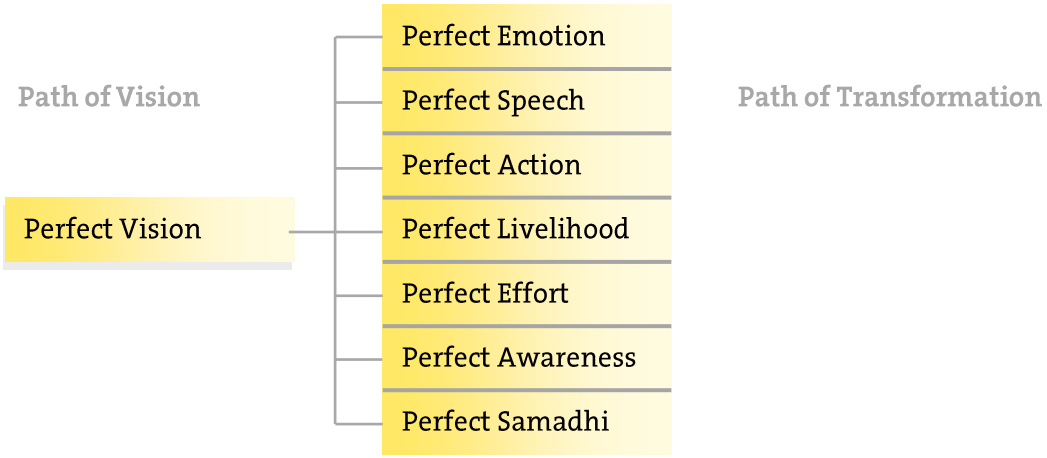
Available from: http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.nymo.html

Different ways of looking at the Noble Eightfold Path
The limbs of the Eightfold Path can be categorised in different ways. According to the most basic division of the Path, they can be seen as follows:

- Ethics – comprises the limbs of Speech, Action and Livelihood.
- Meditation – comprises the limbs of Effort, Mindfulness and Samādhi.
- Wisdom – comprises the limbs of Vision and Emotion.

There is also the division between the Path of Vision and the Path of Transformation as follows:

- Path of Vision = the limb of Vision
- Path of Transformation = the other seven limbs of Emotion, Speech, Action, Livelihood, Effort, Mindfulness and Samādhi.

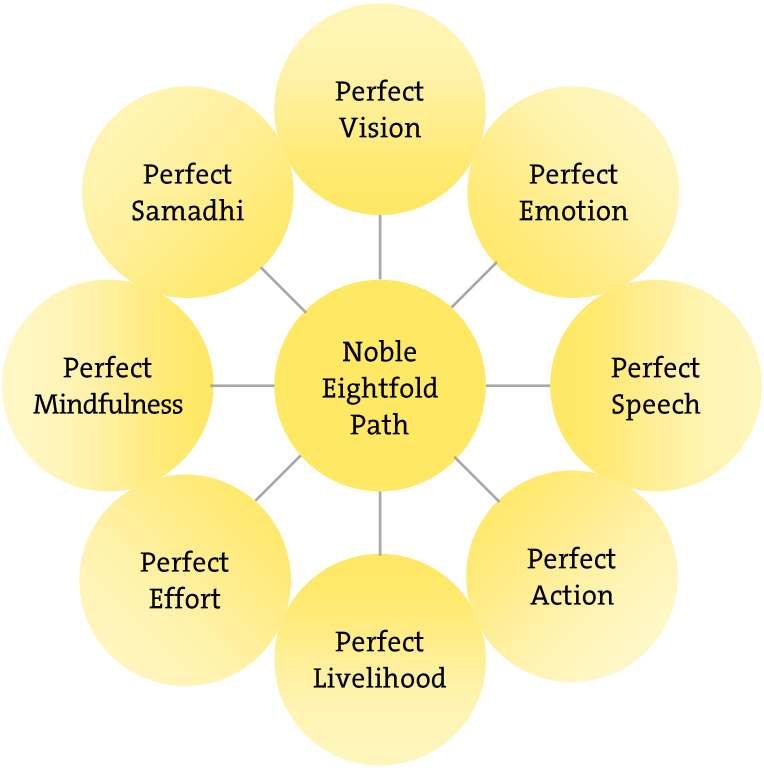


The distinction between the mundane and transcendental versions of the path leads to what amounts to a 16-fold version of the path:

The Mundane Path
1. Right Vision
2. Right Emotion
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

The Transcendental Path
9. Perfect Vision
10. Perfect Emotion
11. Perfect Speech
12. Perfect Action
13. Perfect Livelihood
14. Perfect Effort
15. Perfect Mindfulness
16. Perfect Samādhi

There is also the path in terms of an image. Often it is seen as a series of steps, but it can equally be seen as the petals of a lotus or the spokes of a wheel.



Study guide and questions

Each of the units for this module is relatively concise but even so, its spiritual scope is extensive, introducing a wide range of teachings from the Buddhist tradition. It does build on many of the themes found in *Year One* of the course and will introduce others that will be explored later in the course. Particular links to other parts of the course are made clear in the introductions to each unit and in the *Taking it Further* section below.

As usual, make sure you set some time aside to prepare the material before your group meeting and it would be helpful if you can take some notes as you work your way through the primary material. This helps both with absorbing the material (avoiding any tendency to 'go in one ear and out the other'!) and gives you a summary to refer to in the group and in the future.

The following questions are here to help you engage with the various topics covered in this module. They highlight some of the key themes in each chapter, and particularly focus on things that aren't raised elsewhere in the course. If you have time, you may wish to write some notes to one or more of the questions before attending your group or you may just wish to reflect on one or two of them through the week. If there is a topic that is not covered by the questions that you wish to discuss in the group then do of course raise that too.

Here, Sangharakshita introduces some of the key distinctions for the module as a whole i.e. that between 'view' and 'vision' and between the 'path of vision' and the 'path of transformation'. Many of the symbols and ideas he refers to have already been touched upon in *Year One*, e.g. *The Wheel of Life*, *The Four Noble Truths*, *Karma and Rebirth* and *The Three Marks of Conditioned Existence*, but the teaching of the four *śūnyatās* may be new to you.

1. Sangharakshita translates the term 'samyak' (or 'sammā') as 'perfect' rather than 'right' throughout this series. Why does he do this and what are the implications of using this translation? What does 'perfect vision' communicate to you that 'right view' might not?

2. What has been your own experience of Perfect Vision and what conditions gave rise to that experience?

3. When you have experiences of seeing things more deeply, how can you know whether it is right view and perfect vision we are experiencing? What are the implications of mistaking right view for perfect vision?

4. Do you tend to be drawn more to the Dharma expressed through image or through concept? What might be the strengths and weaknesses of each form of expression?

5. Sangharakshita explores three images – the wheel, the Buddha and the path. Which speaks to you most, and why do you think that is? If there are any of these you that you don't connect with, how might you connect more with them and what might be the benefits of doing this?

6. What practical relevance does the teaching of the four levels of śūnyatā have for your Dharma life?

2.1.**2**
Perfect Emotion

Moving from the Path of Vision to the Path of Transformation, Sangharakshita here explores the importance of emotion in spiritual life, a recurring theme in his teaching of the Dharma.

1. Do you experience "this terrible chasm … between our theory and our practice" in our Dharma lives? In what conditions do you feel it most strongly? In what conditions do you feel less of a gap between our theory and our practice?

2. *"For most of us the central problem of the spiritual life is to find emotional equivalents for our intellectual understandings."*
Why might this be our "central problem"? What difficulties does it cause in your life? In the week ahead, what could you try to find these emotional equivalents in our Dharma lives?

3. Why do you think renunciation is important in spiritual life? What have you given up since you started practising Buddhism? How might you practise renunciation more intensively in the week ahead?

4. Since you started practising Buddhism, have you become 'at least a little better tempered'? How might you deepen your practice of this in the week ahead?

5. Since you started practising Buddhism, have you become a bit less cruel? In what ways might you still indulge yourself in acts of cruelty? How might you be more vegetarian and vegan as part of your practice of non-cruelty?

6. Dāna is the "basic Buddhist virtue". Do you consciously practise it each day? What might you do to help you remember and be motivated to do acts of dāna each day in the week ahead? What might you give?

7. Which of the maitrī, karuṇā, muditā and upekṣā, known collectively as the Brahmavihāras or 'sublime abodes', do you find most inspiring? How might you develop each of them in your daily lives?

8. Do you find puja helps to develop Perfect Emotion? What is your experience of practising it in relation to Perfect Emotion?

2.1.**3**
Perfect Speech

The speech precept of truthfulness has already been explored in *Part 2, Week 5* of *Year One* but here Sangharakshita also looks at the other three speech precepts – of affectionateness, helpfulness and harmony.

1. Do you think it is ever appropriate to lie? If so, when? What might be the consequences for us of lying in these situations?

2. Give some examples of times when you have found it difficult to tell the truth and when telling the truth has had a positive effect.

3. *"Most of us, most of the time, do not speak the truth."*
What do we make of this statement? In what ways might we not speak the truth most of the time?

4. *"What really happens, most of the time, is that we are communicating ... with our own mental projections."*
How might we move beyond this and into more affectionate speech?

5. Is criticism ever appropriate? If so, in what circumstances?

6. *"We should see the good, the bright, the positive side of things – not fasten our attention on the negative."*
How might we do this more in the week ahead, especially in relation to people? And how might we be more helpful in our speech towards them?

7. Identify some examples of useless speech that you engage in. How might they be transformed?

8. In terms of online communication, especially with regards to emails, online forums and social media, when do you tend to break the speech precepts? What could you do to be scrupulous in this area?

9. What is the difference between gossip and taking an interest in someone's life? How might we be careful to know which we're doing?

2.1.**4**
Perfect Action

Looking again at the whole area of ethics, this unit discerns the underlying principles of Buddhist ethics as well as touching on the five precepts and other Buddhist ethical codes.

1. What makes something an ethical issue (as opposed to a matter of personal preference)?

2. *"If you do something and it makes you feel good, then that thing is right, at least for you."*
   What is the problem with this view? Do you fall into this view in particular situations?

3. How can you be clear if, instead of Buddhist ethics, you're simply falling into practising conventional or authoritarian ethics? If you do fall into these, why do you tend to do so?

4. *"Morality, according to Buddhism, is as much a matter of intelligence and insight as one of good intentions and good feelings."*
   What might be the pitfalls of morality merely being a matter of good intentions and good feelings?

5. *"The moral life becomes a question of acting from what is best within us: acting from our deepest understanding and insight, our widest and most comprehensive love and compassion."*
   Do we find this vision of ethics inspiring? How does it differ to the form of ethics we learned when growing up?

6. How might you practice each of the five precepts more intensively in the coming week?

2.1.**5**
Perfect Livelihood

In many ways, the area of livelihood has seen the most development in the Triratna Buddhist Community since Sangharakshita gave these lectures. You may want to explore some of these developments in your group. However, the basic principles that are outlined in this unit do still apply, whatever your own work situation, and it may be helpful to really explore this area of how your work affects your spiritual practice. You might also like to fill in the table below as part of your preparation for this week's group.

1. *"Buddhism ... tries to create the ideal society, the ideal community, here and now on this earth."*
   To what extent do you see your practice as being about creating the ideal community? How could you make this a more prominent part of your spiritual life?

2. The Buddha disapproved of monks earning money from palmistry, fortune telling, astrology and divination? Why do you think this was? What might be the modern equivalents?

3. *"If [your livelihood] involves so much mental strain that you become tense and cannot meditate, then as a Buddhist you need to consider your position."*
   What effect does your livelihood have on your ability to meditate? How do you feel when you get home from work?

4. Do you consider your livelihood to be a vocation, in the sense that Sangharakshita uses the term? (One crucial test might be whether you would still do it – and put as much time and energy into it – if it only paid the very barest level of support.)

5. *"In reply to the question, 'How much time should one devote to earning a living?' I would reply, 'As little as possible'."*
   Do you think Sangharakshita is advising a life of inactivity? How might we use the energy we would otherwise spend on our livelihood?

6. *"We need ... people who will be part-time monks."*
   On a scale between being a full-time monk and being fully engaged in family and career, where would you like to be?

7. This lecture was given in 1968. Do you think there are other topics Sangharakshita would raise if he were giving the talk today?

8. In your preparation for this week's group, make an assessment of your own current livelihood using the table on the following page:

Ethics What are the implications of your livelihood for your practice of ethics?

Does it enable you to keep the precepts?

Is there a positive vocational aspect to your livelihood?

Meditation What effect does your livelihood have on your meditation practice?

Does it leave you time for meditation on a regular basis?

Does it leave you too stressed and busy to meditate effectively?

Are you able to get on retreat regularly?

Wisdom Does your livelihood provide any specific opportunities for reflection on the nature of things e.g. impermanence?

Friendship What is the quality of your relationships at work?

Are you able to make friendships with like-minded people at work?

Finances Does your livelihood meet your financial needs?

Does it enable you to give money to Buddhist and other good causes?

Do you invest your money ethically?

This unit draws attention to the key role of effort in our spiritual lives. In other parts of the tradition, it is talked about in terms of '*vīrya*' or 'energy in pursuit of the good' (see *Unit 5* of *The Bodhisattva Ideal* module, *Year Three*) but here, the traditional list of the four right efforts is used. Sangharakshita also introduces the terminology of the lower and higher evolution – another theme that recurs in his teaching. The module in Year Four of the course on Evolutionary Buddhism will explore this in some depth but if you want to explore it here, do bring it up in your group.

Exercise: Keep a short meditation diary this week; during your mediation, notice and label any of the Five Hindrances you notice, and at the end of the sit write down what you notice.

1. If you had to choose just one, which unskilful mental state do you most need to "prevent and eradicate"?

2. Which of the five hindrances most affected you in meditation this week, based on the exercise above? Choose the most prevalent, and think about what you could do to counteract it in meditation.

3. Does the hindrance you identified in question two affect you in your general life, when you are not meditating? In what ways? How could you act against this hindrance in your life as well as in your meditation?

4. Which methods of dealing with the five hindrances in meditation do you use? Which do you find most useful and effective?

5. Which skilful mental state do you most need to "develop and maintain"?

6. How might you bring a positive mental state which is currently absent into existence? For example, if your mind seems to lack metta or calm, how do you bring these into existence?

7. How might you maintain and intensify a positive mental state you are currently experiencing? For example, if you are experiencing a degree of metta, how do you maintain this and allow it to grow?

8. It is frequently said that we need to accept the thoughts and emotions that come up when we meditate. How can we reconcile this advice with the Buddha's teaching of the Four Exertions (often called the Four Right Efforts)?

9. Do you have any experience of dhyāna or dhyāna-like states? What did this feel like? Under what circumstances did it arise?

2.1.**7**
Perfect Awareness

In *Part 2, Week 6* of *Year One*, we were introduced to Sangharakshita's teaching on *The Four Levels of Awareness* (alongside the three key terms for mindfulness – sati, sampajañña and appamāda) but this remains a classic lecture and one of great spiritual relevance. When asked in 2008 what his main spiritual practice was, Sangharakshita very clearly stated that it was mindfulness.

1. *"Our concentration is weak because we have no continuity of purpose. There is no one overriding purpose that remains unchanged in the midst of all the different things we do."*
   Is this a fair analysis of your own experience? If so, how could you develop more continuity of purpose?

2. How much time do you spend appreciating nature and your environment, compared to the time you spend immersed in busy-ness, the media, and your own thoughts? If these two are out of balance, how could you remedy this situation? Would you be willing to take a precept to put this into practice? What would get in the way?

3. What do you do that puts you in touch with your body? What do you do that cuts you off from body awareness? Could you change the balance between these two?

4. Is there a connection between awareness of the body and awareness of feelings?

5. Sangharakshita refers to 'communication exercises' as a way of becoming more aware of another person. Do you have any experience of these? If so, did you find this a comfortable or an uncomfortable experience? Might your response tell us something about what gets in the way of awareness of other people?

6. *"Repetition of [a] mantra ... puts one in contact with that which it represents, [and] keeps one in contact with it in the midst of all the ... ups and downs ... of daily life."*
   Have you ever used mantra in this way? If so, do you find this an effective way of maintaining mindfulness?

2.1.**8**
Perfect Samadhi

Sangharakshita here explores the area of meditation using a three-fold formula (of *śamatha*, *samāpatti* and *samādhi*) derived from Zen and Mahayana tradition, which he came across through his teacher Yogi Chen. You may want to contrast it with *The System of Meditation* outlined in *Part 3, Week 2* of *Year One*.

1. How easy do you find it to experience the 'peace and calm of mind' of śamatha? Is your life when you are not meditating conducive to śamatha? What gets in the way, and what helps? What could you do make it easier to experience a state of śamatha?

2. Sangharakshita tells us that the type and degree of samāpatti – attainments – that one experiences in meditation is not necessarily related to one's degree of spiritual development? Does this surprise you?

3. Sangharakshita describes a wide range of samāpatti experiences that might occur in meditation. Have you ever experienced any of these? Have you had any other experiences that are not mentioned?

4. *"You may attain flashes of insight ... You might suddenly comprehend the truth of a teaching you had known for a long time, but had never realized or had any insight into – something you had read about in books, and thought you knew very well ... you realize that you did not know it at all."* Have you ever had such a flash of insight in meditation? Can you describe it?

5. The Three Samadhis are now normally referred to within the Triratna Community as the vimoksa-mukhas, the 'Gateways to Liberation'. Have you come across these? If so, what are they? How are these Three Samadhis related the Three Lakshanas? (You may need to look into other sources to answer this question.)

6. What is the relationship between Perfect Vision and the other aspects of the path, including Perfect Samadhi?

7. Sangharakshita tells us that the image of the path may be a misleading metaphor for the spiritual life, and offers an alternative, the growth of a tree. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of these metaphors? Can you think of any others?

Projects

As with all the modules of the Dharma Training Course, this module concludes with the opportunity to present a project to your group on a topic arising from the material you have been studying. You may wish to take one of the Suggested Questions and explore it in more detail than you have been able to in the weekly meetings or you may want to take up a theme or question of your own. Whichever you choose, the purpose of the projects is to give you the opportunity to practise the second level of wisdom more fully i.e. the level of reflection or cintā-mayī-prajñā. It is also a good way to share something of your experience with the group.

Taking it Further

If you have felt inspired or moved to explore any of the themes in this series further, you may find the following resources helpful. They may also be helpful for your project.

The Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path, Sangharakshita, book and lecture series.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-buddhas-noble-eightfold-path-2/
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X07

Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta, various translations.
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.nymo.html
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.than.html
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn56/sn56.011.piya.html

Unit 1

Where Buddhism Begins and Why it Begins There in *Crossing the Stream*, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766780. This is a great little essay touching on dukkha as the basic spur to spiritual practice and contrasting that with other religions and philosophies.
http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/crossing-the-stream.pdf

Unit 2

Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766780, has a much fuller exploration of the Sevenfold Pūjā.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/ritual-and-devotion-in-buddhism/

An audio version of *Ritual and Devotion in Buddhism* is also available.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X05

The Dharma Training Course module on *The Brahmavihāras*, *Module 3* in *Year Four*, is a practical exploration of the four Brahmavihāras.

Unit 3

The Ten Pillars of Buddhism, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579214, has a much fuller exploration of the four speech precepts. An audio version is also available.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-ten-pillars-of-buddhism-sangharakshita-classics/
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=161

The *Abhaya* or *Abhayarajakumara Sutta* (Sutta 58) from the *Majjhima Nikāya,* Wisdom Publications, ISBN 086171072X. Explores the Buddha's views on appropriate speech.
http://www.wisdompubs.org/book/middle-length-discourses-buddha

Unit 4
The Ten Pillars of Buddhism, Sangharakshita, is very good on the background to Buddhist ethics. See above for link.

Unit 5
Western Buddhist Review 1 – Going Forth and Citizenship, Subhuti, explores how Buddhists can participate in the social and political spheres:
http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol1/citizenship.html

Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition, Subhuti, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766683. Chapter 9 is a fuller exploration of the 'New Society'.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

Transforming Work – An Experiment in Right Livelihood, Padmasuri, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579524. Takes a detailed look at Windhorse:Evolution, the most developed of the Triratna team-based right livelihood businesses.
https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Transforming_Work.html?id=6oXTpoO6yLkC

The Dharma Training Course Module *21st Century Bodhisattva*, *Module 2* in *Year Four* explores many of the issues raised in this unit in greater detail.

Unit 6
Meditation, the Buddhist Way of Tranquillity and Insight, Kamalashila, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579052. An older edition of this book is also available free online. The appendix is very good for ways of working with the five hindrances and there is also a section on working in dhyāna in Chapter 8.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/buddhist-meditation-tranquillity-imagination-and-insight/
http://kamalashila.co.uk/Meditation_Web/index.htm

Unit 7
Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, *Majjhima Nikāya,* 10.
http://www.wisdompubs.org/book/middle-length-discourses-buddha

Living with Awareness, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579389. This is a full exploration of Buddhist teachings on mindfulness in the form of a commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/living-with-awareness-a-guide-to-the-satipatthana-sutta/

Satipaṭṭhāna – The Direct Path to Realization, Analayo, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579540. This is detailed but very helpful commentary on the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/satipatthana-the-direct-path-to-realization/

The Dharma Training Course module *The Way of Mindfulness, Module 5* in *Year Two* is a practical exploration of *The Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Unit 8
Meditation, the Buddhist Way of Tranquillity and Insight by Kamalashila (see above, Unit 6) is a very good background for this Unit.

The Three Jewels, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579060. Chapter 14 has more on the three *samādhis* (referred to there as the three *vimokṣa-mukhas* or *doorways to liberation'*.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-three-jewels/

2.**2**

Pratītya-Samutpāda: The Nature of Existence

Contents

Front Image: Michelangelo, *Creation of Adam*, detail.

Compiled by Subhadramati and Vajrashura

This module of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras explores the central teaching of the Dharma – in Sanskrit *pratītya-samutpāda* (in Pāli, *paṭicca-samuppāda*) or 'dependent arising', which is generally rendered in Triratna simply as 'conditionality'. This is the central concept through which the Buddha communicated his Insight into the nature of existence. Here we will be exploring this teaching, especially through Sangharakshita's particular presentation of it. We will have already come across conditionality in *Year One, Part 4*, and some of that material is covered here again. This module aims, however, to go much deeper into the significance of conditionality and its central place in Triratna's system of Dharma practice.

The module is eight weeks long, and draws from a few different sources, all by Subhuti and Sangharakshita. It is laid out as follows:

- Week one, *The Endless Round – The Twelve Links,* is a slightly edited version of a talk by Subhuti with the same name, originally published in the FWBO magazine *Mitrata* number 24 in 1979.
- Week two, *The Spiral Path,* is a slightly edited talk by Sangharakshita with the same name, originally published in the FWBO magazine *Mitrata* number 13 in 1977.
- Weeks three to eight are based on Subhuti's *Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma*, written in 2010. This explores the Buddha's and Triratna's 'fundamental philosophical position'. It also includes extracts from others of Subhuti's writings – endnotes indicate where any other material has been inserted into this text.

A Note on Endnotes

There are many endnotes for the section drawing on Subhuti's *Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma*, i.e. weeks three to eight. They are of three kinds:

1. Details of references in the text.
2. Additional comments by Subhuti on points raised. These are not essential to following and understanding the argument, but are often points Sangharakshita made in discussions with Subhuti that did not fit the main flow of the piece, but seemed too valuable to lose altogether. Some are simply Subhuti's own reflections. Subhuti suggests that they are only referred to on a second reading.
3. Notes made by the compilers, mainly to mark where additional material has been inserted into Subhuti's original paper, but also to explain some terms that haven't been otherwise translated.

Note that all translations from the Pāli are by Bhikkhu Bodhi.

This week's talk is by Subhuti. It explores the cyclic aspect of conditionality. Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study. Note that the material this week is quite long, so give yourself plenty of time to read it all, ideally two or three times.

From the standpoint of the Enlightened mind – liberated from all conditions, freely functioning with spontaneous creativity – the overwhelming feature of all phenomena, whether physical or psychical, is that they are *conditioned*. The ever-moving flux of things, of events, of states of mind, is a process of interdependent stages, each of which comes about through the presence of antecedent conditions and, in its turn, conditions those succeeding. Rainfall, sunshine, the nourishing earth, all are conditions from which arises the towering oak tree, whose fallen leaves rot and form the rich humus from which the bluebell grows. A murderous blow is conditioned by a jealous attachment and itself gives rise to feelings of remorse and guilt. Nothing phenomenal is spontaneously produced, without preceding conditions, or itself fails to have consequences (excepting, of course, those actions performed by one who has subsequently gained Enlightenment and who therefore has transcended conditions). This principle of 'Conditioned Co-production' (Pāli: Paṭicca-samuppāda) is fundamental to any conceptual expression of the Buddha's Insight. Its simplest early formulation is:

> This being, that becomes, from the arising of this, that arises; this not becoming, that does not become; from the ceasing of this that ceases.

The Buddha perceived that this universal principle, which underlies all of phenomenal reality, operates in two distinct ways. Conditionality functions in a cyclic mode and in a spiral mode. Where the process is of a cyclic kind, there is an action and reaction between pairs of opposites; life is followed by death, which is in turn followed by new life, as when a tree grows and dies, providing through its decay the medium of growth for a new tree. Similar reactive cycles can be found at work in human behaviour; a young man, brought up by strict parents, rebels for a period and then settles down with the advancing years to a life as respectable in its own way as that of his parents. At all points of examination – physical, biological, psychological, sociological, historical – this same cyclic process can be found to be operating in a more or less mechanical way. There is no real conscious purpose, merely a more or less complex set of reactions to environmental stimuli, of the kind shown by the dogs of Pavlov's famous experiments. No lasting or real development can take place at this level; things rise only to fall; any growth is purely organic and must be succeeded by decay; any health, wealth, fame and status has loss, old age, sickness, death and oblivion as its inevitable outcome.

The spiral mode of conditionality, on the other hand, has within it the possibility of real and permanent growth, though this possibility, in practice, only exists within the realm of human

experience, since it is only with self-awareness and individuality that this kind of growth and development can take place. Here, rather than involving a mechanical action and reaction between polar opposites, each set of conditions acts as the point of departure from which, out of an inner creative fullness, the individual brings into being something still richer and fuller. This in turn may act as the departure point for yet further creative heights, each new phase augmenting and surpassing that preceding.

The principle of Conditioned Co-production thus shows that the individual may continue to function reactively in a cyclic manner, or that he may act more and more creatively as he ascends the spiral path and finally that he may, with Enlightenment, overcome all conditions within his own mind.

The earliest formulations of this principle to be found in Buddhist texts are given in terms of 'links' (Pāli: *nidāna*) in the chain of conditionality. There are according to most accounts twelve cyclic links and, in two passages of the Pāli texts, an account is given of the spiral process in terms of twelve progressive links. A clear grasp of the processes at work in these twelve cyclic links provides the basis from which an individual may slowly transform his reactivity into creativity, his endless self-destruction into personal growth and freedom.

Before proceeding to a detailed examination of each link in the cyclic chain, there are two points which require further elucidation. Firstly, the relationship between each link and its successor is one of conditionality, not of mechanical causality. Secondly, the analysis is based on the assumption that the individual is reborn again and again.

The principle of Conditioned Co-production is concerned not with causes but conditions. It does not, for instance, ask what causes a billiard ball to move across the table and fall into the comer pocket; the answer (at least the most straightforward answer) to this would be that the cause was the billiard ball's being struck by a billiard cue. However, many other factors must be considered if we are to account fully for the event. The shape and surface of the table, the weight and consistency of the ball, the experience of the player and his mental state at the time, indeed, even the heat of the sun which would have melted the ball and incinerated the table if it had been too great - all must be taken into account. The billiard ball's behaviour is conditional upon all these and many other factors. So, an analysis in terms of conditionality considers each thing, event or mental state as being produced out of a complex ground or field of factors upon which it depends. To state that one link is conditional upon another is to say that the preceding is *one aspect* of that field or ground out of which the succeeding is produced. The universe is a dynamic flow of interdependent processes, not the clashing together of solid and unchanging bodies. An analysis in terms of causes would have involved pushing back through an endless, strictly mechanical spatio-temporal sequence; whereas, by asking what the conditions are which produce each link, the Buddha was able to search deeper and deeper below the surface of things until He arrived at what was, for His purposes, the basic condition for human suffering.

The analysis proceeds through a number of different layers and levels; the conditioning factors are not always of the same order as those phenomena which arise in dependence on them. For instance, from an 'historical' account of birth and death, the analysis delves into the psychological processes which shape human destiny, and then into a description of the production of the psycho-physical organism, and on to the spiritual poverty which underlies every link. Furthermore, many factors involved in any one link may appear again in a number of other links. This is because the term 'condition' is generic and covers, according to Buddhist Abhidhamma scholastics of the Theravada School, twenty-four different kinds of relationship.

For the purposes of this account, it is sufficient to realise that conditions are different from causes.

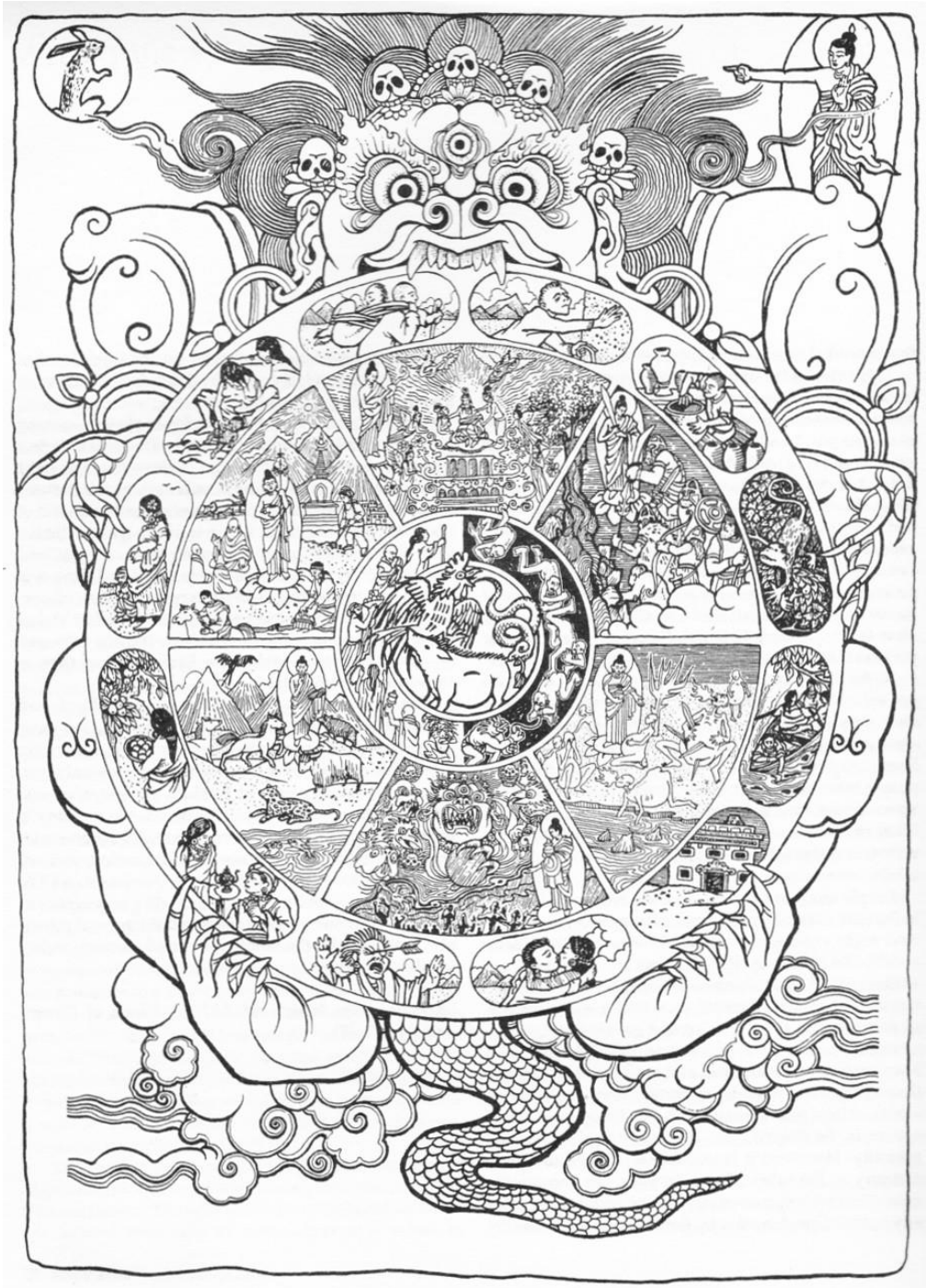
Traditional Buddhist teaching has always assumed that the individual is reborn (or 'rebecomes') innumerable times, and this teaching of the twelve links explicitly assumes the factuality of rebirth.

However, it is a principle that we are concerned with, one which we can also see at work year by year, day by day, and even microsecond by micro-second in our present lives. In a sense we are being born and dying all the time; all twelve links are at work, whirling away, in every moment of consciousness. But we cannot escape the fact that rebirth in a literal sense is a primary matter of the fully developed formula. What, then, is meant by rebirth?

The Buddhist view of the individual being is that he is a complex inter-relationship of processes, all of which are constantly changing. Even the body, the most stable aspect of personality, is composed of cells most of which will be renewed every seven years. Emotions, impulses, ideas, mental states, all come and go with astonishing rapidity. There is nothing in the individual's total psycho-physical make-up which stands outside the flux. Rebirth is not, then, the transference from one body to another of a soul or substrate which is itself unchanging. Rather it is that the flow of processes in one life conditions the flow of processes in the next. Thus actions and preoccupations in one life determine the nature of one's consciousness and the circumstances into which one is reborn.

For the purposes of the present account, we need only realise that rebirth is a definite part of traditional Buddhist teaching, that this is not an unreasonable view, and that there are suggestive pointers in modem investigation which seem to support it. If you find it impossible to accept the idea of rebirth or feel that you should keep an open mind on the question, then you should realise that this teaching is a specific application of a general principle. The process of birth and death is the story of existence; no matter what we choose to isolate - the flight of a bird, the rise of an empire, the formation of a galaxy - we see that it starts and it finishes, is born and decays. As each thing decays, it provides the conditions in dependence on which a further process commences; our going to sleep conditions our waking up. So, if the application of these twelve links to the process of birth and death is not acceptable to you, then try to see at least that they are all present in every moment of our lives.

The chain of conditions can be enumerated in direct or reverse order: from death-and-decay to ignorance or from ignorance to death-and-decay. From the point of view of analysis, of trying to find the underlying conditions for human suffering, enumeration from decay-and-death back to ignorance is appropriate. From the point of view of exposition, it seems best to show how one link leads on to the next. This means that we start at the basic condition from which all our lives are spun out – spun out in such a way that we must inevitably experience cramping, unease, failure and worse. Once this condition is removed we are free and can experience only bliss, clarity and spontaneous creativity.



The Tibetan Wheel of Life

Ignorance (Pāli: avijjā)

The twelve links are depicted symbolically around the rim of the Tibetan Wheel of Life, each link by an image which shows its essential character. For the first link, ignorance, the image is of a blind man groping forward, stick in hand. Usually, he looks not only blind but rather stupid; one can imagine him crashing into things and falling over time and again. It might be even more appropriate if he was shown not blind but blind-folded with a scarf tied with his own hands.

The image is, then, of a blunderer, one who fails to perceive the situation as it is and who stumbles on in ignorance. Avija means ignorance or spiritual blindness, lack of vision and spiritual perspective. It is an almost deliberate, wanton refusal to see the real nature of our existence. Since Enlightenment consists in a direct penetration of Reality and a perception of things as they really are, then ignorance is the direct antithesis of Enlightenment.

Though ignorance is ultimately a lack of Enlightenment, we can see it at work on much grosser and more obvious levels. For instance, someone who is infatuated with another person goes off his food, broods and mopes, may be incapable of work or communication; he acts as if the other person was the most perfect, fascinating and important creature the world has ever produced. To an outsider, this paragon might appear as a rather ordinary person, not perhaps without good points, but still just one amongst many. No amount of reasoning will persuade the lover, however, until he is disillusioned by his own experience. Many times we see that others are mistaken in their fundamental assumptions about themselves and the world about them, or else we realise our own delusion. Not only are we ignorant of the real nature of things but we also construct fantasies and false ideas about how things are. This is not a matter of simply reaching the wrong intellectual conclusions – though these will inevitably be involved as rationalisations – but of fundamental assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes which condition our behaviour. We act as if we were going to live forever, as if we were the centre of the universe; project onto others our hopes and fears; we project onto a God our own insecurity; we adopt a cynical nihilism out of fear and anger. In so many different ways, different individuals blind themselves to reality.

The most fundamental manifestation of ignorance is unawareness of the very principle of Conditioned Co-production, of the fact that everything phenomenal is conditioned. In our own Western Society, this has led to the almost total lack of recognition of any higher human possibility. Our culture is at present almost sterile of any dimension wider than that of work and entertainment, sex, and sleep. Not only is there ignorance, but ignorance even of the possibility of Wisdom.

This fundamental ignorance is the prime condition in dependence on which volitional activities arise.

Volitional Activities (sankhāra)
The image for this link is a potter at his wheel and shaping with his hands a pot out of a lump of raw clay. It is well known that no two pots are ever the same; each one has its own character determined by physical factors to some extent but mostly by the potter's own mental state. In the same way, out of our basic state of spiritual blindness, tendencies and dispositions arise which shape our future destiny. We act in ignorance again and again, our speech is based in ignorance and our thoughts are deluded; the whole momentum of our being is conditioned by ignorance. From our unenlightenment we form a character which can only act in an unenlightened way.

It is, at times, quite noticeable how little people are aware of their basic character tendency. They will produce reasons for their actions, announce their future intentions, and make various resolutions, promises, and declarations. All the while, the whole drift of their deeds shows how little they know themselves. We sometimes have the impression that we shape our destiny by the action of will directed by reason, but there is a momentum of the total personality which is far stronger, and which it is our early duty to come to know. It is only by becoming fully conscious of the general drift of this torrent of actions, words, and thoughts that we may begin to shape it into something of real value.

This momentum is carried over into the subtle mind-made body at death. The experience of dissociation from the physical body is one for which most of us are wholly unprepared. According to the Tibetan Book of the Dead, we pass through a series of experiences which consist of projections of disintegrated parts of our own being in the unfamiliar territory of the

after-death state, which offers no toehold of security, and of the searing beauty of naked Reality. Though we are closer to Reality in this in-between state than at most times in life, it is too much to bear, and we long for the safe and sure ground of a body. In all directions we see beings copulating. We find ourselves attracted to a particular couple who in some way suit our own character tendency. As we try to take the place of either the man or the woman, we faint away at the moment when sperm and ovum meet. There is a tremendous shock and a complete blankness ensues, back beyond which few are able to see in their future life.

The volitional activities are the conditions in dependence on which there arises consciousness, the first flash of sentience in the mother's womb after the swoon at conception.

Sentience (viññāṇa)
Sentience is depicted as a monkey up a tree, leaping and jabbering in an uncontrollable way. This first spark is, however, even more primitive than that. It is the sense consciousness of the lowest end of the evolutionary scale: the stumbling proto-awareness of an amoeba. Warmth and nourishment, the throb of the mother's heart are but dimly perceived in that first awakening. From that moment, as the foetus develops, it retraces the whole course of human evolution.

The fact that the foetus possesses sentience from the moment of conception – a sentience which has the potential to become the distinctively human self-awareness – means that to terminate pregnancy intentionally is to take human life. For the Buddhist, this fact should be clear when considering the question of abortion.

The process of human physiological development is the process of objectification of consciousness. The new consciousness which arises in the womb begins to organise physical matter around itself. Thus, in dependence on sentience, arises the psycho-physical organism.

The Psycho-Physical Organism (nāma rūpa)
In the outer rim of the Wheel of Life, this link is depicted as four men in a boat, one of whom is steering. The four men together with the boat represent the five 'heaps' or groups (Pāli: *khandha*) into which all the elements of personality may be divided: the physical body (the boat), feeling, perception, volitional activities, and consciousness (the steersman).

This fivefold analysis is a basic methodological tool of Buddhism. One must be aware that all the elements of one's being are subject to change; there is nothing fixed or static in any of these five heaps. Essentially, one is a congeries of interdependent, ever-changing processes. If one regards oneself as in any way fixed ('I am bad tempered, that's the way I am and you'll just have to get used to it. You can't change human nature') then the possibility of development is denied. The realisation that all the elements of the personality can be accounted for as belonging to one or other of the five heaps, and that all are evanescent and transitory, opens up the possibility of the total transformation which is Enlightenment.

'The Contemplation of the Six Elements', for example, is a traditional Buddhist meditation practice undertaken within the FWBO to engender this realisation, after we have developed a strong basis of emotional positivity and psychological integration. We consider that our body is made up of the different elements. There is in us the element earth, in the form of solid matter: bones, skin, hair, muscle, fat, etc. This earth element within us is no different from the earth element in the universe around. One day, indeed, when we are dead, the solid matter in our body will rot away into the universal earth element: 'food for worms'. It is best, then, to consider this earth element within us, and similarly water, fire, and air, as simply being

'borrowed'. We cannot identify with them; they are not ourselves. The space that we occupy is filled out by the body, but when the body dies that space will 'return' to universal space. We cannot even identify ourselves with the position in space and time from which we view things. Ultimately, even consciousness, which is individualised by the coherence of the other five elements, must be given up; not to unconsciousness, but to infinitely more expansive and open consciousness. After doing this practice, we feel lighter and more free, detached in a very positive and appreciative sort of way. We do feel that, with patience and hard work, everything within us can be made more bright and clear, a harmonious and unified radiance.

At the same time, it should be stressed that we do actually experience ourselves as individuals. Indeed, for most people, the primary task is to strengthen and complete their self-awareness; to bring all the processes which make up the five heaps into full consciousness. That individuality can then be refined and expanded so that it is increasingly receptive to the ultimate nature of things.

This mental and physical equipage which is a 'person' is the fleshing out of consciousness, which is, in its turn, determined by the momentum of the past life. The unstable and insecure after-death state makes us seek to be 'earthed', so we form for ourselves, in a reactive and unconscious manner, a being which is the expression of our consciousness.

This process of concretisation continues one stage further as, in dependence on the psycho-physical organism, arise the six senses.

The Six Senses (salāyatana)
These are represented by a house with a door and five windows. Up until now the process has been one of building the house, but now the media of perception form the five physical senses and the mind – the mind considered as the organ for the perception of mental objects.

The sense organs provide the conditions in dependence on which perception or contact arises.

Contact (phassa)
A man and a woman embracing illustrates the impingement of the external world on the senses. The organs of sense have come into contact with external or mental objects from which an impression is formed. Consciousness thus reaches out through the medium of the body and its sense organs.

The act of perception is where the trouble starts, as will become clear shortly. 'Guarding the doors of the senses' is therefore a basic mental training. This does not mean, however, that one should keep oneself constantly in a state of sensory deprivation. The senses and the act of perception are, in themselves, ethically neutral; it is how we react to them which makes or marrs us. The key is, as usual, to be as aware as possible of what we are sensing and of what is going on in our mind.

The enjoyment of art or nature is very important in the spiritual development of an individual. The perception of aesthetically pleasing objects – externally, in art or nature, or internally, in visualisation and imagination – has the effect of stimulating and refining the higher emotions. Living in an environment which is beautiful and inspiring is almost essential if one wishes to make a serious attempt to develop.

As a result of contact feeling arises.

Feeling (vedanā)
The image here is of a man with an arrow in his eye. When we perceive objects, they give rise to sensations within us, either pleasant, painful, or neutral. We often overlook this emotional colouring to our sensuous experience, but the different environments through which we move have an immediate and powerful effect upon us. We perceive and then we evaluate on the basis of our present nature and past experience.

Awareness of the kind and quality of feelings produced by sensory contact, of the effect that objects have upon us, is of the utmost importance in our growth as individuals. At this point, the doors of heaven and hell are before us, and we may choose...

We will return later to this crucial moment of choice after completing the exposition of the whole chain. Suffice it to say, for the time being, that, if no discriminating awareness is brought to bear, we will simply react on the basis of past tendencies, and thus in dependence on feeling, arises craving.

Craving (taṇhā)
This link is portrayed by a seated man being offered a drink by a woman. His perception of the drink excites in him pleasant feelings, so he craves it. If the woman had been offering him a snake, then painful feelings would have arisen and he would have been repelled by it.

Two possible misunderstandings must be guarded against here: first, the implication that hunger, thirst and desire are, under all circumstances, unhealthy; second, that enjoyment of the senses is itself necessarily unhealthy. Desire should be distinguished from craving; hunger, thirst, and other desires which are expressions of our physical and psychical needs, require satisfaction if our organism is to remain healthy. If one is genuinely thirsty and accepts the drink, and enjoys it if it is pleasant, then there is nothing 'left over' which can act as the condition for further links.

Craving, then, is a longing for something more than the satisfaction of objective desires. It is a feeling that, if we can only possess the object, we will be satisfied in a far deeper, emotional, even existential, sense. Here, our basic spiritual ignorance and blindness leads us to suppose that, if only we could appropriate the object food, a person, wealth or a particular job – we would be happy. Or it may be that we recoil; if only the object was removed from our lives then we could be happy. It can be a relatively trivial passing whim for another slice of toast, to lie in the sun – or it can be very subtle and far-reaching, shaping the whole of our lives, like the longing for a stable sure universe, presided over by a Divine Monarch.

Craving has two primary forms: indulgent, and neurotic. Indulgent craving arises when we wallow in the enjoyment of the satisfaction of an objective desire, lingering gluttonously over it. In neurotic craving there is an absence of experience and therefore of enjoyment. It comes about as a result of our alienation from ourselves, and is a deluded attempt to recontact aspects of the personality which are not experienced, and which have been projected onto people things.

One of the clearest manifestations of neurotic craving in modern life is in sexuality. The desire for sex is a natural and healthy one, the experience and satisfaction of which present no difficulties in themselves. Sexuality becomes itself neurotic and unhealthy by being entrapped within an unhealthy personality. For instance, people are often alienated from aspects of themselves, and so project onto others qualities which are potentially their own. A man can thus project onto a woman his own unexperienced 'feminine' side – his emotionality and

receptivity – and see it in her in a distorted idealisation. Conversely, a woman may see in a man her own more masculine side – her initiative and decisiveness. When this projection takes place, as it does with terrifying frequency, each craves in the other what is really a submerged aspect of his or her own nature. Sexuality may become caught up in this process and thereby itself be distorted and used to reinforce the neurotic personality. Naturally, this unhealthy craving cannot be satisfied by possession of another person, but only by the projected aspect being incorporated fully into our own being.

Craving, then, is the overinvestment, in imagination, of an object with the power to satisfy us, and in ways that it cannot. The natural consequence of craving is that we grasp and cling onto the overinvested object.

Grasping (upādāna)
Here a man is shown gathering fruit from a tree; craving has led to action. We begin to take steps to appropriate and secure that which we long for.

Just as craving can be gross or subtle, so also can clinging. The more obviously recognisable kind is attachment to material objects and to people. However, in traditional accounts, more importance is given to mental grasping. We cling onto various ideas, beliefs and opinions, all of which are modifications of that fundamental ignorance which underlies the whole conditioned chain.

Out of our confusion and ignorance we manufacture these false views (Pāli: *micchā-ditthi*) which are the rationalisations of our basic attitudes and cravings. Most of the time, what we take to be our thoughts are merely accumulations of these assumptions and attitudes, which are not systematically thought through and which can often be shown to be rationally groundless. Books, newspapers, conversation, much indeed of so-called intellectual life is made up of these rationalised attitudes: an Augean stable which requires far subtler strength than that of Hercules to cleanse.

Belief in a personal god can, for instance, be seen to stem from a desire for security, for a final stable relationship between ourselves and the Ultimate. The rigid insistence that all humans are equal can be traced to an inability to accept that others are more developed than we are. The Buddha gave a whole discourse (*The Brahmajāla Sutta in Dīgha Nikāya* of the Pāli Canon) enumerating the many categories of wrong views which were current in his own time; a modern equivalent would be no less useful, though possibly much more voluminous. The exposure and rectification of wrong views and opinions has great consequence for development since they keep us fixed and stagnant. Their function is to keep us secure in our attitudes and feelings. The reluctance which people often show to have their ideas challenged, and the strength of feeling with which they defend them, all are indications of this. It is particularly noticeable how religious dogmas of the theistic kind tend to lead to a fanaticism which may shed oceans of blood to enforce 'belief' on others.

The kind of ideas and beliefs we hold, the sort of objects, people, and events we cling to, all of these determine the kind of experiences which we have, the particular world we live in, and therefore the world into which we are reborn. Thus in dependence on grasping, there arises becoming.

Becoming (bhava)
Becoming here means conception or the beginning of the new life, hence the image used is that of a pregnant woman. Our birth and being are the most drastic manifestations of clinging

that there can be. The particular level or plane of existence on which we are reborn (according to Buddhist tradition this human world is only one of many different dimensions in which we could exist), the kind of body we have, the type of parents we are born to, the particular surroundings of our lives, all these are 'chosen' by us.

Immediately after death, it is said, we experience a state of complete uncertainty. There is nothing fixed or familiar to which we can cling. In a sense what happens is that we are presented with an infinite range of possibilities, including the possibility of not choosing at all but of transcending the whole process. This open situation can be very positive, since there is the possibility of choosing a new and higher state of being. What inevitably happens, however, is that we are attracted to what is most like ourselves, what most readily expresses our ideal of satisfaction. We choose a world and a being which confirms most readily our wrong views and mistaken attitudes and which provides the opportunity of clinging to those objects which we regard as providing satisfaction. To the extent that our false views and emotional and sensual attachments are distortions of our nature, to that extent we will choose for ourselves a distorted environment into which to be reborn.

This process of choosing a rebirth can more immediately be seen in the way we choose our job, our friends, or even the area in which we live and the manner in which we live there. More often than not, this choosing process is largely reactive, being determined by unconscious factors – rationalised with more or less plausible explanations. When we do make an effort to work on ourselves, the circumstances of our lives often change dramatically as we say, take up the practice of meditation, change our work for more creative and ethically positive means of livelihood, and seek the company of other people who are themselves developing.

There is, indeed, a parallel between the experience of a retreat and that of becoming. We are removed from everything familiar and are faced with all sorts of new and expanded vistas through meditation, lectures, and communication. There seems a very real possibility of choosing a far more creative and rewarding way of life or 'place of rebirth'. Many actually do make such changes on the strength of their experiences on retreat.

Becoming, as the process of fashioning and choosing the world into which we are reborn, is the condition in dependence on which arises rebirth.

Birth (jāti)
The image for birth is a woman in childbirth. This is the passive consequence of the active process of becoming. As a consequence of conception, the human psycho-physical organism, the complex inter-relationship of the five heaps is again in being.

The natural and inevitable consequence of birth is death.

Decay-and-Death (jarā-maraṇa)
The destruction and decay which is the outcome of all phenomenal existence is represented by a man carrying a corpse on his back to a cremation ground. To one who has, throughout his lives, continuously committed himself to objects, people, situations, attitudes, beliefs and ideas, believing them to be the source of existential security, deep emotional satisfaction, and the fulfilment of all the potentiality inherent in human awareness, to such a one the spectacle of the continuous loss and destruction of objects, of the death and departure of people, of the waning of situations, and of the oppositions and disappointments, falsehoods and contradictions of attitudes, beliefs, and ideas, produces endless pain and suffering. That

suffering runs through whatever pleasure and happiness there may be: in the words of the scriptures it is, 'sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair'.

In summary: 'Sentient existence consists of activities set up through spiritual ignorance; as a result, beings take rebirth as psycho-physical organisms equipped with sense-organs by means of which they establish contact with the external world and experience pleasant, painful, and sensations; developing a craving for the pleasant sensations, they try to cling on to the objects that produce them, which leads (according to the Theravadins, an early school of Buddhism still extant) to fresh conception in a womb or (according to the Sarvastivadins, another early school of Buddhism, now died out) to the plane of intermediate existence; in consequence of this they again have to undergo birth, old age, disease and death.' (Paragraph taken from *The Three Jewels*, by Sangharakshita.)

An important secondary principle at work in the process of Conditioned Co-production is that the state of mind with which an intentional action is performed determines the nature and kind of effect experienced. A deed or thought which arises out of a wholesome and positive mental state leads to a pleasurable and happy 'feedback' from the world around us. Since we are thinking, speaking, and acting all the time, we cannot always describe a particular experience we have as being the effect of a particular action in the past. The principle is much more general; some volitions are stronger or weaker than others, some are habitual, some have no effect, some cancel others out: it is the whole drift of our consciousness which determines the kind of experiences we have. This is usually known as the Law of Karma (Pāli: *kamma* – willed action). Yet the word 'Law' suggests something rather rigid and mechanical, perhaps even sanctioned by an enforcing agency, rather than a flexible and living principle which underlies human existence.

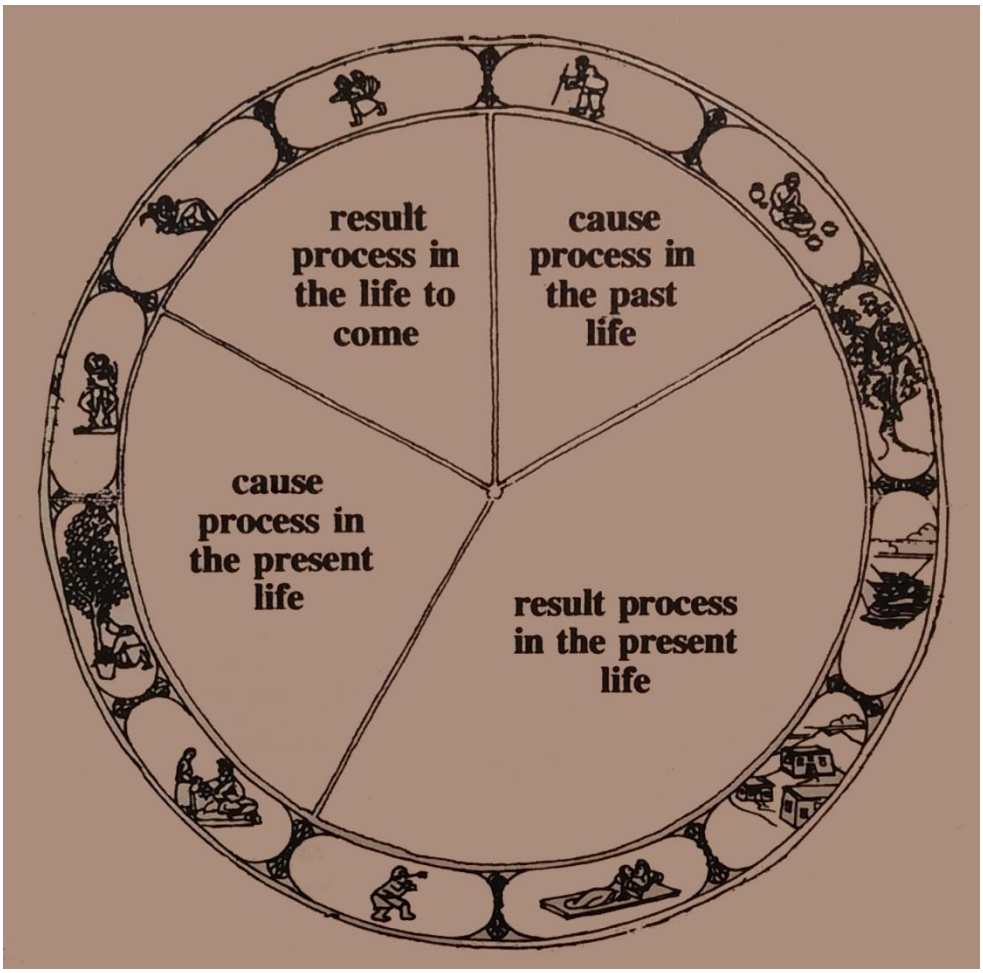
The relationship between willed action (kamma) and its experienced effect (Pāli: *kamma-vipāka* the fruit of willed action) can be found in active and passive phases of the twelve links. Each of the links can be seen as part of either an active cause process or a passive result process. The cause process is volitional, the result process is the consequence of those volitions in accordance with principle of Karma.

The twelve links of the chain show the operation of cyclic conditionality in the course of three lives: past, present, and future. Thus the first two links, ignorance and volitional activities, are the cause process in the past life, while sentience, the psycho-physical organism, the sense organs, contact and feeling, are the result process in the present life. Craving, grasping and becoming are the cause process in present life; rebirth and death-and-decay are the result process of the life to come.

Although the chain is a series which unfolds in time, all its links are present simultaneously in each situation. This is clear from the fact that what is considered present now, is future as regards the past, and past as regards the future.

Our enumeration of the *nidāna* chain is now complete. What should be absolutely clear is that its devastating analysis of human reactivity is only one part of the total picture of existence. Here we are shown what happens when we exercise no individuality, when we allow ourselves to tick on in a more or less machine-like way. But there is another, more glorious vista which opens up, ascending into greater and greater radiance, bliss and freedom,

culminating in the total transcendence of all conditions, which is the great liberation of Enlightenment.



It is to the task of ascending the spiral path of spiritual development that our human calls us. We are capable of living with a nobility and fruitfulness which the clockwork motion of the twelve links denies. How then can we escape the endless round of reactivity and commence the unfoldment of our creative potential?

Within the process there is a gap through which the possibility of growth appears. Once in every cycle of the twelve links, that gap opens up. Here we may either react in the old patterns or begin to function creatively. The opening appears in the transition between the effect and the cause process, between the effect of past volitions and renewed volitional activity. To give a crude example; a man craves money and so robs a bank – this is all volitional action and is therefore a cause process. He is then caught and sentenced to a term in prison – this he merely suffers, independent of his own will, and he is therefore experiencing a result process. Once he is released from prison, he is free of the consequences of his past volitions and no new ones have come into play. He could 'go straight' or start his life of crime again. At this point it is up to him. So, within the *nidāna* chain, the gap appears between *feeling* and *craving*: the end of the effect process in the present life and the commencement of the cause process in the present life. This is the Achilles' heel of the cyclic process; this is the weak point in the whole chain.

Let us re-examine that link of craving. As a result of contact with the external world and with mental objects, pleasant and painful feelings are experienced. What usually happens is that we project onto those objects which excite pleasurable experience the power to provide a

satisfaction beyond what they objectively may be able to do. There are emotional hungers and thirsts, and those of the spirit too, which become tangled up with the physical experience of hunger and thirst. Indulgence in food or sexual gratification thus may go far beyond the satisfaction of physical hunger or healthy desire, to become a means of assuaging a lack of affection or the 'nonexperience' of emotional alienation. These cravings, and indeed, our total existence, may be an attempt to fill the inner emptiness of our lives; to compensate for our alienation from Reality itself. To the extent that we are out of contact with the ultimate meaning and significance of our existence, then, we will try to fill the emptiness with people, and ideas.

The way out, then, is to break the chain at this point. This does not, of course, happen all at once. Gradually we become aware that what we hanker after cannot give us any lasting satisfaction; a life lived in this reactive fashion is always going to be uncomfortable, awkward, ill-fitting, unsatisfactory. Slowly we begin to detach the qualities which we have projected onto objects, people, places, and attitudes, and to experience and develop them in ourselves. The lover ceases to project his own femininity onto his beloved and begins to experience the qualities in his own being. The glutton ceases to see food as a source of gratification; and experiences an inner richness and fullness. Gradually, we crave less and less phenomenal ephemera and increasingly long for Ideals of real substance and worth. The emotions are directed not to transient experience, but to those people, practices and ideals which can help us to develop an integrated, loving, blissful and liberated mind.

It is not, then, a question of suddenly forcibly suppressing all craving. This would result either in severe alienation or, in a more healthy person, in a speedy reaction to indulgence. What has to be achieved is the gradual curbing of the reactive pattern as we become aware of it in different areas of our life. At first we may simply be aware of a certain tendency, say, to have rather more to eat than we need. It may be very difficult to stop, but with time we become more and more aware of the forces motivating us in this reactive pattern. At first, we are only aware retrospectively that we have acted in an unskilful way. Then we become aware actually as it happens. Eventually we become aware before we start to act and thus may check and eradicate the pattern.

At the same time as our developing awareness is bringing about the curbing and controlling of reactive patterns, we must be consciously bending and directing our emotions towards new, more subtle and positive objects: towards our spiritual friends and teachers, towards the work we do and the community we live in, towards meditation, towards the music, painting, sculpture and literature which are expressive of a more refined and inspired sensibility, towards the Buddhas and all those Bodhisattvas and Heroes, who are the torchbearers of humanity, towards the Dharma and the Sangha. As we do this, we will find ourselves travelling, not round and round the endless sequence of the cyclic chain, but up and up the spiral chain with its own series of links: from unsatisfactoriness, to faith, to joy, to rapture, to calm, to bliss, and on upwards to the full and final transcendence of all conditions, which is Buddhahood.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. *"At all points of examination – physical, biological, psychological, sociological, historical – the same cyclic process can be found to be operating."*

Can we recognise and see examples of these cycles of reactivity in our lives?

2. How would we describe the difference between conditionality and causality?

3. How do we respond to the traditional assumption of rebirth? If we don't believe in rebirth in the traditional manner, what consequences might this have for our Dharma life?

4. How is ignorance or spiritual blindness "deliberate"? Can we think of examples in our lives of ways in which we are deliberately ignorant or spiritually blind?

5. How do the ignorant views that we mentioned in the previous question manifest in our day-to-day actions, i.e. what volitions are shaped by them?

6. How might we come to know the strong and deep momentum of our total personality, which is our "early duty to come to know"? Why is this important in the Dharma life?

7. How is "human physiological development ... the process of objectification of consciousness"?

8. What effect does reflecting upon how all aspects of our being are conditions and changing have upon us? Why might it be necessary to strengthen our self-awareness before reflecting this way?

9. Do we guard the gates of the senses sufficiently in our lives? In what areas do we tend to fall short? Do we try to refine what we come in contact with?

10. Which of the two forms of craving are we most prone to? How might we work with each?

11. What is the difference between craving and grasping? Why might mental grasping be more important?

12. Do we see our life now as the result of our choices? Is it useful to our Dharma lives to see it in this way, or should we focus more on how our choices now influence the future?

13. The gap between feeling and craving is central to the Dharma life. How might we pay more attention to this in our daily lives? How might we embody this more in the coming week?

2.2.**2**
The Spiral Path

This week's talk is by Sangharakshita. It explores the spiral aspect of conditionality. Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

Buddhism can be looked at, in a very general way, from two points of view: from a more theoretical, philosophical, or even speculative point of view, or from one which is more practical, even pragmatic. Here we are going to be concerned with the practical aspect of Buddhism. We are going to leave aside the philosophy, the theory, and to concern ourselves with what is pre-eminently practical. We are going to try to understand something of the stages of the spiritual path, and hardly anything, from a Buddhist point of view, could be more practical than that.

But before we start on the path itself, we must give just a few more general words of explanation. What we call Buddhism, but what in the East is more generally known as the Dharma, the Truth or the Teaching, was founded by Gautama the Buddha. The name, or rather the title Buddha, means simply 'the One who knows' or, as we more usually translate it, 'the Awakened' or 'the Enlightened One', and the state of Buddhahood or Enlightenment may be described as a state of absolute moral and spiritual perfection. It is also, as Buddhism emphasises most strongly, a state which is within the reach of each and every individual human being. If Buddhism emphasises anything, it emphasises that each of us, if we only make the effort, can become as the Buddha himself became. If Buddhism emphasises anything, it emphasises that each of us, if we only make the effort, can become, as the Buddha himself became, continually merging into higher experiences still, and we shall discover what we may describe as a sort of progressive phenomenology of the spirit.

The first stage of the spiritual path is described in the texts in the following formula: **'dependent upon suffering arises faith'.** This is where the spiritual path begins. Here we have two experiences: an experience of suffering and another experience which is called the experience of faith. And we are further told by this formulation that the former experience, suffering gives rise to the latter, faith. Now what does this mean? By suffering here is meant not just individual painful experience, like toothache, or a cut finger, or some bitter disappointment. These are painful experiences, but it isn't just experiences of this kind that the text means when it speaks of faith arising out of suffering. Suffering here means unsatisfactoriness. The original word is *dukkha*, and one of the original explanations of the word *dukkha*, which is usually translated as suffering is this: the prefix *du* means 'ill , bad, incorrect or improper', and the suffix *kka* is the same word or part of a word that we find in the word *chakka* which means wheel. So *dukkha* is sometimes traditionally explained – though this may not be etymologically correct in the scientific sense – as having originated from the word for a chariot wheel which fits badly: *du kha*, the ill-fitting chariot wheel.

Now if you have an ill-fitting chariot wheel and you are driving, or even galloping, along in the chariot, then what happens? You have a very-bumpy and uncomfortable journey – there were no springs on chariots in ancient India, and no proper roads. So if you were so unfortunate as to be driving along in a chariot whose wheel was ill-fitting, loose and wobbly, then you had a very rough, rocky and uncomfortable journey.

Thus *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness, which we usually translate as suffering, means the sort of discomfort which arises in the course of our lives when things don't fit properly, when there's a lot of jarring and a lot of discomfort and disharmony arising out of that jarring sensation. This is what is really meant by *dukkha*: a sort of disharmony, a jarring quality that we experience in the course of our everyday life in this world. And we all know what this sort of thing means. Things are never one hundred per cent right. There's always something, even if it's a little something, that goes wrong. Even in the course of the most beautiful day it seems, only too often, a cloud has to float across the face of the sky. Something goes wrong. Maybe you've prepared expectantly for a very beautiful day. You're going to meet somebody whom you like, things are going to be so lovely, so beautiful. But then some absurd incident happens and it all goes wrong. Then you feel completely out of tune, completely 'jangled', by whatever has happened. And very often this is our experience of life. Most of the time this is how we go through life, feeling like this. We find that everything from which we expected so much fails and doesn't live up to our expectations. This sort of experience is what is called *dukkha*, unsatisfactoriness or suffering.

So then what happens? We start becoming dissatisfied. We start feeling that nothing is going to give us any real or lasting satisfaction. We might have tried all sorts of things: worldly success, pleasure, comfort and luxury, wealth, learning; but in the end we find them all unsatisfactory, and there's a vague sort of restlessness inside us. It's not that we're actually suffering pain all the time, but we're just not really happy and at peace. We feel some sort of vague discomfort all the time, and we can't really settle down. We don't feel that we belong. We feel perhaps in the words of the Bible that 'here we have no abiding city'. This is the sort of experience or sensation that arises.

As a result we start, at first almost unconsciously, looking for something else, searching for something higher. And at first we very often don't know what it is that we are looking for. This is the paradoxical situation in which we find ourselves. We don't know what we want but we're looking for it. There's just this vague sort of restlessness, this groping and feeling around in all directions for one knows not what.

But eventually, searching in this way (if it can be called searching), we come into contact with something which, for want of a better term, we label something 'spiritual'. Now this word 'spiritual' is not one that I really like, but we don't seem to have a better one in English. I use it to mean something higher, something which is not of this world, or even, as the idiom goes, 'out of this world'. And when we come into contact with it, by whatever means, at once it evokes a response in us. We get the feeling, or at least an inkling of a feeling, that 'this is what I was looking for, searching for, all the time, even though I did not know it when I was actually searching'. This sort of emotional response to this spiritual 'something' when we first come into contact with it is what, in the context of Buddhist tradition, we call faith. And it's in this way that in dependence on suffering, or unsatisfactoriness, there arises faith. The original word is *saddha*. We translate it as faith but it isn't faith in the sense of belief, in the sense of believing to be true something which cannot be rationally demonstrated. If we want a definition of faith we may say that it is the response, even the emotional response, of what is ultimate in us to what is ultimate in the universe. For Buddhism faith means specifically faith

in the Three Jewels: faith in the Buddha, the enlightened Teacher; in the Dharma, the path or way leading to Enlightenment; and in the Sangha, the Spiritual Community of those who are treading the path leading ultimately to Enlightenment. These three, the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha represent for Buddhism the highest values of existence. They are called the Three Jewels because, in the same way that jewels are the most precious things in the material world, so these three represent for Buddhism the highest values in the spiritual world.

It is in this way that, in dependence upon suffering, there arises faith, in the sense of this intuitive, devotional, even mystical response to something higher, something of ultimate value, when we first come into contact with it. And here we see the very beginnings of the spiritual life, the first step on the spiritual path.

Secondly, **'dependent upon faith arises joy'**. We have found what we were looking for. We might not have been able to seize hold of it, but at least we've had a glimpse. So naturally after what has perhaps been a period of long searching, long struggling, long discontent, we are pleased and happy. More than that: our contact with the spiritual values which, for Buddhism, are represented by, in fact embodied in, the Three Jewels, has begun to transform our lives. It isn't something intellectual or theoretical. Our hearts have actually been 'lifted up' (the real meaning of the word *saddhā*), lifted up to something higher, and on account of that contact, however brief, a change begins to take place. We begin to become just a little bit less self-centred. Our egoity is just a little disturbed, a little shaken up, and we begin to become just a little bit more generous and outward-going. We tend not to hang on to things so very closely or convulsively. And what may be described as the lower part of our human nature – that part which belongs to the what might be called the 'lower evolution' – starts to come under the conscious control of that higher part of our nature which belongs to the 'Higher Evolution'. Things like food, sex and sleep begin to come under the control of that higher nature. Not only that, but we begin to lead a life which is more harmless and simpler than our life was before. This too makes us feel more happy and contented. We feel more at ease within ourselves, and don't rely so much upon external things. We don't need external things, material things, so much as we used to: we can do without them. We don't care if we haven't got a beautiful house in the suburbs, or a beautiful car, and all the rest of it. We sit very loose to all those things. We are much freer and more detached than we were before, and we are at peace with ourselves.

We may not have fully explored what we were looking for, but we've made contact with it, we know that it's there, and that the contact has at least begun to transform our lives. We have a good conscience, but there's no complacency of course. And Buddhism attaches very great importance to this particular stage – to our having a good and a clear conscience, and feeling happy and joyful on account of our spiritual life. This is one of the things that you can notice in the East, certainly in the Buddhist East: that there spiritual life is much more associated with joy than it is in the West. In the West we tend to think that in order to be religious you must be at least a bit gloomy, or at least serious, keep a straight face, and certainly not laugh in church or anything like that. That would be regarded as very improper. But it isn't like that in the East. There they tend to think that if you're a Buddhist, or leading a spiritual life and following the spiritual path, you should be happier, more open and carefree, more joyful than other people, and religious festivals, celebrations and occasions of that sort are therefore regarded as occasions of joy. I have more than once remarked on the fact that I was very, very surprised when I came back to this country, after twenty years in the East, and found that the Buddhist movement here was, on the whole, such a gloomy and serious affair, with people hardly daring to smile when you made a joke in the course of a lecture. But this is how it was.

The point which I am trying to make is that if you have found this something very precious that you were looking for, and if this has really begun to work in your life and to transform it, then why should you not be happy? If you're not happier than other people who haven't got this wonderful thing called Buddhism – these Three Jewels – well why aren't you? What's the use of being a Buddhist? What, in fact, does being a Buddhist mean?

Indeed so much importance does Buddhism attach to this stage, of feeling happy and care-free and at peace with oneself, and having a good clear conscience, that if for any reason you lapse from this – for instance by doing something that you shouldn't have done, so that you get all sad and serious and start beating your breast in the good old pre-Buddhistic fashion – then Buddhism says that this is a very unhealthy state to be in, this state of guilt and remorse, and that the sooner you get out of it the better. This doesn't mean that what you did wasn't wrong. You made a mistake, and it is best to admit that, and try to make up for it and not do it again. But once you've understood that, and have tried to put it right, it is best to put it out of your mind and just walk on (l hope I'm not stealing anyone's thunder using this phrase, but it just came). Just 'walk on', and leave the mistake behind. It won't do you any good whatsoever to carry it with you.

In Buddhism we even have special ceremonies and services to bring about this psychological effect. If you feel weighed down by any fault that you've committed, just go in front of the shrine, bow down in front of the Buddha, think it all over, and just say to yourself: 'Well, what a fool I've been! I really shouldn't have done that. I really am sorry'. (Especially if it has involved hurt to other people). 'All right, I won't do it again. I'll be more mindful in future'. And then you recite some texts, try to fix your mind on the Teaching, to recollect the ideal, burn some candles perhaps, and light some incense. In this way you purge your mind of the feeling of guilt which you had. So you restore your state of clear conscience, of Joy and happiness in the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Thus in dependence upon faith; this emotional response to the high spiritual values that you encounter, there arises this joy, which should be the hallmark of the true Buddhist.

Now thirdly, **'in dependence upon joy arises rapture'**. Even joy is not enough. We don't have proper words in English to express these things. The word which we translate as rapture, *piti*, is a very strong word in the original Pāli. It's an emotion: an emotion of very intense, thrilling, or even ecstatic, joy. In fact the word *piti* could very well be translated even as ecstasy, because it's experienced not just mentally, but even physically. It's an emotion so powerful that you feel it psychophysically, in your body as well as in your mind. We all know that when we're deeply moved by some experience or other, perhaps in connection with human relationships, or art, or when we listen to a marvellous symphony beautifully played, or look at a beautiful sunset, then sometimes it happens that we are so deeply moved that not only is there an emotion, something mental, but there's a physical innervation at the same time. We may be so greatly moved that our hair stands on end, for instance. Some people get this more easily than others (it's technically called horripilation, which is a dreadful word). Some people even shed tears. You can see people at symphony concerts sometimes, or at the Proms, so much moved that they have to wipe their eyes, in a rather shamefaced sort of way maybe, because in this country we're not supposed to do that sort of thing. But this is *piti*, an overwhelming psycho-physical experience of rapture, bliss and ecstasy which may even carry one right away, we're told. And this is the sort of experience which will be generated as we follow the path. In dependence upon joy arises rapture, or ecstasy.

Now, in the fourth stage, **'in dependence upon rapture there arises calm'**, or you might even say peace; In the Pāli it is *passaddhi*, and passaddhi represents the calming-down of all the physical side-effects of rapture or ecstasy. We saw that ecstasy, which arises in the previous stage, is something psycho-physical, but in this fourth stage the physical side of the experience just subsides, and you're left with the purely emotional experience of ecstasy. The physical innervations die away, not because the rapture or ecstasy is less, but because it has become greater. It's gone beyond all possibility of physical expression you're almost out of the body, so there's no physical expression at this stage. The texts give a very interesting simile to illustrate this. Suppose an elephant steps down into a small pond. (In India there were, and still are, lots of elephants, and elephants are very fond of bathing. Almost every day, sometimes several times a day, they like to go down into a pool or a river and be bathed. They squirt water over themselves and over one another.) Suppose, in fact, the pond is not very much bigger than the elephant himself. When this great beast gets into that little pond what happens? The water goes splashing out at the sides because the elephant is so big, and the pool in comparison is so small. Similarly, we are told, this is what happens in the previous stage. The experience of ecstasy is so great, and our capacity to receive it is so small, that some of it spills over, in the form of these physical side-effects. But then, the illustration goes on to say, suppose the elephant steps down into a great pool of water, a huge lake, or an enormous river. Then what happens? Big as the elephant is, when he steps into the water, or even when he gets fully into the water, there's hardly a ripple, because, though the elephant is so big, the body of water is immeasurably bigger still. In the same way, when you come as far as this fourth stage, the stage of the calming-down of the physical innervations, even though the experience of ecstasy may be very great indeed, you're more able to receive it; there's less disturbance, and the physical innervations therefore die down, and only the inner, purely mental or emotional experience of ecstasy is left. This is *passaddhi*.

Then in the fifth stage, we're told, **'dependent upon calm arises bliss'**. You see how far we are going. We started off with joy, then went on to rapture and ecstasy, and after a period of calm or pacification; we come on now to bliss. Isn't it extraordinary that some of the early books written in the West on Buddhism describe it as a gloomy, pessimistic and negative religion? But here we see exactly the opposite. In dependence upon calm arises bliss. And this is described as a state of intense happiness. It represents the unification of all our emotional energies. They are not divided, there's no split, no flaw. They are all flowing together in a great stream, strongly and powerfully, in a single direction. And here there is not only bliss, we are told, there is peace, love, compassion, joy, and equanimity too. There is no craving or fear, no hatred or anxiety, no guilt, no remorse. All the negative emotions have been purged. And whatever energy we'd invested in those negative emotions now flows positively in the form of Bliss, in the form of intense happiness. So in this way we rise higher and higher in the spiritual scale.

Then, **'dependent upon bliss arises concentration'**. The word here in the original is *samadhi*, which has several different meanings, but here it means 'concentration' – not concentration in the sense of the forcible fixation of the mind on a single object, but in the sense of that unification and integration that comes about quite naturally when, in that state of intense happiness, all our emotional energies are flowing together in the same direction.

This sixth stage, represented by the formula that 'dependent upon bliss arises concentration', is based upon a very important principle. It is based on the principle that when we are completely happy, and all our emotional energies are unified, then we are concentrated, in the true sense. Hence we may say that a concentrated person is a happy person, a happy person is a concentrated person, and the happier we are, the longer we shall be able to stay

concentrated. We find it difficult to stay concentrated for very long because we are not happy with our state. If we were really and truly happy we wouldn't need to do anything else; we would just stay still enjoying that happiness. But we are not happy, we are dissatisfied, and so we get restless, and go searching for this, searching for that – for some distraction, some diversion – and in this way there is no concentration.

Now this connection between happiness and concentration is illustrated by a rather interesting little story from the Scriptures. We are told that one day there was a discussion between a certain king and the Buddha. The king came to the Buddha to ask him about his teaching, and in the course of the discussion the question arose between them: Who is the more happy? Is the Buddha happier than the king, or is the king happier than the Buddha? The king was quite sure that he was the happier by far of the two. He said: 'Well look, I've got all these palaces, I've got an army, I've got wealth, I've got beautiful women. So I'm obviously more happy than you. You've got nothing. What have you got? Here you are sitting under a tree outside some wretched hut. You've got a yellow robe and you've got a begging bowl. That's all you've got.' So obviously, he concluded, 'I'm by far the happier of the two.'

The Buddha replied: 'All right, but let's discuss it. Let me ask you a question. Tell me, could you sit here perfectly still for an hour enjoying complete and perfect happiness?' 'Yes I suppose I could.' 'Could you sit here without moving, enjoying complete and perfect happiness, for six hours?' 'That would be rather difficult.' 'Well, could you sit here for a whole day and a whole night, without moving, absolutely happy the whole time?' 'No, that would be far beyond me.'

Then the Buddha said: 'But I tell you this, l can sit here for seven days and seven nights without moving, without stirring, and I experience all the time complete and perfect happiness without any change, without any diminution whatsoever. Therefore', he concluded, 'I think I am more happy than you are.'

From this story we can see that the Buddha's happiness arose out of his concentration, and his concentration arose out of his happiness. Because he was happy he was able to concentrate, and because he was able to concentrate he was happy. The fact that the king was unable to concentrate showed that he was not so happy, really, as he had thought – certainly not so happy as the Buddha. In this way we see that concentration is dependent upon happiness. The more restless we are, the more unhappy we are, and the less we can concentrate. All this, we may say, is related very closely to our practice of meditation. We know that meditation begins with concentration. Many of us find this very difficult, and we find it difficult simply because we are not happy. This is the main reason: because our emotional energies are not unified. So what do we do? With our emotional energies un-unified, we try to forcibly fix the mind on a certain point. But then all sorts of disturbances arise, we get distracted, and this is because of the split within ourselves – because of the fact that our emotional energies are not unified, not integrated. Concentration is thus something which pertains to the whole being, not just to the conscious mind, and this emotional unification or concentration of the whole being is what we call happiness.

Now this also points to the importance of preparation for meditation. We can't just come along and sit down and think that we can meditate without any preparation. This isn't possible. We have to go through all these previous stages if we really want to meditate, and then the concentration exercises that we do just put the finishing touch. But quite a lot of people first of all have no experience of the unsatisfactoriness of life; no faith has arisen; there isn't much joy; there certainly isn't much of rapture or calm; or ecstasy or bliss or anything like that. They're just in their ordinary restless, dissatisfied state, but they think they can just come along and sit

down and meditate. But that is impossible. It's very significant that concentration in this higher sense, in the sense of *samādhi*, arises only at the sixth stage of the path – the sixth stage of the path out of eleven when we're halfway along! It's only then that we can really and truly begin to concentrate, because our emotional energies have been unified, and we are now, perhaps for the first time in our lives, happy.

Seventhly, **'dependent upon concentration arises knowledge and vision of things as they really are'.** For the first time in our lives, perhaps, we are really happy, really concentrated. We can look into things with a concentrated mind, and we can begin to see things as they reality are, begin to see Reality. This stage is of the utmost importance because here there is a sort of transition from meditation to wisdom, from what is really psychological to what is spiritual. Once we've reached this stage, once in dependence upon concentration there has arisen, or begun to arise, the knowledge and vision of things as they really are, then after that there can be no falling back, no falling away. According to the traditional teaching, the attainment of Enlightenment is now assured.

So far as conditioned or mundane existence is concerned, this knowledge and vision is threefold. It consists in insight into the truth that all conditioned things are impermanent, that they're constantly changing, that they're flowing, and don't remain the same for two consecutive instants. Secondly that all conditioned things are ultimately unsatisfying. They may give us some pleasure, some happiness, for a time. But they can't give us permanent and absolute happiness; to expect that from them is purely and simply delusion. Then thirdly there is insight into the fact that all conditioned things are what is called insubstantial', or ultimately unreal. Not that we don't experience them, not that they're not there empirically speaking, but inasmuch as we experience them without penetrating into the depths, our experience itself isn't absolutely valid and what we experience isn't ultimately real.

This knowledge and vision represents a direct perception, a direct experience: you actually see through the conditioned. Not only that, but you see through the conditioned to the Unconditioned; piercing through the impermanence of the conditioned you see the permanence of the Unconditioned; piercing through the unsatisfactoriness of the conditioned, you see the ultimately satisfying nature of the Unconditioned, of the Absolute, of Reality itself; and piercing through the insubstantial the unreal, you see that which is eternally and everlastingly Real, that which the Mahāyāna calls the Dharmakaya, the Body of Spiritual Truth.

When one begins to see things in this way, when one's concentration becomes so keen that this 'knowledge and vision of things as they are' arises, and you can see the conditioned in its true nature, in its depth, and through it to the Unconditioned – when one can see through the surface right into the depth of things – then one's whole outlook and attitude radically changes; you cannot be the same as you were before. Just as a man when he sees a ghost is never the same afterwards, like Hamlet in Shakespeare's play. Once he'd seen that ghost stalking along the battlements he was a changed man. He'd seen something from another world, something from another dimension. In the same way here, but in a much more positive sense, once you've caught a glimpse of something beyond, once you've seen through the conditioned, seen through the passing show, and had a glimpse of the Unconditioned, of that higher dimension, that higher reality, the Absolute (call it anything you wish, call it even God if you like), once you're had a glimpse of *that* – a real glimpse, not just an idea or a concept, but a real 'communication' – then you can't be the same. A permanent change takes place in your life, a re-orientation. You've 'turned about', to use the Yogachara expression, or begun to turn about, in the deepest seat of consciousness'.

Now eighthly, **'dependent upon knowledge and vision of things as they really are, there arises withdrawal'.** This is sometimes translated as 'revulsion' or 'disgust', but that's too strong, too psychological. This particular stage represents the serene withdrawal from Involvement with the things which we have seen through. If you have seen through something, you're no longer involved in it. You withdraw from it. It's Just like seeing a mirage in a desert. At first we may be very interested in those palm trees and that apparent oasis, and we may be hastening in that direction. But as soon as we see that it's a *fata morgana*, and isn't really there, then we're no longer really interested. We stop, and don't hasten in that direction any longer.

This is what is represented by this stage of withdrawal: it's a sort of sitting loose to life. You play all the games that other people play, but you know that they're games. A child takes his game very seriously. To the child his game is life. The adult can join in the child's game and play with the child, but the adult knows it's all a game. And if the child beats him in the game, the adult doesn't mind, it's only a game, and he doesn't get upset. In the same way, once we have seen through the 'games people play', we can go on playing the games but we know that they're just games, and we withdraw from them; there's an inner withdrawal, even if there isn't an external withdrawal. We may be doing what is necessary objectively, but subjectively we're not really caught up. This is what is meant by withdrawal. We've seen through the conditioned. We play all the conditioned games, but we know that they're games, and in our heart of hearts we've withdrawn from them.

Ninthly, **'dependent upon withdrawal arises disentanglement'.** Now withdrawal, the previous stage, is the movement of detachment from conditioned existence: but disentanglement represents the fixed state of actually being detached. And in this state we cannot be moved or stirred by any worldly happening, anything conditioned. Anything may happen to us, but we can't really be disturbed. It's a state of complete spiritual imperturbability: not hardness, or stoniness, or insensitivity, not *apatheia* in the Stoic sense of the word, but a state of serene imperturbability, like that exemplified by the Buddha when he sat underneath the Bodhi tree. On this occasion, we are told, along came Mara, the embodiment of evil, with his forces. This scene is often depicted in Buddhist art. Mara is shown leading his army, complete with elephants and horses, and soldiers, as well as all sorts of monstrous demon figures who are throwing great rocks, spitting fire and releasing arrows against the Buddha. There are hundreds of thousands of them swarming and swirling around, but the Buddha doesn't take any notice at all. He doesn't even see them, doesn't even look or listen. He's in a state of complete imperturbability. This is what this stage represents. You are so firmly fixed in the Truth, in the Unconditioned, that nothing can disturb you. And here there's a very beautiful touch given in Buddhist art and literature. When all the arrows, stones and flames hurled by these demon hosts at the Buddha touch the edge of his aura, what happens? They just turn into flowers and drop to the ground. So this is the state of imperturbability, the state of disentanglement. All the forces of Mara may rise up against you, the weapons may come hurtling through the air, but as soon as they touch the edge of your aura they just turn into flowers. This is the state represented by the ninth stage, the stage in which 'in dependence upon withdrawal there arises disentanglement'.

Then tenthly, **'dependent upon disentanglement, there arises freedom'** – spiritual freedom (*vimutti*). Nowadays there's quite a lot of talk about freedom, and most people, it seems, think that freedom means simply doing what one likes. But the Buddhist conception of freedom is rather different. In the earliest Buddhist teaching, freedom is twofold. In the first place it's *cetovimutti*, which means complete freedom from all subjective emotional and psychological

bias, complete freedom from prejudice, from al l psychological conditioning. Secondly there is *pannavimutti*, or freedom from all wrong views, all ignorance, all false philosophy and mere opinion. It is this sort of freedom, this total spiritual freedom – freedom of heart and mind, at the highest possible level, at the summit of one's existence – which is the aim and object of Buddhism.

Once the Buddha addressed his disciples and said, 'O monks, just as the water of the four great oceans has one taste, the taste of salt, just so my teaching, my doctrine, has one taste, the taste of freedom (*vimutticasa*)'. Whether you take the water from the Atlantic Ocean or the Bay of Bengal, the Straits of Dover or the Suez Canal, wherever you take it from it tastes salt. In the same way, whatever aspect of the Buddha's teaching you may look at, whether it's the Four Noble Truths, the Noble Eightfold Path, the Four Foundations of Mindfulness, the Four Brahma Viharas, the Three Trainings, the Three Refuges – they all have the same taste, the taste of freedom. So this is the final objective of Buddhism, this state of complete spiritual freedom, freedom from everything conditioned – freedom from even the very distinction between the conditioned and the Unconditioned, as the Mahāyāna goes on to say.

Now eleventhly and lastly: **'dependent upon freedom arises knowledge of the destruction of the asavas'**. One isn't only free – that isn't enough. One knows that one is free; and one knows that one is free because one is free from the *asavas*. This is one of those untranslatable Pāli and Sanskrit words. It means a sort of mental poison that floods the mind. It's a very expressive word. The *asavas* are three in number. There's *kamasava*, which means the poison of desire, or craving for experience through the five senses. Then *bhavasava* craving for any form of conditioned existence, even, we're told, for existence as a god in a heaven. Lastly there is *avijjasava*, the poison of spiritual ignorance. When these poisons are extinct, and one knows that they are extinct, then one is said to be enlightened. One has reached the end of the spiritual path. One has gained Buddhahood.

In this way these eleven stages, from suffering right up to knowledge of the destruction of the *asavas*, constitute the spiritual path, and they also constitute the whole process of what we call the Higher Evolution. We can see very easily from this formulation how the whole spiritual life is, in fact, a natural process of growth. Each succeeding stage of the path is the product, or the overflow, of the preceding stage. As soon as one stage reaches its fullness, it inevitably passes over into the next. And we find this in meditation also. Sometimes people ask: 'When we get to a certain stage in meditation, how shall we get onto the next?' Well there's no need to ask that question. If you get up to a certain stage and go on cultivating that stage, so that it becomes more and more perfect, full and complete, then out of its very fullness it will move forward under its own momentum into the next stage: it will become the next stage. When you perfect any lower stage, then automatically the transition to a higher stage of perfection or development begins. So this is what happens here, the succeeding stage of the path is given birth to by the preceding stage, when that pre ceding stage reaches a point of fullness. We don't really have to bother about the next step, the next stage. All we need to do is bother about this one. Cultivate that. Let there be a theoretical idea of the next stage, but don't bother about it too much. Once the present stage is fully developed it will automatically pass over into the next. And by fully developing, cultivating within ourselves, each successive stage of the spiritual path, we shall achieve the Higher Evolution – the evolution from humanity to super-humanity, to Buddhahood.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Did the spiritual path begin for us with *dukkha*? What "ill-fitting chariot wheels" may have led us to Buddhism?

2. How do we tend to respond in life when things don't live up to our expectations? How might we respond more creatively?

3. Can we see dissatisfaction as a vital step in the spiritual life? In what ways should we be looking to be more, rather than less, dissatisfied?

4. Do we experience faith as anything like "what is ultimate in us responding to what is ultimate in the universe"?

5. Joy is "the hallmark of a true Buddhist". Have we experienced more joy in the life since we started practising the Dharma? If so, where does this joy come from? If not, then why do you think this is so?

6. Do we live our lives with a good and clear conscience? If so, what are typically the main conditions for this? If not, what tends to weigh on us?

7. Are you happy? How does your happiness relate to why you're a Buddhist?

8. Buddhism places great emphasis on having a clear conscience. Do we admit our failings honestly and openly? Does this tend to help us to move on from regrets and/or guilt?

9. In what situations have we experienced rapture? What conditions tend to give rise to it?

10. Have you become even a little calmer, more concentrated, more clear-sighted, and more detached from the "games people play" since you started practising the Dharma? In what ways? Does this give you confidence that the Spiral Path is describing a real process?

From this week onward we will be working from Subhuti's essay Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma. *Subhuti had many conversations on the subject of conditionality with Sangharakshita before writing this, and Sangharakshita has confirmed that the essay is indeed a faithful expression of his understanding of conditionality, which forms the basis of Triratna's teaching.*

The essay is presented here in six parts, with some additional material inserted in places from others of Subhuti's writings. There are many endnotes to the text, most of them from Subhuti, and some from the compilers to aid clarity. The notes also indicate where extra material has been inserted and from what source.

Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

Sangharakshita's approach to Right View

"What is our fundamental philosophical position?" mused Sangharakshita during a meeting of senior members of the Triratna Order in the 1980s. I was struck by his reflective tone – and the fact that he gave no answer: this was work in progress.

Without interrogating the notion 'fundamental philosophical position' too closely, it broadly corresponds in this context to the Buddhist term '*samyag dṛṣṭi*' or 'Right View' – 'Perfect Vision' in Sangharakshita's translation. Over his many years of teaching, Sangharakshita has expounded Right View in many ways, using the terminology and perspectives of a wide range of historical Buddhist schools and translating key terms variously, borrowing from the philosophical, psychological, poetic, and even religious vocabulary of the West. He has also formed his own distinctive language for communicating the Buddha's view of life, in such phrases as the 'Higher Evolution' or the 'Cosmic Going for Refuge'. The remarkable richness and diversity of what he has said and written is certainly, besides its luminous clarity, one of the most attractive features of the Triratna Community, the movement he has founded, giving it a particularly broad appeal and deep scope. However, it also leaves potential problems. Consistency may indeed be a foolish hobgoblin, but inconsistency can lead to misunderstanding and confusion.

We need to consider the whole grand sweep of Sangharakshita's presentation carefully if we are to discern a fundamental philosophical position. But this is not an easy task. While carrying it out, there are two main points to be born in mind, because they account for some of the apparent inconsistency.

First, his exposition of one or other Buddhist tradition should not necessarily be taken for approval of it. He has often found himself elucidating teachings so that his disciples can appreciate the Buddhist background from which they have sprung. In doing so, he has engaged

his considerable powers of empathy with those points of view and has tried to understand them on their own terms, thereby helping us get inside them.[1] Indeed, I have heard him do the same for works of literature and even for the doctrines of other religions.

However, his making intelligible an aspect of the Buddhist tradition, even revealing its spiritual efficacy, does not necessarily mean that he considers it useful in its own right or that it should become part of the Triratna Community's currency.[2]

Second, we must take into account Sangharakshita's own development as a practitioner and as a teacher. Throughout his life he has been deepening his understanding of the Dharma and clarifying his expression of it. Although there is striking continuity in his understanding from his earliest writings to the present day, there is nonetheless a discernible evolution over time: it is possible to recognise the gradual emergence of an integral core that is distinctive to him. Sangharakshita has himself described the unfolding of the core of that core in his *The History of My Going for Refuge*, and similar development can be seen elsewhere.

We must then always read his earlier teachings in the light of his later. This does not by any means require us to discard his earlier material – for instance, burning any book in which he uses terminology borrowed from the German Idealists, like 'The Absolute', which he now eschews. Nor yet does it require us to cut out the entire Mahāyāna, because he now finds some of its metaphysicising problematically reified, despite his earlier use of it. What it implies is that we should have a good understanding of his most recent perspective when we look at his earlier work and read or listen to it accordingly. And, of course, his disciples should take great care in how they themselves use that earlier material in their own practice. When they teach the Dharma they should ensure that the basic position is clear and, if they choose to refer to other, more ambiguous material, they should make it obvious that they are doing so for particular purposes.

Even when all this is taken into account, Sangharakshita's question of thirty or so years ago still requires an answer. What is the Triratna Community's fundamental philosophical position? Insofar as the movement is founded upon Sangharakshita's particular presentation of the Dharma, that requires us to know his fundamental philosophical position. What are we to make of his various ways of speaking about Right View, whether those derived from tradition or of his own coinage? I have been especially concerned that those of us who are his disciples hear something definitive from him about such problematic terms as 'The Absolute', 'The Unconditioned', 'The Transcendental', etc., as well as 'Cosmic Going for Refuge' etc. So in March 2010 I had a series of conversations with him in which we discussed his latest thinking about these matters.

I recorded our sessions, intending to transcribe and edit them, however Sangharakshita preferred that I should write them up in my own words, since the topic requires a greater precision than he can martial in a spoken exchange - the deterioration of his sight not permitting him to commit his thought to paper himself. This I have done in what follows. I have tried to expound what Sangharakshita said to me at that time, not only on the basis of what he then said but also what I have found elsewhere in his work that seems relevant, and I have expanded upon his thought in my own words. What I have written has been carefully checked by Sangharakshita and can be taken as accurately representing his thought – as accurately as is possible in another's words and style.

The Importance of Views

Before proceeding further, I want to make clear why this task is necessary. It is necessary because views matter. But, first, what are views? Essentially they are ways in which we organise and interpret the raw data of our experience. Our senses, outer and inner, deliver us an undifferentiated mass of impressions, which must be reduced to some manageable order if we are to live at all successfully. The first step in creating cosmos out of chaos is the labelling and categorising of our perceptions so that the world becomes an assemblage of recognisable elements: this is *saṃjñā*, 'interpretation' or 'recognition', in its most basic function. Evidently this primary ordering is in part instinctual: animals too are able to differentiate eatable and uneatable, threat and herd member, own territory and rival's land. However, the ability to apply words and concepts greatly extends the subtlety and range of *saṃjñā*.

Language also brings something more: *vitarka*, the capacity to think, even to reason, to whatever extent we may use it. We can stand back from experience and consider how the elements of what we perceive are related to each other – and above all we can think about ourselves in relation to them. The patterns we form by that thinking are our views. They may find expression in more or less clearly articulated theories and ideas, but most often they are not formulated in a conscious way at all and are simply unthought-out attitudes and assumptions that are carried in our mental processes without us being aware of them.

Views may be immediate theories about particular situations or they may extend to fundamental questions of the meaning and purpose of human existence and the nature of reality itself. Actually all self-conscious individuals who have not realised the Dharma directly for themselves carry implicit views about their own selfhood and about life itself, however dim, contradictory, and muddled their ideas may be.

Our views are, of course, not disinterested. They arise out of our affectively tinged experience and in support of the fundamental struggle to avoid what we disdain and to gain and perpetuate what we value – pain and pleasure being the most basic categories of evaluation. In part, views are analyses of the situation we find ourselves in: explaining why pain or pleasure has arisen. In part, they are strategies for acting from that situation: explaining how we may further what we value in future. Most often, according to the Buddha, they are overhasty generalisations from our experience.[3] They appear to serve our best interests, but often in fact only bring us future suffering.

Having constructed views to deal with our experience to what we suppose is our best advantage, we then become attached to them. That is because they themselves are often strongly connected with feelings of pleasure or pain. We get a sense of relief or satisfaction when we have a view about things, because we have 'mastered' the situation in thought and now know what to do.

Views can, of course, be 'right' or 'wrong' – no doubt with various shades in between. To distinguish the one from the other, we need to consider three things:

- The accuracy and balance of the data.
- The values that are being served.
- The outcome.

Right View attends to the data as a whole: it gives *yoniso manasikāra*, 'wise attention', taking in all the information, pleasant, painful and neutral and seeing it as it is in fullness and depth. It stays close to the essential experience, recognising it as sharing the characteristics of all

things: impermanence, insubstantiality, and inability to give permanent satisfaction, but offering always a gateway to liberation. Right View serves the highest and greatest possible good: progress on the Path towards the ultimate liberation of all. Finally, views can be judged as Right when they result in actions that are beneficial to self and others in accordance with the precepts.

Wrong views build on selective or one-sided interpretations of experience, distorted information that is not seen in its roundness or depth. We pick certain characteristics of things and leave out others, choosing what pleases us – even though perversely that may sometimes be the unpleasant aspects of things or especially of people. Wrong views serve narrow, coarse, selfish ends and they result in suffering for the agent and for others.

According to the Buddha, there are two kinds of fundamental wrong view: eternalist and nihilist. Both arise from breaking up the undifferentiated flow of experience, with its appearance of things coming into being and passing away, and emphasising one aspect at the expense of another. Eternalism consists in emphasising the fact that things appear to arise or come into being. We abstract that arising and generalise it into a view of ultimate, eternal realities. Nihilism is the result of abstracting from the fact that things appear to cease and building a theory of the ultimate vacuity of reality, its essential valuelessness and lack of meaning and purpose.[4]

Both have consequences in action. There are so many forms of each that it is not possible to reduce the results to as neat equations as is often done in expositions of the Dharma. However, eternalism may result in self-denial of a destructive kind and it leads especially to the denial of personal moral sensitivity and in inhuman acts that are justified as the commands of an eternal principle of some kind – various forms of theistic belief are the characteristic examples of eternalism. Nihilism very often leads to an absorption in a very narrow pursuit of pleasure and a carelessness about or denial of moral values – one could say that consumerism is a modern nihilistic construction.

Right View does not promote either attachment to the reified abstractions of eternalism or to the lack of value, order, and meaning of nihilism. Rather it brings us back to what can be clearly seen in experience, whether of what is happening to and in us at any particular moment or of what we know from those we have found to be wise.

It should by now be obvious that it does matter, and matter very much, what views we hold. Integrity and good intentions are not enough: an intelligent understanding that accords with the ways things truly are is essential. The ideas we have about life, the attitudes we have to our experience, all shape the way we act for good or for evil. The long experience of mankind amply demonstrates that ideas really do count: we can see, for example, the terrible inhumanity that flowed from views in the twentieth century, whether fascist, communist, or colonialist. Much of the danger in the world today stems from the confrontation in the Middle East between incompatible views: Islamic, Jewish, Christian, Socialist, Neo-Conservative, Liberal and so forth.

Of course, views have been the basis for much good in the world, too, and today we must hope and work for the triumph of humanitarian views of all kinds. Considering the enormous destructive potential of modern technology, one could say that the survival of the world today depends upon the widespread influence of more helpful views about the nature of this life, humanity's meaning and purpose, and the responsibility that one human being has to another – and to other beings too.

Views matter because they shape our ethical lives; they also shape spiritual or religious life, in the broadest sense. Genuine spiritual growth is a possibility within life itself and can be witnessed among some followers of most religions – and of no religion, especially within the fields of art and philosophy. The problem is that, in so many cases, religions distort human growth because of their way of understanding life – because of their views, especially of the eternalist variety. It is very significant that, in the *Brahmajāla Sutta,* the Buddha's classic statement on the subject, a majority of the sixty-four wrong views enumerated are misinterpretations of visionary and meditative experience: views sidetrack higher experience and prevent it from leading to liberation.[5]

What is distinctive about Buddhism is its definitive clarity about the Path and the goal to which it is directed. The Buddha saw very clearly indeed the danger of views and the necessity of maintaining a sharp awareness of the way we think and talk about our lives, our efforts on the path, and especially our understanding of the true nature of things. The Pāli texts show him to be ever alert for ideas that are harmful, or at least not helpful, whether to ethical life or the attainment of liberation. It is very striking that the *Brahmajāla Sutta* is the first sutta of the first *nikāya* of the first *piṭaka* of the *Tipiṭaka.* Wrong views lead to a distortion of human experience and, at best, prevent genuine spiritual aspiration achieving its full flowering, at worst they lead to all the evils of which human beings are capable.

Until we have seen things directly as they are, we rely upon Right Views for our practice of the Dharma. This is why study is such an important aspect of Dharma practice. We need to clear our minds of the wrong views, whether eternalist or nihilist in any of their many forms and sub-species, that make up so much of our thought and attitudes. This requires us to do quite a bit of self-examination, especially through study and discussion of the Dharma with those clearer than ourselves.[6] At the same time, we must acquire Right Views, the set of ideas about things that direct us back to how they really are and teach us first to live in harmony with others and ourselves, through ethics and meditation, and then, through Wisdom, to gain liberation from suffering.

Suggestions for reflection, research, and discussion

1. Why does Bhante use the term “fundamental philosophical position”, as opposed to another term like “core beliefs”?

2. Why is it useful to know what Triratna’s ‘fundamental philosophical position’ is?

3. Do we have a sense by now of the breadth and depth of Sangharakshita’s Dharma?

4. Based upon the introduction in this week’s text, what is Subhuti trying to accomplish with this whole paper?

5. Can we notice any views that we hold that are “simply unthought-out attitudes and assumptions”? Why might we be holding these particular views?

6. What "implicit views about [our] own selfhood and about life itself" might we be holding right now?

7. Do we realise that our views are strongly not disinterested? Or do we pride ourselves on being rational and logical?

8. *"In part, views are analyses of the situation we find ourselves in."*
Can we think of examples where we have done this recently?

9. Subhuti gives three criteria for distinguishing right views from wrong. How might we use these in our everyday practice?

10. How might eternalism lead to "self-denial of a destructive kind and ... the denial of personal moral sensitivity"? How might nihilism lead to 'an absorption in a very narrow pursuit of pleasure and a carelessness about, or denial of, moral values'?

11. How exactly is consumerism a form of nihilism? Is this our lived experience of it, i.e. do we experience it as a form of nihilism? If so, what are we doing about it?

12. Subhuti says that we act on the basis of our views. Can we think of a clear example of this from our day so far today? What wrong views have we acted upon? What right views have we acted upon?

13. "Until we have seen things directly as they are, we rely upon Right Views for our practice of the Dharma."
This being so, do we place enough emphasis on cultivating Right View? How might we deepen our practice of this?

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1 In this connection, Sangharakshita quotes a very interesting saying of William Blake's, 'Everything possible to be believed is an image of truth'. He says of himself, 'If I read Schopenhauer, I become a Schopenhauerian; if I read Plotinus, I become a Neoplatonist.' He says that he empathises first and later engages his critical faculties. This is also true of Buddhist teachings.

2 There is another factor to be borne in mind looking at his exposition of such teachings. Sangharakshita was giving his account on the basis of the scholarship available in English at the time. Buddhology has developed very greatly in the last fifty years and quite a lot is now known about, for instance, the origins of the Mahayana, the teachings and development of the Yogācāra school, or even the evolution of the Pali Canon that was not recognised when he was giving some of his lectures and seminars on such topics. We must then take into account the most recent and well-established findings of modern scholarship on philology and textual history, as well as Sangharakshita's purpose and attitude in speaking about Buddhist traditions.

3 See *Brahmajāla Sutta*, DN1.3.32: The Buddha speaks of each of the views as being 'merely the feeling (*vedanā*) of those who do not know and see...' and then traces the *nidānas* back from *vedanā*.

4 See especially the *Kaccānagotta Sutta,* SN12.15.

5 DN1

6 The Buddha speaks of straightening out views (*diṭṭhi ca ujukā*), together with completely purifying morality, as 'purifying the starting point of wholesome states', which is the basis for the practice of the *satipaṭṭhānas*. SN47.3.

Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

The Buddha's 'metaphysical reticence'
The Buddha rigorously resisted all wrong views, seeing them as a 'thicket, a jungle, a tangle' in which one can easily get lost. He taught Right View as the first limb of his most basic presentation of the Path: the Noble Eightfold Path. However he was not teaching philosophy, despite what Sangharakshita says of him in his early paper *Philosophy and Religion in Original and Developed Buddhism* - at least not speculative philosophy: if he could be described as a philosopher at all, it would be as an empirical one. He was not concerned to provide a comprehensive, rationally derived account of reality or an explanation of how and why it worked. He considered that to be a distraction from the real task. In some places, he speaks of having no view, in the sense of not holding onto a preconceived philosophical position.[1] He saw the way things are directly by his Wisdom and did not require any position from which to evaluate them. He was a thinker, however, reflecting deeply on his own experience of suffering and pointing out what it was necessary for us to know in order to get free from it.

The Buddha's thought represented a complete break from that of his contemporaries and those who preceded him in India. His teaching was quite foreign to the general Indian mentality and mode of expression, both before and after his time. Of course, he had to address some of the principal concerns of his times and to express himself in a common stock of terminology. But he rejected the speculative and metaphysical trends common in that age. He famously refused to answer four metaphysical problems posed by the wanderer Vacchagotta, dismissing them as unprofitable for gaining liberation from suffering.[2]

The Buddha scrupulously avoided all metaphysical abstraction in his presentation of the Dharma – this has been referred to as his 'metaphysical reticence'. Where he has been interpreted as abstracting (e.g. the 'unborn' of the *Ariyapariyesanā-sutta*[3]), it is plain that he is being poetic and should not be taken philosophically. However, it did not take long for the Indian tendency to highly abstract thought to be brought to bear on his teaching. The Dharma theory of the *Abhidharma* was the first move and later Mahāyāna thinkers went far further, culminating in the *Tathāgatagarbha* doctrine, with all its rich variety of forms and interpretations, some of them very complex indeed.

Those who developed such theoretical approaches may have been, in their own context and experience, making good sense of the teachings and practices they inherited to deal with problems they faced, especially those posed by Brahminical challengers; they may have been fully faithful to the spirit of the Dharma. It is possible, as Sangharakshita himself has done, to make very good and inspiring spiritual sense of some of these metaphysical constructions.

However, they betray the Buddha's fundamental method – and one might say his method was itself a principal aspect of his teaching: the way the Buddha talked was as significant as what he said. This implies a fourth criterion for Right View, besides what is mentioned above: the accuracy and balance of the data, the values that are being served, and the ethical outcome. We must also consider the effect of the language we use: does it communicate either an eternalist or nihilist impression? Sangharakshita believes that quite a lot of terms used throughout the Buddhist tradition fail this test.

The danger of eternalism

Sangharakshita acknowledges that he himself has employed a number of apparently metaphysical terms in his own presentations: 'The Absolute' being the most egregious example.[4] The problem is that inevitably one hears or reads terms like 'The Absolute', ' The Unconditioned', 'The Transcendental', 'The Non-dual', 'Buddha Nature', especially when capitalised, as referring to some reified metaphysical entity, real, but existing somehow apart from what can be experienced. They easily lead into views, species of eternalism, and those views will then provide the basis for action, which will easily become unskilful, since they are not in tune with the ways things truly are. Such quasi-philosophical or metaphysical terminology is to be avoided, especially in our general teaching. It should only be used where it is genuinely helpful and one can make very clear indeed that one is speaking in an entirely poetic, metaphorical, or imaginative sense – which is not easy to be sure of one's hearers having caught, however luminous one's own understanding.

In general, Sangharakshita says, the more abstract the mode of expression the less authentic it is in expressing the Buddha's teaching, and the more concrete the more authentic. If we have to engage much mental gymnastics to make it clear that such abstractions do not refer to ontological realities, our suspicions should be aroused and we should be very wary of using them. When we read or hear terms of this kind in Sangharakshita's own work, we need to be aware of what he is intending: an imaginative or poetic evocation of the goal of the Dharma life. And perhaps we should be very cautious about imitating him in this particular way. We should stray no further into speculation than is strictly necessary for real practice of the Dharma. This was the Buddha's own direct example to us.

The danger of nihilism

The danger so far mentioned is at the eternalist end of the wrong-view spectrum. However, nihilism is as much of a danger – and perhaps a worse one in our times. How do we convey a sense of deeper meaning and purpose to life, of something that goes beyond our present range, without of course 'something' seeming to refer to a supra-experiential reality? How do we keep before us a 'transcendental object', in Sangharakshita's perhaps dangerous phrase: a higher goal of our spiritual efforts? It is essential for us to conceive and imagine such a goal, for the Dharma life is lived to go beyond what we now are. If we do not have that image before us, we cannot direct our energies to practising the Dharma. In our eagerness to avoid eternalism, we must beware of falling into nihilism. But how are we to avoid it? What then is it to which we are going beyond what we now are? How are we to talk about that?

There is not only the problem of where we are going: how are we going to get there? The Dharma life takes us beyond our narrow self-identity and its egoistically based motivations.

What then is it that takes over from our normal drives, however benign? Unless one has already some abiding experience of that goal and that supra-selfish motivation, one needs a way of keeping them in mind, allowing them a convincing and inspiring presence in one's life, and aligning one's actions with them. One needs to be able to refer to and have confidence in

goal and supra-selfish motive force so they can shape one's choices in accordance with the Dharma – one needs increasingly to sense a direction towards which one is drawn and a deeper energy that carries one to it. But how can one refer to these without suggesting a something metaphysical that truly exists?

Sangharakshita's experience of the goal and of Dharmic motivation

For Sangharakshita himself this never seems to have been a problem. From his first contact with it, the Dharma made a direct and vivid impact upon him and within him. Reading the Diamond Sutra at the age of 16, he experienced 'something ineffable' that he 'at once joyfully embraced with an unqualified acceptance and assent'. This released in him a fountain of joyous energy and gave him a sense of unbounded freedom. From then on, he was drawn forward, never doubting the direction he was taking. Increasingly he experienced a motivation arising within him that transcended himself: from the Bodhisattva Ideal, from his visualisation of Tara, Manjusri and other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

He had a particularly powerful experience of this supra-personal motivation after he arrived in Nagpur on 6 December 1956 to learn of Dr Ambedkar's death.[5]

Writing to his friend Dinoo Dubash, on 15 December 1956, he tells of his visit to Nagpur in Central India a few days earlier, which had coincided with the tragic news of the death of Dr Ambedkar, the great Indian leader who just seven weeks before had led hundreds of thousands of his followers out of Untouchability into Buddhism in that very city. Once the shocking tidings had become known, waves of grief and despair had rolled through the multitudes of new Buddhists and it had fallen especially to Sangharakshita to try to rally them through meeting after meeting, talk after talk, often continuing late into the night. That story is relatively well known. However, what is of note here is the very unassuming, almost understated, account he gives of his own inner experience in his letter to his friend, written just a week later:

> My own spiritual experience during this period was most peculiar. I felt that I was not a person but an impersonal force. At one stage I was working quite literally without any thought, just as one is in *samādhi*. Also I felt hardly any tiredness – certainly not at all what one would have expected from such a tremendous strain. When I left Nagpur I felt quite refreshed and rested.[6]

'An impersonal force'! It is safe to assume that what he means by this is that he was not motivated by self at all. No 'personal' interest drove him, but he nonetheless acted, and acted very effectively, giving people just what they needed.

He experienced himself responding entirely spontaneously to the crisis faced by the new Buddhists, bereft of their revered leader - responding with deep inspiration and great effectiveness, as if something from far beyond him was working through him. He says that, while he was giving lecture after lecture over a number of days without rest, it didn't feel as if it was him speaking. Sometimes he would not know what he was saying, 'The words would just come out of my mouth, and I would hear them almost as if I was listening to another person; they were not preceded by thought'.

Later, when he was lecturing in Britain, he quite often felt that at a certain point in the talk something took over that was more than him. In a similar vein, he later speaks of the Triratna Order having been founded through him, rather than him founding the Order. Looking back

and reflecting on his life as a whole it does seem to him that he has been driven by a wind from far beyond himself.[7]

Something of this kind seems to be indicated in a letter Sangharakshita dictated for me, on 14 October 2011, in which he reflected upon his experience around the time he was establishing the Movement. The letter contains the following deeply significant lines:

> I may also say that in recent years, on looking back over the history of the FWBO/Triratna, I have been amazed at what has been accomplished. At the same time, I have felt, or rather seen very clearly, that it has not been accomplished just by me. It was as though a supra personal energy or force was working through me, an energy or force for which, in a way, I was not responsible. I have given expression to this feeling, or realisation, in my poem 'The Wind', which I quote for your benefit.
>
> THE WIND
>
> A wind was in my sails. It blew
> Stronger and fiercer hour by hour.
> I did not know from whence it came,
> Or why. I only knew its power.
>
> Sometimes it dashed me on the rocks,
> Sometimes it spun me round and round.
> Sometimes I laughed aloud for joy,
> Sometimes I felt a peace profound.
>
> It drove me on, that manic wind,
> When I was young. It drives me still
> Now I am old. It lives in me,
> Its breath my breath, its will my will.[8]

This remarkable statement, and the poem that so aptly illustrates it, suggests that the Triratna Community, in Sangharakshita's own estimation, has not emerged from any egoistic or self-interested motives. It embodies the Dharma, it would seem, rather than any personal desire.

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. In what ways is the Buddha's teaching not a philosophy? How might such a philosophy have been 'a distraction from the real task'?

2. The Buddha 'did not require any position from which to evaluate' the way things are. What does it mean to require a position to evaluate something? How might we think we require such a position?

3. Do we have a 'metaphysical reticence' or are we happy to speculate or philosophise? How might it be useful for us in our Dharma lives to be more metaphysically reticent?

4. Do we find eternalistic or nihilistic impressions in our understanding of the Dharma?

5. What can we say about something which is ‘existing somehow apart from what can be experienced’?

6. Do we tend to use such terms as ‘The Absolute’, ‘The Transcendental’, ‘The Non-dual’, ‘Buddha Nature’ in our Dharma vocabulary? If so, are these terms useful or dangerous?

7. ‘The more abstract the mode of expression, the less authentic it is in expressing the Buddha’s teaching, and the more concrete the more authentic.’ Why is this? Is this your experience of the Dharma life?

8. How would you summarise the main dangers of eternalism to the Dharma life?

9. *“One needs increasingly to sense a direction towards which one is drawn and a deeper energy that carries one to it.”*
Can we see the importance of such a sense, such a direction, such an energy? Do we experience this in our lives already?

10. What responses do we have to Sangharakshita’s supra-personal experiences described in the text? Does it give us a sense of a way of being in the world that is different to one based on self-identity?

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1 e.g. KN.Sn.IV.8&9.

2 MN72: *Aggi-vaccagotta-sutta.* Later tradition, especially that initiated by Nāgārjuna, demonstrated that it was not simply that he would not answer because it was not useful to do so, but that any possible answers would lead to self-contradiction: it was the questions themselves that were the problem, because of the assumptions on which they rested.

3 MN26.12.

4 At the time, Sangharakshita had, of course, his own justification for his usages, although he would not employ many of them now. He has, for instance, often been called to account for his use of 'The Unconditioned', especially in relation to Nirvāṇa, whilst also asserting that Nirvāṇa arises as the expositional endpoint of a conditioned process. He acquits himself brilliantly by distinguishing between spatial and temporal metaphors and between doctrinal and methodological viewpoints. Nirvāṇa, viewed from the perspective of one who has attained it, is unconditioned (or more accurately 'unconfected', a more etymologically correct translation of *asaṃskṛta*) in a spatial sense, insofar as it is 'impartible', not made up of anything. However, from the point of view of one setting out to attain it, it is conditioned, insofar as the experience of Nirvāṇa arises at the end of a temporal sequence of conditionally arising states. Significant as this may be, it is perhaps not necessary to engage with the term in this way at all. In the Suttas, the Buddha in all cases but one, and that probably a late addition to the canon, uses 'unconditioned' to mean unconditioned by something in particular – usually greed, hatred, and delusion. That usage seems to have been turned by later followers into an abstraction. Sangharakshita inherited that abstraction and made good sense of it. (For *asaṃskṛta [asaṃkhata]* in the Suttas, see SN43: *Asaṃkhatasaṃyutta.* For the exception see AN152. With thanks to Sagaramati, who has rightly been emphasising this point for many years!)

A similar movement from non-metaphysical usage in the Sutta-Piṭaka to a metaphysical one in the Abhidhamma and the commentaries can be seen in the understanding and interpretation of the term *Nibbāna.* It begins as a metaphor, 'becoming cool', for a 'psychological' experience, and gradually acquires metaphysical significance.

5 The next three paragraphs, including the quotation, are taken from Subhuti's paper *A Supra-Personal Force*. This article, in Sangharakshita's phrase, 'rounds off the cycle of teachings' that began with *Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma*, proceeding then to *Re-imagining the Buddha*, and *Initiation into a New Life*. They are available at https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/all-four-papers-subhuti-and-sangharakshita

6 Sangharakshita, *Dear Dinoo: Letters to a Friend*, Ibis Publications, 2012

7 The rest of this week's text is taken from Subhuti's *A Supra-Personal Force*. See https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/all-four-papers-subhuti-and-sangharakshita

8 Sangharakshita tells me that this poem 'wrote itself', coming unbidden and complete in a way that few of his other verses have done. He thought of the first line only, and the rest of the poem followed without any conscious thought. He says it was something of a surprise to him, on checking it after he had written it down, to find that the metre and rhyme were all in order.

Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

Sangharakshita's fundamental 'philosophical' perspective
These experiences have helped Sangharakshita make sense of the Buddha's teaching and have fuelled his contemplation of it, especially in the form of reflections on Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels, the 'spiral path', the nature of Stream Entry and the *bodhicitta*, leading on to ideas about the Lower and Higher Evolution. He has arrived thereby at his own particular presentation of Right View.

For him, as for the Buddha, the fundamental expression of Right View is *pratītya-samutpāda*, which is in a sense no view at all[1]: it is not a theory about things but a description of what we actually can see and know about all elements of our experience. It is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism. It avoids eternalism because all is dependently arising and therefore impermanent; it avoids nihilism because it contains the possibility of a path of self-transcendence.

In its classic statement, the Buddha's fundamental insight points out that any aspect of experience we choose to examine can be seen to arise in dependence on conditions and, those conditions ceasing, itself to cease. Much follows from this. Most notably, conditionality entails, and is entailed by, the three *lakṣaṇas*: what is conditioned cannot be permanent, cannot have substantial existence, and cannot offer abiding satisfaction. But conditionality implies also a dynamic interrelationship of all things, inner and outer. There is not merely a coincidental procession of otherwise independent, impermanent, insubstantial events. There is a connection between one event and what follows it. One set of events *conditions* another. From this set of events, just that set of events must emerge.

The fact of conditionality requires no theory about the precise mechanism whereby conditions and conditioned are related. It is simply what we can observe happening all around us and within us: it is just the way things really are. There is regularity or order to the chain of events. All is ordered or regulated, in the sense that, broadly speaking, from the same conditions the same effects will emerge.

Pratītya-samutpāda is, from this point of view, the general principle of ordered relationship between conditions and their effects. That principle is expressed in a vast, perhaps infinite, number of possible laws that govern the relationship between particular conditions and what they condition – although the metaphor of 'law' and 'government' here certainly implies no external agency or law maker. For instance, the 'law of gravity' simply describes a predictable regularity in the relationship between any possible larger and smaller body. It is this ordered

nature of things that enables us to function in relation to them – if there was no such order, life would not be possible.

Although the fact of *pratītya-samutpāda* is fundamental to our survival in the most basic sense, its importance for Dharma life is more specific. Our ability to find liberation from suffering depends upon *pratītya-samutpāda*, not merely in that fully understanding the principle is liberation, but that liberation is possible because there are regularities or laws within the overall pattern of *pratītya-samutpāda* that make it so. Once we have understood and are fully convinced about the nature of reality as *pratītya-samutpāda,* we align ourselves with those regularities or laws that lead us to liberation. Liberation too arises in dependence on conditions – there are regularities that govern spiritual growth and fulfilment.

The Five Niyāmas

To understand this further, we need to look at the variety of conditioned relationship. In the suttas the Buddha refers to a range of different kinds, but these are never clearly classified.

That task was undertaken later and was recorded by Buddhaghosa in his commentaries on the *Tipiṭaka*.[2] Buddhaghosa set out five *niyāmas* under which all conditioned relationships can be grouped. *Niyāma* means 'restraint', 'limitation', or 'necessity' and, in this context, refers to categories of necessary relationship within the principle of conditionality – the five different classes or orders of regularities by which conditioned is bound to conditions.

This classification has had a major influence on Sangharakshita's understanding and presentation of *pratītya-samutpāda*, although he has given it his own interpretation, in certain respects different from that found in the commentaries and especially of modern understandings of them.[3] In his exposition of the *niyāmas,* he uses modern concepts not found in ancient India to expound the five categories and he gives some of them rather different meanings from what is found in the sources. He probably does this on the basis of Mrs Rhys Davids' interpretation. It is important to acknowledge that what we are left with is a teaching that is sufficiently different to be regarded in some respects as new, although based on the essential principle, found in Buddhaghosa, that conditionality as a whole comprises different 'orders'. Sangharakshita's analysis is, however, not at all inconsistent with the teaching of the Buddha as found in the Suttas – and, it must be said, what appears to be the import of the commentaries themselves.

Although much of the ground is quite familiar, it is worth recounting the teaching as a whole as Sangharakshita understands it, so that its full significance as an exposition of what is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism is made plain. It is also worth spelling out so that it can be seen in the context of Sangharakshita's overall presentation of the Dharma.

Pratītya-samutpāda means that there are discernible patterns of regularity between conditions and what they condition. These patterns of regularity can be grouped into five categories – the five *niyāmas*: *utu, bīja, mano, kamma,* and *dhamma*.

Utu-niyāma is the sum total of the regularities found in physical inorganic matter – the subject matter of the sciences of physics and chemistry – the conditions that govern the Mineral Kingdom. It includes the law of gravity, the laws of thermodynamics, the laws governing chemical reactions, electricity, the structure of atoms, etc.

Bīja-niyāma is made up of all the conditioned relationships that pertain to living organisms – the Vegetable or Plant Kingdom, the subject matter of biology, botany, and physiology.

Examples of *bīja-niyāma* conditionality are photosynthesis, genetic inheritance, the circulation of the blood.

Mano-niyāma is the sum of regularities that order the Animal Kingdom, made up of all organisms that have sensory perception, studied by zoology and much of behavioural science. Here are found the processes of perception, reflexes and stimulus-response reactions, and instincts. Included may be very complex and intelligent responses, such as remarkable migratory instincts and survival strategies of apparently great cunning.

These three *niyāmas* all operate in us: regularities of conditioned relationships under these three headings govern our bodies and our sensory and instinctual intelligence. It is within these *niyāmas* that what Sangharakshita calls the 'Lower Evolution' takes place. The remaining two *niyāmas* are what make the 'Higher Evolution' possible.

Kamma-niyāma conditionality comes into play once intelligence becomes self-reflexive, capable of forming an idea of self as a centre of action and experience. It consists of those regularities that are found in the relationship between the self-conscious agent and the effects of his or her actions, whether of body, speech, or mind. The effects that emerge under this *niyāma* are of two kinds: external and internal. While it is more difficult to be certain whether or not something that happens to one is the result of one's past actions under the *kammaniyāma*, it is relatively easy to observe the way our actions reshape the mind as it re-arises from moment to moment in this life – if not the way it re-arises from life to life.[4]

Kamma-niyāma is the arena of ethics. Actions that are based upon skilful or helpful states of mind broadly tend to bring beneficial effects in the world, pleasant feedback from one's surroundings, and a greater degree of inner satisfaction and fulfilment and a deeper and enriched experience. Of course, unhelpful actions have the opposite effect, in accordance with the karmic order of conditionality. Ethics consists in according one's actions with the way things are. Ethics is natural: what makes an action ethical or unethical is inherent in the nature of things. Reality is inherently ethical.

The *dhamma-niyāma* is presented in the source commentaries as accounting for such matters as why a 'world-earthquake' takes place at each of the major stages in any Buddha's career. More recent Theravadin discussions seem to understand it as the fundamental principle of conditionality itself, inclusive of the others or as a sort of miscellaneous category to take care of whatever doesn't fit elsewhere.[5] Sangharakshita however reads much more specific meaning into it. The *dhamma-niyāma* comprises those conditioned processes by means of which Buddhas arise. These processes are represented especially by the sequence of 'positive' factors that arise at Stream Entry. It is, one might say, the stream that one enters.[6]

Working with *karma-niyāma* processes involves recognising oneself as a moral agent and intentionally cultivating ever more skilful actions of body, speech, and mind, so that progressively more satisfying, subtle, flexible, and open states of consciousness emerge as their fruit. Such states will be more and more free from subjective or self-oriented bias and colouring, and thus more in tune with the way things are. This phase of the spiritual path culminates when one's karmic efforts have conditioned the emergence of a consciousness that it is capable of absorbing fully the true nature of reality.

Dharma-niyāma processes are first felt as a pull to self-transcendence or a glimpse of life beyond self-clinging – a first hint of *samyag-dṛṣṭi* or 'Perfect Vision', which often initiates the spiritual quest. They begin to unfold in a decisive way at Stream-entry, when the sense of

separate agency is seen as an illusory construct, however essential it may be in the *karmic* phase of the Path. There then emerges a spontaneous flow of increasingly non-egoistic volitions that unfailingly result in skilful activity. Before Stream-Entry, one works with *dharma-niyāma* processes by developing receptivity to the pull of that current within one's own consciousness, systematically cultivating devotion to whatever embodies that stream of non-egoistic willing, especially in the form of the Buddha and of his teaching. Above all, one makes a continuous effort to undermine one's own ego-clinging by seeing through the illusions that sustain it.

Stages of Commitment

The Dharma life requires active cooperation with these *karma-* and *dharma-niyāma* conditioned processes that are ever present potentialities of reality. It requires a conscious and explicit reorientation of all aspects of life so as to build up the successive conditions for these processes to unfold. This conscious and explicit reorientation attains its fullest and clearest expression in the act of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels, in which one commits oneself to becoming like the Buddha by cooperating with the forces of *karma* and *dharma* in inspired connection with the Arya-Sangha – which itself is a Refuge because it consists of those in whom the *dharma-niyāma* processes have become dominant: who have fully 'Entered the Stream of the Dharma'.

Commitment is gradual, engaging more and more of one's energies as one aligns oneself more and more fully with *karma* and *dharma* processes. Sangharakshita distinguishes five stages in this growing commitment: five levels of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels.

The Cultural level is not truly a commitment at all, because there is as yet no integrated moral individuality. It consists in a sense of allegiance to Buddhism and its values because it is part of one's culture and of the social group to which one belongs by birth and education. Through this identification one will be influenced to act in a morally positive way and that may eventually lead to the development of genuine moral self-consciousness.

Provisional Going for Refuge arises in moments of temporary inspiration or insight, perhaps some glimpse of Perfect Vision, but this does not have enough weight behind it to be sustained. Nonetheless, one will from time to time make some effort to work with the *karmic* and *dharmic* kinds of conditionality and that sooner or later may enable one to commit oneself more effectively.

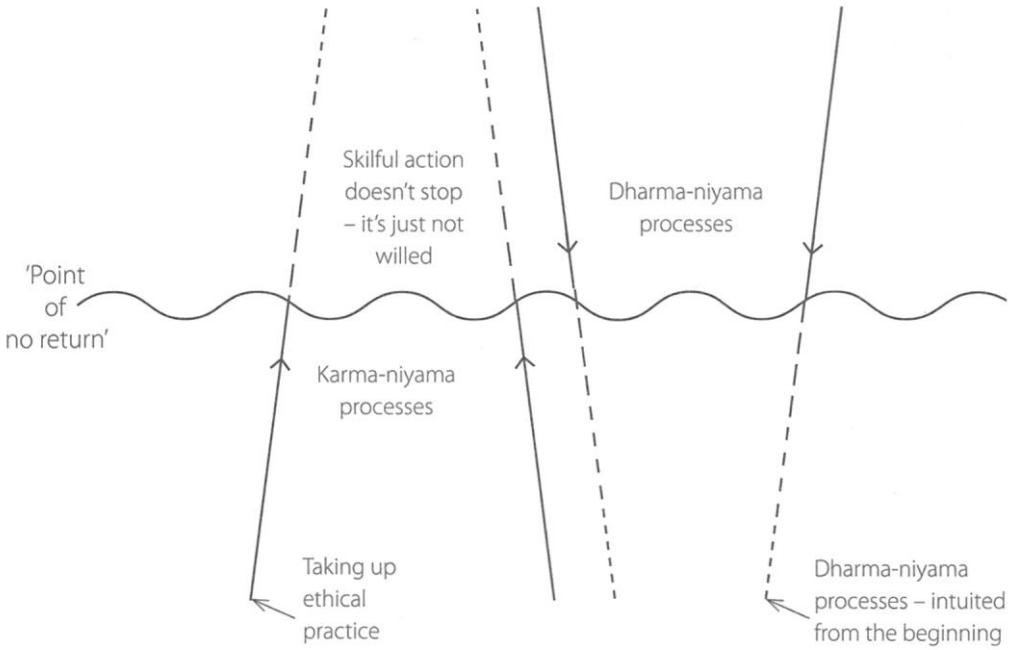
Effective Going for Refuge takes place on the basis of a compelling glimpse of what lies beyond self-clinging and of a sufficient integration of one's energies to constitute a more or less consistent moral agency. One is then in a position to cultivate both *karma-* and *dharma-niyāma* processes in an effective and continuous way. However, progress is entirely dependent on a constant application of willed effort.

When Going for Refuge is Real, *dharma-niyāma* processes are dominant, unfolding spontaneously through the individual who cooperates fully with them, overcoming successively more subtle depths of self-clinging.

Absolute Going for Refuge is the point of Enlightenment itself, at which there is nothing but a flow of *dharma-niyāma* processes - of pure non-egoistic volition.

Buddhahood is not a random event, nor is it given: it is gained by establishing a sequence of conditions, each succeeding one arising out of the preceding in accordance with *pratītya-*

samutpāda. One attains Bodhi by exploiting regularities inherent in reality: the capacity for Enlightenment is part of the way things are.[7]



Dharma-niyama and karma-niyama processes in relation to each other

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Can we find any aspect of our experience that has not arisen in dependence upon conditions and therefore not impermanent?

2. *Pratītya-samutpāda* requires no theory – merely observation. Is this enough for us and our sometimes overly-scientific minds?

3. *"There are regularities that govern spiritual growth and fulfilment."*
   Is this news to us? Do we agree or think that the Dharma life is somewhat random or not that influential in our everyday lives?

4. Are the regularities of the *utu-*, *bīja-*, and *mano-niyāmas* the same as the laws of physics, chemistry and biology?

5. How would we describe the step from *mano-* to *kamma-niyāma*?

6. *"Ethics consists in according one's actions with the way things are."*
   What do you interpret this to mean? Is this how we normally think of ethics?

7. *"Reality is inherently ethical."*
   Have we come across such a perspective outside of Buddhism? Does is make sense to us? What response do we have to it?

8. In the *dharma-niyāma* there 'emerges a spontaneous flow of increasingly non-egoistic volitions that unfailingly result in skilful activity.' Does this accord with our sense of what Enlightenment would be like?

9. *"Before Stream-Entry, one works with dharma-niyāma processes by developing receptivity to the pull of that current within one's own consciousness, systematically cultivating devotion to whatever embodies that stream of non-egoistic willing, especially in the form of the Buddha and of his teaching."*
   What, for us, embodies his 'stream of non-egoistic willing', and how do we systematically cultivate our connection to it?

10. *"This conscious and explicit reorientation attains its fullest and clearest expression in the act of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels."*
    This is what we are doing in Going for Refuge. Does this shed a new light on what the Dharma life is about?

11. How do we respond to the different levels of Going for Refuge?

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1 It is not a view in the sense that it is a description of the fundamental characteristic that can be recognised in all things, rather than an all-inclusive reality, so to speak, containing all things.

2 In the *Atthasālinī*, Buddhaghosa's commentary on the *Dhammasaṃgaṇi* of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* (see the English translation, *The Expositor*, p360), and in his commentary on DN14.1.17, *Mahāpadāna-sutta*.

3 Sangharakshita first learned of the five *niyāma* from the writings of the British scholar, Caroline Rhys Davids, for whose sharp eye for significant detail we in the Triratna Buddhist Community owe a considerable debt of gratitude. See *Buddhism*, C. A. F. Rhys Davids. Interestingly, Dr Ambedkar also shows knowledge of this little-known schema, perhaps also getting it from Rhys Davids. He uses it especially to show that caste has nothing to do with karma. *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Bk III, part 3, Section 6: *To believe that Karma is the instrument of Moral Order is Dhamma*.

4 There is glimpse here of the very complex interrelationship between the *niyāmas*, for the *kamma-niyāma* brings its effects partly through the lower *niyāmas*. There is much more to be said about this, and about the passing of karmic effects from one life to another through the other *niyāmas*, as well as about the *dhamma-niyāma* in relation to the rest.

5 See *The Niyāma Dipani* (The Manual of Cosmic Order) by Mahathera Ledi Sayadaw, available at http://holybooks.lichtenbergpress.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/The-Manuals-of-Ledi-Dipani.pdf

6 The rest of this week's text, with the exception of the final paragraph, is taken from Subhuti's *Initiation into a New Life*. This article is part of the cycle of teachings that begins with *Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma* and proceeds to *Re-imagining the Buddha*, *Initiation into a New Life* and *A Supra-Personal Force*. See https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/all-four-papers-subhuti-and-sangharakshita

7 The following diagram is taken from Subhadramati's book *Not About Being Good*.

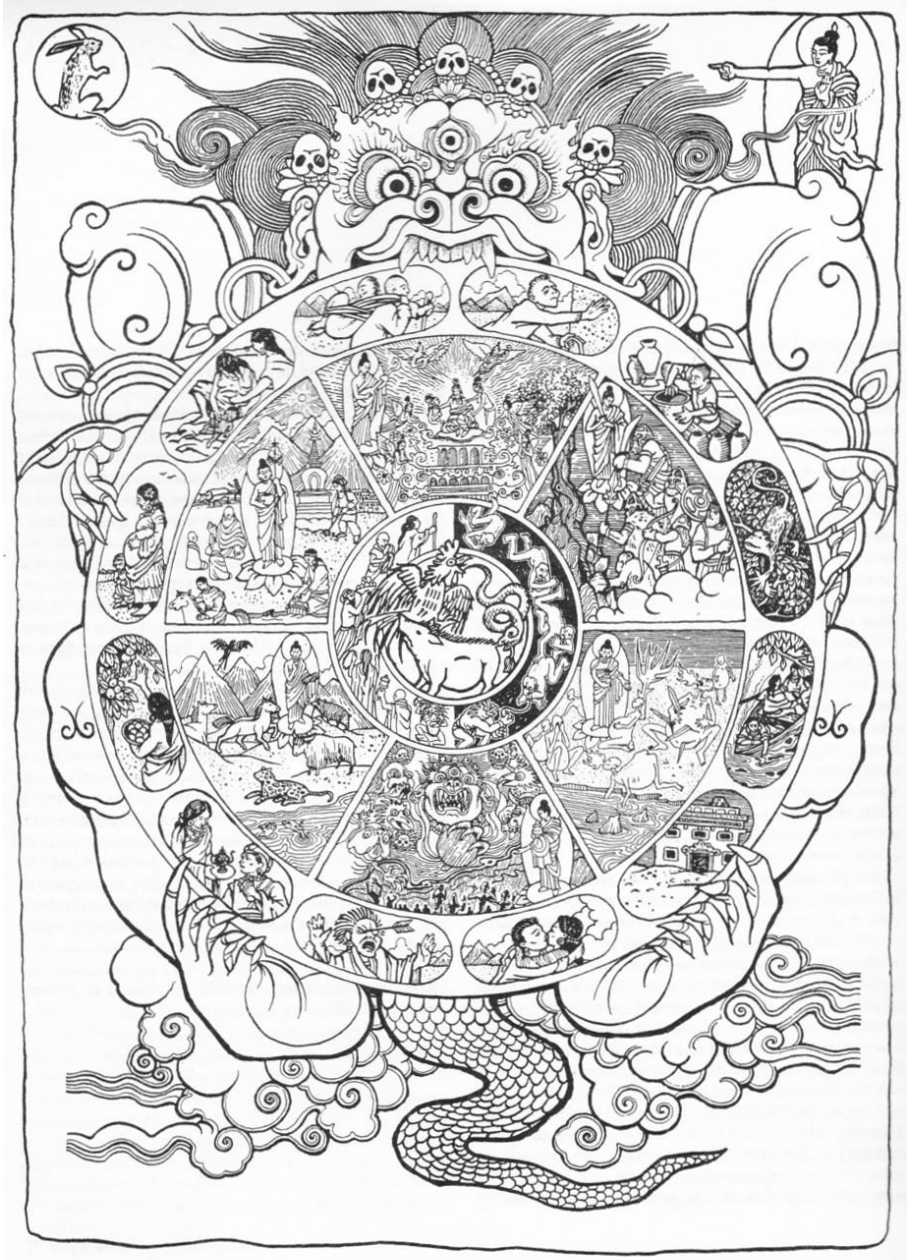
Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

The cyclic and progressive directions within conditionality
The *niyāmas* categorise all possible regularities of conditioned relationship and arrange them in a hierarchy of the degrees of consciousness that they support, from inorganic non-consciousness through to the fully Enlightened mind – from those under *utu-niyāma* to those under *dhamma-niyāma*. However, each is not a discrete system, but is interrelated with the others in many complex ways. Most significantly, processes within one *niyāma* may give rise to processes within another. Movement is possible from to a lower to a higher – and indeed from a higher to a lower. We can thus distinguish two trends within *pratītya-samutpāda* as a whole. There are those processes that remain on one level, moving in a constantly renewed cycle: as seen in the cycle of birth and death of any animal species or the formation and wearing away of mountains. And there are those processes that move from one *niyāma* to the next: whether upwards, as when living organisms emerge from a warm soup of amino acids (*bīja-niyāma* processes emerging from those of *utu-niyāma*); or downwards, as when a plant species dies out (*bīja-niyāma* merging back into *utu-niyāma* ones). Sangharakshita speaks of these horizontal and vertical directions within conditionality as a whole as cyclic and progressive (the possibility of progress taken as implying the possibility of regress).

The progressive trend within conditionality has two stages. At first, progression is blind – the organism does not consciously direct its own emergence in more complex and conscious forms. However, once self-awareness arises, bringing the *kamma-niyāma* into play, deliberate effort must be made if there is to be further progress. This second, conscious stage within the progressive trend Sangharakshita describes as the growth of the creative mind through spiral conditionality.

The emergence of *kamma-niyāma* conditionality, then, marks the transition to conscious development. Progress under the *kamma-niyāma* requires the conscious subordination to ethical awareness of instincts belonging to the *mano-niyāma*. If this does not happen then self-consciousness becomes side-tracked or degenerates, in accordance with the 'reactive' sequence of conditionality that is described in the twelve 'cyclic' *nidānas*. In terms of the traditional schema, this means wandering in the *dugati*, the four 'realms of misery' found in the Tibetan Wheel of Life: hell, *pretaloka*, animal realm, and world of the *asuras*; all of which represent distorted forms of self-consciousness – varieties of evolutionary cul-de-sac.

If ethical awareness does predominate, directing actions of body, speech, and mind in skilful ways, then consciousness emerges in more and more subtle and refined forms, increasingly expanded beyond a narrow self-reference. To complete the correspondence with the six realms schema: one then progresses through the *sugati* – the human and god realms.



The Tibetan Wheel of Life

The progressive possibility within the *kamma-niyāma* consists in the sequence of steps leading up to Stream Entry, variously described in tradition. In the three-fold training, the *triśikṣā*, it is ethics, *śīla*, and absorption, *samādhi*; in the chain of twelve positive *nidānas,* it is the steps from faith, *śraddhā*, up to *samādhi*.

As consciousness emerges in more and more sensitive and pure forms, it becomes less and less self-referenced and it is increasingly attuned to the way things truly are. Gradually the tendency to egoistic clinging weakens enough for a new process to come into play: progress in accordance with the *dhamma-niyāma,* beginning with the arising of wisdom, *prajñā*, or 'knowledge and vision of how things really are', *yathābhūtajñānadarśana,* at Stream Entry, and continuing on to Buddhahood.

This *dhamma-niyāma* process develops naturally in accordance with its own inner dynamic, each stage emerging by inherent momentum at a higher level out of the one that precedes it and it is now irreversible. In the case of the four lower *niyāmas*, all directions are possible: there may be a cycle of conditions or else conditions under the next *niyāma* may emerge – or

there may be a degeneration, in which the higher processes disappear. Under the *dhamma-niyāma*, there is only progression from higher state to higher still – the *dhamma-niyāma is* pure progression.

The sequence of conditioned arisings, categorised under the *dhamma-niyāma,* transcends self-consciousness, just as self-consciousness transcends instinctual consciousness, and develops within the individual independent of egoistic volition, spontaneously unfolding in more and more rich and satisfying forms. It is now the chief motive force of the one in whom it flowers, increasingly replacing the old self-referent willing, however refined. There is still a motivation, but it does not come from the individual will and it does not merely serve the interests of that individual. Considered from this point of view, it is the *bodhicitta*, a suprapersonal, altruistic motivating force – which is why Sangharakshita translates *bodhicitta* as the 'Will to Enlightenment', drawing out this aspect of its character. It is felt as a will from beyond one's own will, that carries one onward and upward, at this stage, without any personal effort. One's choice, under what remains of *kamma-niyāma*, is to align oneself with it, to cooperate with it.

The niyāmas and evolution, lower and higher

The progressive trend in conditionality runs through all the *niyāmas*. When the appropriate conditions arise within each *niyāma,* processes under the next *niyāma* emerge. Physical and chemical processes of the *utu-niyāma* provide the basis for the emergence of *bīja-niyāma* processes: living organisms are made up of and emerge from physical and chemical processes. Sense awareness and instinct, operating under the *mano-niyāma*, emerge when the organic processes of the *bīja-niyāma* provide the necessary conditions. Sensory awareness and intelligence are the basis from which self-consciousness emerges and the *kamma-niyāma* comes into effect. Conscious ethical growth, in accordance with the *kamma-niyāma*, provides the conditions for the emergence of the self-transcending processes of the *dhamma-niyāma*.

Sangharakshita sees this progression as a continuous sweep, which he connects with the idea of evolution. However, a caution is required here. Sangharakshita's usage does not imply any particular *theory* of evolution, far less any kind of materialist epiphenomenalism: the doctrine that consciousness is simply a bi-product of physiological processes. That, of course, is a view, and a nihilist one at that. We are rescued from views by the Buddha's Right View of *pratītya-samutpāda,* which avoids all theorising about the processes around us and in us. It merely describes what we can observe: regularities that enable us to say, 'In dependence on this, that arises', without begging any question as to why or how.

This theoretical agnosticism – an example of the Buddha's 'metaphysical reticence' – applies as much to what Sangharakshita calls the progressive or spiral order of conditionality as to the merely cyclical or reactive. The emergence of more complex and sensitive processes out of simpler ones, leading to the arising of the self-conscious individual and then to the arising of higher states of consciousness, is one that can be observed in the evidence all around us, if we include the reports of 'the wise'. Why it happens or what drives it is not a question the Buddhist needs to answer. Indeed, an answer would almost certainly not be profitable in terms of the leading of the Dharma life, and would very likely involve mistaken views about things that would hamper or block one's progress on the Path.[1] All we are required to say is that we can observe, directly and by reliable report, regularities in the world around us and within us that do enable a progression from simpler to more complex and sensitive organisms and onward to higher human states, if not further.

Sangharakshita, then, connects the progressive trend in conditionality with the idea of evolution but he does not consider that equation as indispensable to his particular

presentation of the Dharma, especially since he is well aware that some people find it off-putting. He makes the connection to take advantage of an idea that is familiar to many people already, giving them a broad image of development, but also to help make more sense of spiritual life by putting it in a wider context. If we can see the progressive trend at work throughout nature, we can recognise the continuity of what we are ourselves attempting to do as Buddhists with what is happening in the life all around us. The process of human development is a natural one.

With that caution firmly in mind, let us see how Sangharakshita connects the idea of evolution with the progressive trend in conditionality and with the *niyāmas*. He speaks of an evolution of consciousness, with four phases:

- First, a phase of blind evolution of sense or instinctual consciousness by species, which he calls the Lower Evolution, from *utu-niyāma* to the emergence of self-awareness and therefore of the *kamma-niyāma*;
- Second, a phase of voluntary growth in self or moral consciousness under the *kamma-niyāma*, which constitutes the Higher Evolution of the individual in its lower phase, including all the stages from the emergence of reflexive consciousness to the first arising of *prajñā* at Stream Entry;
- Third, a phase of the development of transcendental consciousness, unfolding spontaneously independent of individual volition once the stream has been entered under *dhamma-niyāma* processes – the Higher Evolution in its higher phase;
- Fourth, a phase in which Enlightened consciousness flowers more and more richly. Here the *dhamma-niyāma* processes unfold completely beyond the other *niyāmas*. While a Buddha is alive and has a body, the three lower *niyāmas* still operate - however the *kamma-niyāma* has no relevance here, since there is not even a trace of self-attachment. Once Parinirvaṇa is attained at death, there is only *dhamma-niyāma* and we have no categories by which to describe what 'happens' – and this was one of Vacchagotta's questions that the Buddha said could not be answered by any of the categories of our thought. Here we enter a mystery.

Mind – Reactive and Creative[2]

Sangharakshita introduced some seminal new terms in a lecture, 'Mind – Reactive and Creative'[3], which he gave at Reading University Buddhist Society in 1967, shortly after founding the FWBO. He used the new expressions 'reactive mind' and 'creative mind', to communicate the principle of conditioned co-production as presented by the Buddha and Dhammadinna in the texts cited above. These terms bring home the significance of the basic metaphysical teaching of Buddhism, for the moment by moment living of the Buddhist life. They are now an important element in Sangharakshita's teaching. As he points out,

> Whilst [the reactive and creative] are not traditional Buddhist expressions, neither of them rendering any one technical term in any of the canonical languages, they seem to express very well the import of the Buddha's teaching.

In the teaching of 'Mind – Reactive and Creative', Sangharakshita applies the principle of conditioned co-production to the mind, because the mind is the methodological starting point. According to the Buddha, our actions stem from our minds and lead us either to suffering or to happiness. In the end it is our minds that we must transform through spiritual practice. Sangharakshita teaches that the mind can function in either a 'reactive' or a 'creative' way. The mind is functioning reactively when it is merely reactive to external stimuli, usually derived from the five senses. It is conditioned by external objects, automatic, mechanical and predictable, repetitive, programmed, and unaware. The creative mind by contrast, is

spontaneous creating out of its own inner fullness and abundance. Even when there is an initial external stimulus it 'quickly transcends its original point of departure and starts functioning independently'. It is responsive rather than reactive, melioristic, 'optimistic' in the deepest sense:

> The optimism of the creative mind persists despite unpleasant stimuli... [It] loves when there is no reason to love, is happy where there is no reason for happiness, creates where there is no possibility of creativity, and in this way 'builds a heaven in hell's despair.

It is non-conditioned and free. Ultimately being identical with the Enlightened mind itself. It is aware and therefore 'intensely and radiantly alive'. The creative, it should be pointed out, is not here identified solely with the production of works of art. While the greatest art is the outpouring of the creative mind, the creative mind also manifests in human relationships, in meditation, and in any act that expresses an inner abundance rather than a mere reaction to external stimuli.

These two ways in which the mind functions, of course, are equivalent to the two trends within conditioned co-production. As we have seen, reality is nothing but becoming, a flow of conditions, within that vast web of becoming there is a movement from one condition to the next either by way of a reaction between opposites or by a progression from one factor to another that complements and augments it. The reactive mind exemplifies the reaction between opposites and the creative the progression.

Better to bring home these teachings to the imagination as well as to the reason, Sangharakshita has expressed them in two images. The reactive trend is cyclic, like a fixed wheel, turning and turning upon itself, without travelling in any direction. The creative is like a spiral, which rises higher and higher, each stage acting as the basis for a yet further one. The cyclic trend is particularly exemplified by the Tibetan Wheel of Life. This composite image starkly illustrates the rising and falling of beings, caught up in the reactive mode of conditionality, under the impulsion of their own greed, hatred, and delusion.

So far we have spoken mainly in terms of metaphysical theory, but that theory has immediate practical implications. Metaphysics must become spiritual practice. The task of spiritual life is to move from the wheel to the spiral to begin with, both trends are present in our minds. Though the cyclic usually predominates at the outset, some creative impulses arise within us, at least from time to time. Developing mindfulness by means of the whole range of spiritual exercises we gradually become more aware of what is happening in our minds. We become more aware of these two trends and begin to discriminate the reactive from the creative, the cyclic from the spiral. We gradually shift ourselves from the wheel to the spiral, from the reactive to the creative. We encourage the spiral trend to become ever more dominant within us. Enlightenment is the point at which the spiral trend has become completely triumphant. There is simply pure creativity, without any trace of reaction.

Even if Enlightenment is the point on the spiral at which all reactivity falls away, it is not the end of conditioned co-production. If conditioned co-production applies as much to *nirvana* as to *samsara*, then *nirvana* itself must be conceived of in dynamic terms. *Nirvana* too is a progression, albeit one we cannot possibly understand since it passes beyond the reach of our thinking and knowing. The twelve positive *nidānas* end with Knowledge of the Destruction of Poisons only because we must stop somewhere. If we did not stop, we would have to enumerate an infinite progress of ever higher states. Enlightenment is, according to an image

of Sangharakshita's, but the farthest point on our horizon, however, it recedes from us and the Buddhas appear over it in ever more subtle and glorious forms.

With this dynamic perspective, there is no danger of our seeing Enlightenment as a place we arrive at and settle down in – a kind of spiritual retirement home. We conceive of it as a way of being which, though immeasurably beyond our present experience, is connected to how we now are by a chain of ever more subtle states that imperceptibly merge into it. We also avoid the tendencies to ontological dualism in Hīnayāna metaphysics, which the Mahāyāna philosophers were very concerned to counteract. There are no really existent and independent states, *samsara* and *nirvana*. There is one process of becoming within which there are two trends, the *samsaric* and the *nirvānic*. Sangharakshita has even said that we should perhaps talk, not of achieving *nirvāna*, but of *nirvānising*, one might say, rather than *samsarising*.

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do we find that we "subordinate" our instincts to our karmic choices? How might it happen that if we do not do this then "self-consciousness becomes side-tracked or degenerate"?

2. When we act skilfully, is it our experience that "consciousness emerges in more and more subtle and refined forms, increasingly expanded beyond a narrow self-reference"?

3. *"As consciousness emerges in more and more sensitive and pure forms, it becomes less and less self-referenced and it is increasingly attuned to the way things truly are."*
This statement is at the heart of this week's lecture. What do we make of it? How do we respond to it?

4. Do we find we make our egoistic clinging weaker through Dharma practice? Does something else ever shine through, so to speak, when this happens?

5. *"The* dhamma-niyāma *is pure progression."*
How do we respond to this? Does it give us confidence or inspiration in the path?

6. Can we imagine something unfolding spontaneously within us, independent of egoistic volition?

7. Can we see how each *niyāma* emerges on the basis of the appropriate conditions in the preceding *niyāma*, at least for the first four niyāmas?

8. What kinds of mistaken views might we get caught up in if we try to form a theory about the *niyāmas* and how they work?

9. Does Sangharakshita's connecting of the progressive trend to the theory of evolution clarify things for us? Does it put our spiritual life in a wider context?

10. Have we experiences of the creative mind transcending the conditions around itself?

11. In our Dharma lives, do we think about moving from the reactive to the creative mind, from the wheel to the spiral?

12. Do the last two paragraphs change how we normally think of Enlightenment?

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1 This is a point the Buddha makes again and again. For instance, he urges his disciples not to 'reflect upon the world', i.e. its origins and functioning, because it is 'not beneficial, irrelevant to the fundamentals of the holy life, and does not lead to revulsion, to dispassion, to cessation, to peace, to direct knowledge, to enlightenment, to Nibbāna'. What he encourages us to think about is the Four Noble Truths: how to end suffering. SN56.41.

2 The rest of this week's text is taken from Subhuti's book *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*, page 71.

3 See Sangharakshita's lecture *Mind: Reactive and Creative*, available at https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=31 or in his book *Buddha Mind*, Windhorse Publications, http://windhorsepublications.com/buddha_mind

Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

Cosmic Going for Refuge

Last week we looked at Sangharakshita's four phases of the evolution of consciousness, from blind evolution up to the flowering of Enlightenment. This progressive sweep clearly has a different character in each phase, as each is dominated by a different order of conditionality. However, there is a common element all the way through: there is an upward momentum, lifting on to the next level. We have most direct understanding of that momentum as we experience it within ourselves – in the second phase, that of voluntary growth. We feel a definite inner urge to go beyond ourselves as we now are to something more: there is a combination of disillusionment (*saṃskāra-duḥkha*) with our present experience, a sense of being drawn towards something further (*śraddhā*), and a commitment to move towards the highest goal we can see. This all finds expression in the Buddhist context in the act of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels.

In the third phase, that of transcendental development beyond Stream-entry, that momentum no longer depends upon our conscious effort: it is experienced as a current carrying one along or a will beyond one's own, guiding one's actions – in its altruistic form, the 'Will to Enlightenment', the *bodhicitta*.

The motivating force operating in the fourth phase defies description, but leads to conduct that is unfailingly beneficial. Presumably, the Jina Amoghasiddhi embodies the 'motivation' of the Enlightened mind: he embodies the transcendental counterpart of the *skandha* of *saṃskāra* or volition, he is the head of the Karma family, his Wisdom is the Action Accomplishing, and his name means 'unobstructed success'. Sangharakshita says in his seminar on the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*,[1] '...the action of Amoghasiddhi represents something subtle and even esoteric. It's not just action in the ordinary, crude, obvious sense. ... it works in "unknown ways".' This is perhaps the nearest we can get to the momentum here: an unfailing creative force that moves mysteriously to accomplish the benefit of all.

But what of the first phase? What is the momentum that carries the evolving organism on to the next level? Something analogous to volition is observable in living organisms: a drive or urge of an instinctive kind, whether for survival or reproduction, is the precursor of what emerges in us as our own will. Extended far enough in favourable enough conditions, that instinctive urge or drive transcends itself, even one might say fulfils itself, in self-consciousness volition.

At lower levels still, biological, chemical, and physical processes cannot be characterized even as drives or urges in anything but the most poetic sense, but they still have a momentum that,

given the appropriate circumstances, leads to the arising of an organism with sense intelligence. It is interesting to note that the translation of the *Atthasālinī*, one of the texts that refer to the *niyāmas*, has 'caloric order' for *utu-niyāma* and this seems to be the usual understanding of it. In *Abhidharma* theory, heat is the *dhātu* or element that brings about change and transformation. This points to the inherent momentum even in physical and primitive organic matter. We thus have a dynamic principle that is represented by 'heat' at the most basic levels, by instinctive desire at the animal level, by will at the level of the human being, and by *bodhicitta* at the level of the Stream-entrant.

Looking at things in this way brings to mind Schopenhauer's notion of *Wille*, which Sangharakshita acknowledges may have influenced his own thinking. Could the *Dhamma-niyāma* itself be the progressive momentum, driving the whole evolutionary process, finding its unstoppable expression at Stream Entry and finally unfettered at Buddhahood? There are ways of reading the source commentaries that could support this. However, engaging in this, so tantalising, area we stray dangerously close to a theory of evolution – in other words, to a view. *Pratītya-samutpāda* relieves us from that danger by enabling us simply to state what we may observe: in dependence on this level, that arises.[2]

Sangharakshita sees the progression as a continuous momentum, manifesting on higher and higher levels, finding its full expression once the *dhamma-niyāma* comes into play. He thus dares to speak poetically of a 'Cosmic Going for Refuge', a phrase very much open to misinterpretation, being sometimes taken, whether in mistaken excitement or equally mistaken dismay, to imply somehow a conscious intention on the part of the Cosmos. In his understanding, it refers simply to a momentum that can be seen at every level of evolution, from the merest atom to the full flowering of Bodhi. At every level the possibility exists of moving to a higher – there is the possibility of 'self-transcendence', to use terminology found elsewhere in Sangharakshita's work. It is this always possible upward momentum that is the Cosmic Going for Refuge, no more and no less.

If this terminology, and the allied language of Evolution, Lower and Higher, has any value at all, it is that it brings out the continuity of this progressive trend, and therefore the continuity of our own efforts upon the Path with processes that occur naturally all around us, as well as with the forces that move within the Buddha's own mind. What one feels as an urge within oneself is not merely accidental. It is a trend, even a momentum, within things that now emerges in one's own consciousness. The universe cooperates with you in your efforts to follow the Path – or, rather, your own conscious efforts cooperate with the evolutionary trend in the universe.

Understanding this brings an attitude essential to following the Path: a humble and confident openness to processes that are far larger than one's own small selfhood. This disposition is indispensable - even if one does not take to the terminology of evolution or finds the phrase 'Cosmic Going for Refuge' too problematic.

Faith in the progressive trend

Whether in these terms or not, the recognition of the progressive trend within *pratītya-samutpāda* is essential to leading the Dharma life. We need to be confident that it is possible to go beyond our present level of consciousness and to realise fully that it can only be done by creating the conditions out of which new levels emerge. Without that confidence and understanding, we will not apply ourselves to assembling the necessary conditions.

First, we need to be convinced that there is a *kamma-niyāma*, a karmic order of conditionality. Only when we have that faith will we make an effort to create the conditions for our further growth. We will practise ethics, *śīla*, acting in ways that are helpful to ourselves and others, in accordance with the Precepts; we will develop wholesome states of mind, through *samādhi*; and we will gain as clear an understanding of the Dhamma as we can, through cultivating *śruta-*, *cintā-*, and *bhāvanā-mayā-prajñā*[3] These efforts will bring higher and richer states of consciousness into being and will bring us into increasing harmony with the way things are.

Then, we need to have faith that there is a *dhamma-niyāma*, a dharmic order of conditionality. Only then will we be confident that we can let go of our selfhood and give up our individual volition. We will systematically disabuse ourselves of the illusion of a fixed self and will deliberately let go of our clinging onto it, through the practice of *prajñā* or *vipaśyanā* meditation. This will create the conditions in dependence on which the spontaneous stream may emerge within us, carrying us on to Buddhahood.

This is the fundamental faith we need in order to lead a Dharma life: a belief in the karmic and dharmic orders of conditionality. There is no need for us to believe in metaphysical realities or agencies outside experience – there is no need for eternalism. But that lack of any eternal being or force need not imply a nihilistic sense that there is no meaning or order or direction to life. The faith we need for Dharma life arises out of what we can establish through clear logical analysis and validate at every moment in our experience: everything arises in dependence on conditions. Within that conditioned arising is a progressive possibility: this again we can verify in our observation of nature, as regards the lower *niyāmas*. As regards the *kamma-niyāma*, we can recognise its force in our own lives: we can feel within us the power of our own urge to develop and can witness how skilful action brings a progressive change in our own consciousness. If we do not have our own direct experience of the *dhamma-niyāma*, we can refer to our knowledge of the Buddha and his enlightened disciples down the ages, for the Buddha exemplifies, even embodies, the dharmic order of conditionality. Reading about the Buddha and other great practitioners of the Dharma, studying their words, insofar as we can, strengthens our conviction that there is a *dhamma-niyāma* that we can align ourselves with, so that we may attain freedom from suffering.

The niyāmas and the system of meditation

If we have that faith in the progressive trend within reality, especially in the form of the *kamma-* and *dhamma-niyāmas*, then we will be able to practise the Dharma wholeheartedly. We will align ourselves with the progressive trend by assembling the conditions that will move us on from level to level. This is what we may methodically do by following Sangharakshita's System of Meditation, with its four progressive stages and fifth 'stageless' stage, which is the framework for the Triratna Community's approach to meditation. The System works with all five *niyāmas*, bringing us into a relationship with each of them that will allow the progressive or spiral kind of conditionality to unfold through us. Although it is termed the System of *Meditation*, it is really much more than that and encompasses the stages we must go through in all aspects of our lives.

The Stage of Integration grounds us in our awareness of *utu-*, *bīja-*, and *mano-niyāmas* as we directly encounter them. It begins with basic mindfulness of the body, through mindfulness of the body, *kāyānupaśyanā*, and mindfulness of feeling-tone, *vedanānupaśyanā*. Without that mindfulness of bodily sensations and feelings, consciousness will be distorted and unreal, to some extent, and therefore unable to evolve in a balanced way. Integration here includes such issues as taking proper care of one's body, as the vehicle of one's further evolution. If one does

not look after the health of one's body, a bundle of conditioned arisings under the first three orders of conditionality, it will cause many hindrances to one's practice of the Dharma.

Integrating *mano-niyāma* energies is even more demanding than mindfulness of the body. The instincts and conditionings that form our basic mental make-up are more elusive and can be very complex. Yet, if one does not know, to some extent, one's own particular nature, the *mano-niyāma* conditions as they manifest in oneself, one's efforts will constantly be undermined. We need to be aware of the instinctual demands of our animal nature, if it is not to dominate us, in one way or another. We need to recognise the influence upon of us of our own family and cultural conditioning in shaping our responses under *mano-niyāma*. Again, we need to have some understanding of our particular character type, our own mental 'physique', which we have quite independent of our own choices. Coming to terms with one's own nature and conditioning in this sense is a major part of early spiritual life. All of this is value neutral – no blame attaches to us for our basic physique, our particular character shape, or our background and childhood experience. However, to be karmically responsible, we need broadly to understand ourselves from these points of view, so that we can act in ways that are skilful, taking into account who we actually are. All this is the task of the Stage of Integration.

The Stage of Positive Emotion works especially with the *kamma-niyāma*. This means trying to be ethical, so that one's actions, guided by the Precepts, are more and more helpful to oneself and to others. It also means addressing underlying motivations by deliberately cultivating helpful intentions – skilful mental states – through the practice of meditation.
Included also is genuine communication and friendship, especially in the context of Sangha. These efforts of *śīla* and *samādhi* will gradually bear fruit under the law of Karma. One will experience deeper and richer states of consciousness emerging – not merely at the time of meditation. One will have a more abiding sense of satisfaction and self-confidence, one will feel a deeper harmony with others and a stronger sympathy, one will have a more subtle aesthetic sensibility, one will dwell more frequently in dhyāna. If that is not our experience it is because we have not set up the conditions for it, through integration and positive emotion – we have not yet worked sufficiently with the lower *niyāmas* and with the *kamma-niyāma*.

The *kamma-niyāma* comes into play when self-consciousness arises. Working with the progressive possibilities in the *kamma-niyāma* requires us to have a sense of ourselves as responsible ethical agents. We must be capable of standing apart from the flow of our experience and identifying a self that owns the experience and that is capable of choosing to act skilfully rather than unskilfully. This self-reflexiveness is initially quite crude, involving a rather rigid sense of ourselves as something real and separate. One of the consequences of development under the *kamma-niyāma*, as we practise the Stage of Positive Emotion, is that the sense of self becomes more flexible and interpenetrates more sympathetically with the world around us. However, that self-sense still rests upon a deep quasi-instinctual illusion that must be transcended. Although the idea of self is essential if one is to work with the progressive trend in the *kamma-niyāma*, it is simply an idea, limited and ultimately limiting. We must give it up, so that a new order of conditionality may take over.

The *dhamma-niyāma* functions beyond our willing, so we must renounce the illusion of an independent self if it is to manifest within us. This is the function of the Stage of Spiritual Death. Through practices like the Contemplation of the Six Elements, we deliberately see through and give up our self-identity.[4] If we have created a sufficiently refined and sensitive consciousness through developing conditions under the *kamma-niyāma,* then this renunciation of fixed self-identity creates the space within which the *dhamma-niyāma* may function spontaneously through us.

The Stage of Spiritual Rebirth trains us to 'revere and rely upon' the *dhamma-niyāma* completely, resting in it as what unfolds within us when we give up our self-attachment. It means allowing a new supra-personal motive force to operate through us, now that we have relinquished self-referent willing. The most effective way of practising here is to enter the world of archetypal imagination, especially through the visualisation of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. We feed our illumined imaginations with archetypal figures that embody the *dhamma-niyāma* and thereby train in submitting ourselves more and more willingly to the movement inherent within reality that leads on to Buddhahood and beyond.

The Stage of No Practice, in which we 'just sit', is undertaken in parallel with each stage of the System of Meditation. At each stage it has a somewhat different significance, but one could speak of it as allowing the evolutionary trend to unfold naturally within one, without any effort to bring anything into being. The effort here is to stay awake to the processes of one's own mind, with a deep confidence in the progressive trend in reality as one senses it within oneself, however dimly.

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Subhuti describes, in the first paragraph, forces and urges that we experience within ourselves. Do we find there are such active forces in our lives?

2. How might speaking of “Cosmic Going for Refuge” be useful to our Dharma practice?

3. How does it feel to align yourself with a universal tendency inherent to life to self-transcend which occurs naturally all around us?

4. Is the universe alive to us? Does it cooperate with us in our efforts to follow the path?

5. Do we have sufficient faith in the karmic and dharmic orders of conditionality? How might we cultivate faith in each one more?

6. Do we feel within us “the power of our urge to develop”?

7. Do we refer to our knowledge of the Buddha and his enlightened disciples down the ages to get more of a sense of the *dhamma-niyāma*?

8. In terms of working with the *mano-niyāma*, what kinds of ‘instinctual demands of our animal nature’ have we experienced? What family and cultural conditioning might we have to work with?

9. Subhuti says working within the Stage of Positive Emotion involves working in the *kamma-niyāma*, and elsewhere defines Positive Emotion as the stage of positive intention. Does this make sense to us? Is this a more useful way to think about positive emotion than just being about mettā?

10. Do we find that as we practise our sense of self "becomes more flexible and interpenetrates more sympathetically with the world around us"?

11. Do we have situations where we can renounce our sense of fixed self-identity, so as to create the space within which "the *dhamma-niyāma* may function spontaneously through us"?

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1 See Bhante's seminar on *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, page 188. Available at www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/seminartexts/SEM150_Tibetan_Book_of_the_Dead.pdf

2 See also Sagaramati's significant paper, *Two Cheers for Taṇhā*. Available at www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol2/tanha.html

3 These are the three levels of wisdom – hearing (or reading), thinking (or reflecting), meditating (or becoming). See *Year One*, *Part 4*, week 1 of the *Dharma Training Course for Mitras* for more details.

4 Sangharakshita stresses that it is important not merely to see through, but actively to renounce, otherwise insight does not penetrate deep into experience. The affective and cognitive aspects of delusion are closely intertwined, but it is easy to fool ourselves that we have seen through, when we have merely made an intellectual adjustment of a self-flattering kind.

Please read the text carefully and dwell upon the questions in preparation for this week's study.

The Buddha as the focus of faith

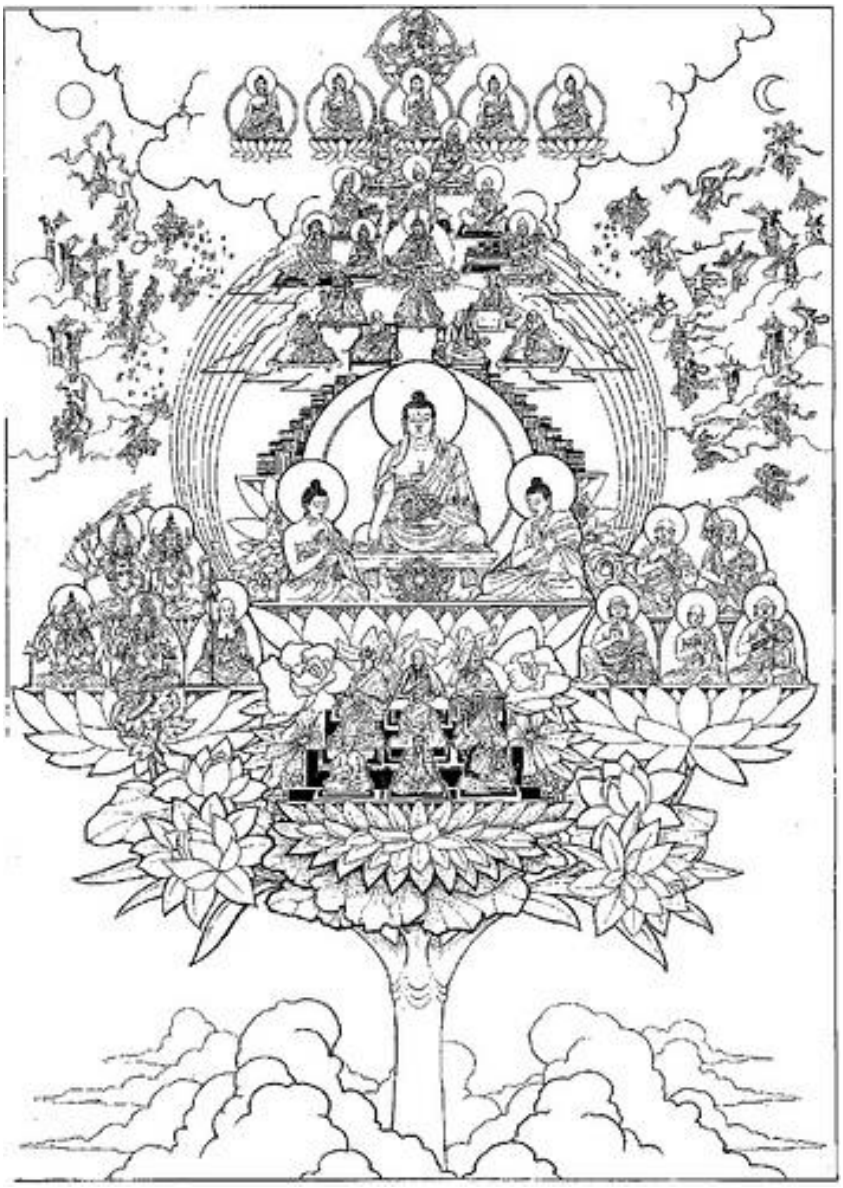
In last week's lecture, we explore how the Dhamma life, exemplified here by the System of Meditation, depends on faith in the progressive trend in conditionality, especially as manifested in the *kamma-* and *dhamma-niyāmas*. We saw how one must have confidence in the mechanism, so to speak, that makes progress possible if one is to exert oneself on the Path and overcome its many obstacles and difficulties. But that is not enough. Even that faith is not sustainable unless there is some focus for one's devotion, some higher object for one's aspiration, to which one can look up and that one can revere.[1] If there is no such higher devotional object progress must appear as a progress in self – which is really no progress at all. Progress is, in the end, progress in self-transcendence. For real progress to be possible, whether at the level of *kamma-niyāma* or of *dhamma-niyāma*, there must be a giving up of self to something beyond self that one serves and depends upon.[2]

Sangharakshita sees the historical Buddha as the central focus of devotion and believes that we should keep him very much at the centre, not allowing other figures to usurp his place, if we are to preserve the integrity of the Dharma. All other Buddhas and Bodhisattvas have their meaning through him: they are imaginal explorations of the Buddha's inner nature, personifications of his Enlightened qualities. All the figures on the Triratna Community's Refuge Tree, devised by Sangharakshita, achieve their significance through Sakyamuni.[3]

This is not merely a question of respect for our great human guide and teacher. If we are truly to give ourselves to something it must be more than human. The Buddha attained and came to embody something that went altogether beyond our human understanding. For this reason, Sangharakshita provocatively suggests that we should see the Buddha as the Buddhist God – the 'God who did not create the universe!'[4] This ironic proposal challenges the humanistic interpretation of the Buddha, inviting us to recognise that he has 'gone altogether beyond' and dwells in a sphere to which we have as yet no direct access. Devotion here implies something of awe – of the sacred or numinous.

Devotion begins where rational understanding falters. Faith in the Buddha Sakyamuni, as our ideal and the fulfilment of the progressive trend in conditionality, takes over where rational explanations run out. Right View in the form of *pratītya-samutpāda*, understood in terms of the two trends and the five *niyāmas*, gives us the understanding we need to follow the Path. But it offers little by way of explanation: why does one thing arise in dependence on another? What is the driver of evolution? Especially it gives us no grasp on what lies beyond the merely human. What is the nature of a Buddha's experience, especially after his Parinirvaṇa? Sangharakshita has been intrigued and inspired by the *Gārava Sutta*, in which we find that

even the Buddha feels the need to revere and rely upon something, and sees that it is only the Dharma that he can worship. Clearly here Dharma is not just his own teaching, but it must be something more than a principle, for one can scarcely revere a principle. What is it that the Buddha relies upon?[5]



We must accept the limits of rational understanding and beware of terminology that appears to explain what is inexplicable, inevitably falling into the reified absolutes of eternalism. We must also not get trapped into a nihilistic dismissal of all meaning and value because we've reached the limits of reason. Buddhism invites us to accept that the Dharma transcends our rational understanding.[6] It has no 'mania for explanation', Sangharakshita says. Certainty is bad for you, spiritually speaking, whether about one's own experience or about the nature of things: there is wisdom in insecurity.[7] The Bodhisattva stands on a position that is devoid of a support, as the *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā* has it. One must accept that there is a mystery beyond what reason is capable of telling us. 'Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.'[8]

The fact that reason has limits does not mean that one cannot approach or enter that mystery, but one must do so with another faculty than that of reason. That faculty is the spiritual imagination that transcends reason, using the language of ritual and devotion, of poetry and art, of symbol and archetype, especially in the form of the visionary Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

of the *sambhogakāya*.[9] The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas take us into the depths of who the Buddha is, giving us some imaginative glimpse of and relationship with his Enlightenment.

Sangharakshita suggests that the need to give some content to what it was that the Buddha 'revered and relied upon' was fulfilled in the *Sukhāvatī-vyūha Sutras* by the image of the Buddha Amitabha, the Buddha, so to speak, beyond the Buddha. What even the Buddha reveres cannot be merely a body of teachings, nor yet simply a principle, yet it cannot be some kind of eternal Creator-god. However, we misunderstand it if we think of it as impersonal – as Sangharakshita says, if we see it as impersonal it will 'feel' sub-personal to us, since our ordinary experience only deals in the categories of personal and sub-personal (if you like, the *kamma-niyāma*, on the one hand, and the *utu-*, *bīja-*, and *mano-niyāmas* on the other). Sangharakshita says in *The Three Jewels*, 'The *dharmakāya* is not impersonal in the sense that it utterly and completely excludes personality, for that would be to identify it with one of two opposite terms, whereas the truth of the matter is that, being non-different from Absolute Reality[!], the *dharmakāya* transcends all opposites whatsoever.'[10] Insofar as it is almost impossible for us to consider anything that is not included in one or other of these two opposites, it is more accurate to think of – or, better, imagine – the object of the Buddha's reverence as supra-personal, rather than either personal or impersonal. That is what the figure of the Buddha Amitabha represents: the eternal Buddha to whom even the historical Buddha looks up. His image is food for the illumined imagination, which must take over and continue where reason has flown as high as it may.

But symbols and archetypes are multivalent. Even these visionary figures are capable of misleading, unless they are linked to a clear expression and understanding of Right View – after all a suicide bomber may be inspired by an archetype.[11] Sangharakshita considers that all Buddhist archetypes need to be anchored in the image of the historical Buddha, who is the enunciator of *pratītya-samutpāda*. The full meaning of the archetypal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas can only clearly be recognised if they are seen through the Buddha Sakyamuni, whose inner reality they represent and from whose historical personality they have emerged.

For Sangharakshita the figure of the historical Buddha is the key. Instead of resorting to abstractions, we should focus on his life and teaching, to give us the confidence and courage we need to practise the Dharma, without danger of falling into views.[12] We can plunge more deeply into the mystery of his Enlightened nature by contemplating and worshipping the archetypal Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, which embody his inner character, thereby engaging our uplifted imaginations, beyond mere reason and emotion. The Buddha Sakyamuni exemplifies the Path, as well as embodying the process inherent in reality that makes Buddhahood possible. When we contemplate the Buddha, we hold before us the fact that the progressive potential of conditionality is always present and actualises whenever we choose to set up the conditions in dependence upon which it unfolds. Right View consists in seeing this clearly, without the eternalism of reified abstractions or the nihilism of a meaningless and valueless universe. This is the fundamental 'philosophical' position of the Triratna Community, insofar as it follows Sangharakshita's particular presentation of the Dharma.[13]

Recollection of the Buddha Practice

From the compilers of the module: To finish up the group this week, the study leader might like to lead a session of *Buddhanusmṛti*, 'Recollection of the Buddha'. When we engage with

this practice, it's important to emphasise the importance of feeling in the presence of the Buddha, not just trying – as it were – to see him. *Buddhanusmṛti*, after all, simply meant originally 'remembering the Buddha'.

Disciples who knew him would naturally and easily remember him and how it was to be in his presence. He was their *kalyāna-mitra* (spiritual friend), teacher and the living embodiment of Bodhi. To recollect the Buddha means imagining that we are a disciple of the Buddha ourselves, and there with him in actuality.

Below is a suggested recollection you can use, adapted from Vessantara's book *Meeting the Buddhas*. This could be read slowly, and with feeling, by the study leader, with appropriate spaces for different parts. You can also feel free to use your own if you feel it's more appropriate.

Recollection of the Buddha Shakyamuni
We sit quietly, allowing our mind to become calm, gently letting the concerns of the everyday world drop away.

We allow everything to dissolve into a vast expanse of blue sky, stretching away into the distance. The blue sky is bright and vibrant.

We see a flat, grassy plain appear in front of us. In the far distance are snow-capped mountain peaks. The plain is expansive and spacious, the grass a vivid green.

Near us sprouts a spreading bodhi tree – a 'tree of awakening'. It has a silver trunk, wide-reaching branches, and heart-shaped dark green leaves.

Under the tree is a mound of kusha grass, piled up to form a seat. On the seat is a pure white cloth.

Seated on the white cloth is the Buddha Shakyamuni, sitting cross-legged in meditation. He wears the saffron robes of a monk, with one shoulder uncovered.

His hands rest in his lap in the meditation position, one on top of the other, supporting a large black begging-bowl. His hair is blue-black and curly.

He is smiling serenely, eyes half closed. He is delighted to see us and welcomes us with a sense of deep kindness.

His figure is surrounded by an aura of golden light, and gives off a feeling of profound peacefulness and infinite compassion.

The golden light around the Buddha Shakyamuni extends out to gently surround us too. The light purifies us of all shortcomings and all regrets.

The golden light fills us, and we feel our wisdom increase. Our intention to practise is strengthened, and our resolve made firm and unshakable.

Slowly, the Buddha dissolves into golden light. The golden light moves into our heart, deepening the golden aura around us.

We sit for a while, enjoying and absorbing the golden light of the Buddha.

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Even faith in the kamma- and dhamma-niyāmas is not sustainable unless there is a focus for one's devotion, someone one can revere. Why, in your words, might this be the case?

2. *"Progress is, in the end, progress in self-transcendence."*
Is this how we tend to think of the Dharma life, in our day-to-day and hour-to-hour Dharma practice? Could we do more to frame our daily Dharma practice in this way?

3. What responses do we have to the figure of the Buddha himself, in particular as a focus for devotion and reverence?

4. How do we respond to the "ironic statement" that we should see the Buddha as the Buddhist God – "the God who did not create the universe"? Why would Sangharakshita make such a provocative statement?

5. Do we feel a need to revere and rely upon something beyond us? Or do we resist such feelings? Or even simply not have such feelings?

6. When we reach the limits of our rational understandings, do we tend to fall into either of the extremes of reducing it to absolutes of eternalism or divesting it of all meaning and value? Can we think of any examples of how we might have done either or both of these in the past?

7. Do we relate to Enlightenment "impersonally" or "personally", i.e. do we think of Enlightenment mainly in terms of concepts and teachings, or as embodied in the figure of a Bodhisattva or Buddha?

8. Is there a danger that the impersonal feels sub-personal to you? That is, can we see how we can easily relate to the impersonal as being less than personal?

9. We need both right view and a sense of the supra-personal object to look to such as the Buddha. Which do we personally need to develop more and why?

10. Can we now summarise in our own words what Triratna's "fundamental philosophical position" actually is?

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1 It is this point that I believe Dr Ambedkar is making when he insists that Morality (which he equates with Dhamma) must be 'sacred'. He argues that, without that sacred awe, most people would revert to self-interest and therefore to the non-morality of the most powerful. No doubt in the Indian context 'sacred' (*pavitra* in Hindi) requires no explanation, but it is the sense of something beyond human understanding that is of sublime, awe-inspiring, and overwhelming power and splendour that commands our reverence and devotion. *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Bk IV, part 1, sect. 6: *Mere Morality is not Enough. It must be Sacred and Universal.*

2 This is necessary at any time, but is all the more necessary because of the prevailing nihilistic materialism of much of modern culture and the widespread ethos of self-fulfilment – the fulfilment of a self bounded within one life alone.

3 Sangharakshita has, of course, recently been tidying up his way of understanding the Triratna Buddhist Community's Refuge Tree – another example of the unfolding of his own teaching. He now sees the Refuge Tree as essentially about Going for Refuge to the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni. The Teachers of the Past are not on the Tree as Refuges, but as 'great Buddhist spiritual heroes', followers of the Buddha, whom we may respect very highly even though we should not accept their teachings uncritically. The Teachers of the Present represent Triratna Buddhist Community's immediate spiritual background, and again are not objects of Refuge. Both Teachers of the Past and of the Present are of course worthy of respect – Sangharakshita now calls the Tree the Tree of Refuge and Respect. All the other figures, together with those members of the Triratna Buddhist Order meditate upon in sādhanā practice, are Archetypes of Enlightenment. When we Go for Refuge to them as Archetypes of Enlightenment, we are in reality Going for Refuge to Śākyamuni, because it is through him that we know of the Enlightenment of which they are personifications. Milarepa and Padmasambhava are, incidentally, rather problematic since they appear on the Tree as 'spiritual heroes', but in their respective sādhanās as Archetypes of Enlightenment – essentially because their historical and archetypal characters are distinguishable. Sangharakshita is here making some very important points that may appear a little surprising. They merit much fuller treatment. The main issue is the need to recognise and maintain Śākyamuni's central place in the Buddhist life, as the intersection of the historical with the suprahistorical. Maintaining his central place is vital to the future unity of the Triratna Buddhist Order – and indeed to the future of Buddhism worldwide – but also to preserving the balance of clear understanding and imaginative inspiration, which can only be united in his figure.

4 It seems that when Christian missionaries first arrived in Thailand they found there was no word for God in Thai – so they coined the phrase 'The Buddha Who Created the Universe'. Sangharakshita rather mischievously proposes calling the Buddha, 'The God Who Did Not Create the Universe'! This is not entirely far-fetched. The notion of God has three principal aspects: creator, keeper of the moral order, and ideal. For Buddhists the question of creation does not arise. Buddhists do not require any cosmic agency to reward and punish since the moral order is natural, structured into reality in the form of *kamma-niyāma* conditionality. However the Buddha is our ideal and embodies the goal of our spiritual life. It is because of him that we have encountered the Dharma at all in this life. He therefore, in that respect, fills for us the place of God in the theistic religions and we should not deprive ourselves of the opportunity to feel devotion because we are squeamish about God – even if we do not, no doubt for very good reasons, adopt Sangharakshita's ironically suggested terminology!

5 In the *Gārava Sutta*, the Buddha, immediately after his Bodhi, recognises that not to 'revere and rely upon' anything is a source of suffering. He realises that there is no one alive to whom he can look up or depend upon, so he decides to dwell revering and relying upon the Dharma. SNI.6.2. Sangharakshita wondered what went through Bhikkhu Bodhi's mind as he translated this remarkable sutta, which seems not to have excited much comment in Theravāda tradition. It opens up quite a mystery that even the Buddha must 'reverence and rely upon' something.

6 'It is enough to cause you bewilderment, Vaccha, enough to cause you confusion. For this Dhamma, Vaccha, is profound, hard to see and hard to understand, peaceful and sublime, unattainable by mere reasoning, subtle, to be experienced by the wise.' *Aggi-vacchagotta Sutta*, MN72.18.

7 This should apply to our thinking and talking about our own spiritual life also. We should not prematurely try to force whatever arises in meditation, for instance, into the straitjacket of Buddhist terminology, applying traditional labels as a way of saying what happened. Nor should we try to calibrate our experience, fitting it into one or other hierarchical schema. We should simply forget traditional categories, Sangharakshita says, and, if it is genuinely helpful to speak of what happened at all, we should simply describe as best we can the 'raw' experience. In many cases, 'claims' are innocently made through inadequacy of expression and understanding, seizing upon the nearest label that seems appropriate.

8 *Ratnaguṇasaṃcayagāthā*,II.3; Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, proposition 7: the closing words of the work.

9 In our discussions, Sangharakshita remarked on the way in which *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna*, a Chinese work attributed apocryphally to Aśvaghoṣa, first attempts some very complex metaphysics to explain conundrums posed by its own presuppositions and then takes refuge in a poetic image to make its

point: the mutual perfuming of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. The image communicates something of real spiritual significance, which Sangharakshita has found very appealing, whilst the philosophical arguments seem irrelevant, and even dangerous. Similarly Sangharakshita considers that Plato is at his best when he communicates through myth, such as the myth of the cave in *The Republic* and Diotima's teaching about the divinity of Love in *The Symposium*. Incidentally, Sangharakshita commented that *The Awakening of Faith* finally resorts to an exposition of the ten precepts, the law of karma, and *śamathā* and *vipaśyanā* - because in the end that is what it all comes down to: you have to practise the Dharma.

10 (Part 1, sect. 5)

11 A quick search of websites referring to figures from the Buddhist archetypal pantheon will turn up many references that have nothing to do with the Dharma. One will find Buddhist figures put to all sorts of New Age, esoteric, or psychological uses – often with great authority and conviction.

12 Sangharakshita suggests that members of the Triratna Buddhist Community should make far more use in teaching and practice of the *Jātakas*, especially the canonical ones, since these present the long struggles over many lifetimes that preceded the Buddha's Enlightenment. This gives us perspective on our own spiritual efforts, both in terms of the magnitude of what is to be done and the wonder of it. The stories illustrate his 'taking the lead' in lifetime after lifetime, whether as a great king serving his people or as a sage who brings the decisive wisdom that saves the situation. This offers an inspiring example of what is to be done.

13 This is the end of Subhuti's paper. The text following this is a practice suggestion from Vajrashura to bring to life the material discussed in this week's text.

The Buddhist Vision, Subhuti, Windhorse Publications. Especially good on the Wheel and the Spiral.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-buddhist-vision-a-path-to-fulfilment/

Re-imagining the Buddha, Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma, Initiation Into A New Life, and *'A Supra-personal Force or Energy Working Through Me'*, Subhuti and Sangharakshita. From the 'seven papers'.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/seven-papers-subhuti-sangharakshita

Not about Being Good, by Subhadramati. Chapter 8 is on the *karma- and dharma-niyāmas*.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/not-about-being-good-a-practical-guide-to-buddhist-ethics/

Three Cheers for Taṇhā, Sagaramati. Referenced by Subhuti in week 7.
http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/vol2/tanha.html

2.3

The Five Aspects of the Dharma Life

Contents

Front Image: Winslow Homer, *The Guide and Woodsman*, detail.

Compiled by Subhadramati

The Five Aspects of the Dharma Life: The Triratna System of Practice
This module aims to explore, in greater depth than in *Year One*, the five great aspects of the Dharma Life.

Sangharakshita and Subhuti have been clarifying the Triratna system of Dharma practice and this module explores the results of that clarification.

The module explores the aspects of: integration, positive emotion, spiritual death, spiritual rebirth, and spontaneous compassionate activity as both *stages* and *aspects* of the Dharma Life. It also explores the quality of spiritual receptivity or Dharmic responsiveness and how that has to be present at every stage.

Primary study material
The primary study material for this term is the book by Maitreyabandhu *The Journey and the Guide: A Practical Course in Enlightenment*, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 9781909314092. http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-journey-and-the-guide-a-practical-course-in-enlightenment/

You will need to have a copy of this to use throughout the module and it will feature again in other parts of the course. The individual sections to be read are outlined for each unit below. If you buy an e-book you might need to check the page numbers against a printed copy.

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2.3.**1**
Integration

Please read:

- The Introduction.
- Chapter entitled *Week 1 : Integration* up to the end of page 26 (up to and including the section called *A fit body*)
- From bottom of page 31 (section entitled: *Ten per cent*) to the end of page 38 (to end of section *Spiritual receptivity 1*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. *"Siddhartha's story begins with the shock of seeing,* really *seeing old age."*
   Do you feel you have 'really seen' old age? Sickness? Death?

2. What made sense of Siddhartha's dissatisfaction was the sight of a wandering holy man. This was "a vision of possibility". Have you experienced a glimpse of this kind of vision?

3. Maitreyabandhu suggests that "if mindfulness is the first *inner* practice of integration, simplifying your life is the first *external* practice" (page 30). What is your response to that? Is it something you put into practise?

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2.3.**2**
The Mandala of Integration

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 2: The mandala of integration* up to the end of page 55 (to end of section 'Do we need therapy')
- From bottom of page 64 (section entitled *Men and women*) to the end of page 67 (to end of this section)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you agree or disagree that "integration can only take place if we have something to integrate *around*"? (page 42)

2. Horizontal integration means becoming "more and more one person". Would your friends describe you as someone who can be trusted? Someone who keeps their word? (page 46)

3. What is your experience of the "vertical dimension"? (page 47)

4. Do the circumstances of your life support integration? How could you improve them? (page 50)

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2.3.**3**
Positive Emotion

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 3: Positive emotion* up to the end of page 94 (end of section *Meditation*)
- From middle of page 101 (section entitled *Leaving the palace: sex and love*) to the end of page 108 (end of section *Spiritual receptivity 3*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you agree or disagree that "there is no stage of positive emotion without *hrī*"? (page 84)

2. Are you clear of the reason that *hrī* itself is a positive mental event in Buddhism?

3. Why do you think Maitreyabandhu describes gratitude as "a quintessentially adult emotion"? (page 91)

4. Do you agree or disagree that "ordinary acts of giving" are more important than being "deep" or "spiritual"? (page 91)

5. Do you agree or disagree that the cultivation of "good manners" is as important as Maitreyabandhu argues it is? (page 92)

6. Do you agree or disagree that 'to make sustained progress on the path we need a regular meditation practice'? (page 93)

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2.3.**4**
The Mandala of Positive Emotion

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 4: The mandala of positive emotion* up to the end of page 123 (end of the section *Friendship*)
- From middle of page 132 (section entitled *Letting go*) to the end of page 138 (to end of section called *Spiritual receptivity 4*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you really believe that positive emotion makes you happy? (page 111)

2. Can you spend time alone? Have you gone on a solitary retreat? (page 113)

3. Can you admit when you're wrong?

4. Would you be prepared to be unpopular?

5. What brings you delight?

6. Do you *practise* friendship in the way Maitreyabandhu describes? (page 121)

7. Do you agree or disagree with the statement "friendships within the genders, on the whole, are more straightforward" (page 122)

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2.3.**5**
Spiritual Death

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 5: Spiritual death* up to the end of page 165 (end of section *Real spiritual death*)
- From page 174 (section entitled *Being a Buddhist*) to the end of page 179 (end of section *Spiritual receptivity 5*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. When have you felt "the pull of Dharma Niyama processes"? (page 156)

2. Do you agree or disagree that "settling for refined selfishness" is a "real danger in the spiritual life"? (page 161)

3. Who do you look up to and do they have a "radical spirit"? p. 161

4. Do you agree or disagree that "commitment to the journey is the single most important thing *in* the journey"?

5. Ask yourself the questions on page 176.

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2.3.**6**
The Mandala of Spiritual Death

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 6: The mandala of spiritual death* up to the end of page 197 (end of section *Doing nothing*)
- From page 208 (section entitled *Another death*) to the end of page 214 (end of section *Spiritual receptivity 6*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you agree or disagree that "our self-attachment, lying below our more-or-less well ordered, well-behaved lives, motivates us all the time"? (page 184)

2. Do you practise confession and/or apology? (page 186)

3. Do you practise forgiveness (page 188)

4. Do you have periods of 'doing nothing'? (page 197)

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2.3.**7**
Spiritual Rebirth

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 7: Spiritual rebirth* up to the end of page 236 (end of section *Elements of imagination*, sub-section *Ascent*)
- From page 241 (section entitled *Eros and beauty*) to the end of page 250 (end of section *Spiritual receptivity 7*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you feel a resonance with any images of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas that you've seen?

2. Do you agree or disagree that imagination is a faculty and that it can be cultivated? (page 233)

3. If you agree, how do you cultivate your own imagination?

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2.3.**8**
The Mandala of Spiritual Rebirth

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 8: the mandala of spiritual rebirth* up to the end of page 269 (end of section *Worship*)
- From page 275 (section entitled *The well-dwelling frogs*) to the end of page 281 (end of section *Spiritual receptivity 8*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you have a supportive lifestyle? How could you make it more supportive? (page 266)

2. Do you agree or disagree that "in order to make progress we have to serve something bigger than ourselves"?

3. Do you agree or disagree that 'performing puja is an integral aspect of the journey'? (page 269)

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2.3.**9**
Spontaneous Compassionate Activity

Please read:

- Chapter entitled *Week 9: spontaneous compassionate activity* up to page 299 (end of section *The guide*)

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Do you think you could practise something from each stage every day? Take some time to think about this.

Reference Materials

The Journey and the Guide: A Practical Course in Enlightenment, Maitreyabandhu, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 9781909314092.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-journey-and-the-guide-a-practical-course-in-enlightenment/

It's really worth listening to a series of talks given by Subhuti at Padmaloka in 2013 called 'The Five Aspects of the Dharma Life'. Bear in mind that they are given to an audience of men training for ordination.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X74

Revering and Relying Upon the Dharma, Subhuti and Sangharakshita.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/seven-papers-subhuti-sangharakshita

2.4

Turning the Mind to the Dharma

Contents

Front Image: John Everett Millais, *The Vale of Rest*, detail.

Module compiled by Saccanāma, lightly edited by Vajrashura

The human body, at peace with itself,
Is more precious than the rarest gem.
Cherish your body, it is yours this one time only.
The human form is won with difficulty,
It is easy to lose.
All worldly things are brief,
Like lightning in the sky;
This life you must know
As the tiny splash of a raindrop;
A thing of beauty that disappears
Even as it comes into being.
Therefore set your goal and
Make use of every day and night
To achieve it.
- Tsongkhapa

This module looks at the central teaching and practice of Buddhism – that of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. It starts with an exploration of what are variously called the four reminders, the four mind-turning thoughts or the four ordinary preliminary practices (as against the four extraordinary preliminary practices or mūla yogas of Tibetan tradition). These are meant to focus our minds on the opportunities we have for spiritual practice as well as leading us to investigate the nature of what are called the false refuges. In coming to terms with impermanence more deeply, in acknowledging the inevitable effects of karma and by seeing through the dangers of saṁsāra, we can free ourselves more fully to turn towards the True Refuges, i.e. the Three Jewels.

The Four Mind-Turning Reflections are practised throughout the Tibetan Buddhist world but essentially comprise teachings that make up what Sangharakshita has called Basic Buddhism. Going for Refuge itself goes back to the very earliest days of Buddhism and is a practice acknowledged by all schools of Buddhism even if its true significance is not always appreciated.

Primary study material
The primary study material for this module is a series of five talks on the theme of the Four Mind-Turning Reflections. They were given by members of the Women's Ordination Team at Tiratanaloka on a retreat for women who were training for ordination. They have not been transcribed so you will need to be able to access them as mp3 files from Free Buddhist Audio.

https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X25

The talks are as follows:

1. *The Four Mind-Turning Reflections* by Dhammadinna.
2. *The Preciousness and Rarity of Human Life* by Dhammadinna.
3. *The Transitoriness of Life and the Certainty of Death* by Vajradarshini.
4. *Karma and the Consequences of Our Actions* by Ratnadharini.
5. *The Defects and Dangers of Saṁsāra* by Maitreyi.

The module concludes by looking at the levels and dimensions of Going for Refuge through an excerpt from Subhuti's book *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*.

2.4.**1**

The Four Mind-Turning Reflections – An Introduction

This first talk is an introduction to the Four Mind-Turning Reflections as a whole, giving a background to their role and purpose as well as placing them in the context of Going for Refuge and a path of regular steps. Please listen to it and take some notes before your group meeting and if you can, find time to reflect on some of the following questions:

1. How are the four reflections connected with Going for Refuge?

2. How might these reflections help to establish you on a path of regular steps?

3. *Nissarana* – literally 'not going for refuge' – is the word often translated as renunciation. What are your own associations with the word 'renunciation'? And what are we renouncing or not going for refuge to?

4. What might be the benefits of reflecting on this precious human life? Why does Dhammadinna suggest we start with this reflection rather than the more usual reflection on death and impermanence?

5. What might be the benefits of keeping an awareness of death and impermanence alive in our hearts?

6. Dhammadinna emphasizes how these reflections can help us 'give up craving without harmful side effects' and the importance of not reacting between the extremes of giving things up and indulging ourselves in pleasure. What relevance might this have for your own spiritual practice?

2.4.**2**

The Preciousness and Rarity of Human Life

Dhammadinna here explores what it means to be human in terms of the traditional list of eight freedoms, ten endowments and three kinds of faith found in the Tibetan Lam Rim texts. Whilst some of these may seem strange to us, they provide a basis upon which we can build our own reflections on this theme. Dhammadinna refers to the six realms of the Wheel of Life which we have already met in *Week 3, Part 4* of *Year One*.

1. Dhammadinna suggests that as Westerners, we often have difficulty valuing our lives. Do you have a sense of the value of your own life? If so, what do you value about it?

2. What are the implications of the centrality of the human realm?

3. Which of the eight freedoms seems most relevant to your situation? Why do you think that is?

4. Which of the ten endowments seems most relevant to your situation? Why do you think that is?

5. Of the three kinds of faith, which do you think is strongest in you and which the least developed?

6. How do you relate to the notion of the rarity of human life?

7. In modern (i.e. non-traditional) terms, what freedoms and endowments do you have in your life?

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Lists mentioned in the talk

The Eight Freedoms

1. Freedom from birth as a hell-being.
2. Freedom from birth as a hungry ghost.
3. Freedom from birth as an animal.
4. Freedom from birth as a long-lived god.
5. Freedom from being born in a border-tribe or a barbarian land.
6. Freedom from being born with extreme wrong views that are inimical to the Dharma.
7. Freedom from being born as a senseless fool.
8. Freedom from being born in a place or time without a Buddha.

The Ten Endowments

1. Being born as a human being.
2. Being born in a central land.
3. Being born with all sense faculties.
4. Being born without an extreme karmic burden.
5. Being born having faith in the Buddha's Teaching and confidence in the spiritual life.
6. Being born where a Buddha has appeared.
7. Being born where the Buddha has taught the Dharma.
8. Being born at a time when the teachings survive and are not corrupted.
9. Being born when the Teachings are practised by a Sangha.
10. Being born when we have favourable conditions and support from friends and a teacher.

The Three Kinds of Faith

1. Faith in realities – trusting or confident faith. This is cognitive.
2. Faith in qualities – lucid or serene faith. This is emotional/affective.
3. Faith in capacities – longing faith. This is volitional.

2.4.**3**

The Transitoriness of Life and the Certainty of Death

The transitoriness of life – or impermanence – is one of the central teachings of Buddhism. In an interview for the magazine *Resurgence*, Sangharakshita was asked for a one-word description of Buddhism and replied with the answer "Impermanence!"

We have already met the teaching of impermanence as one of the three lakṣaṇas (or marks of conditioned existence) in *Week 5*, *Part 4* of *Year One* and we will be meeting it again in other parts of the course. Here Vajradarshini shares some poetic and personal reflections on the topic as well as giving a three point structure for our reflection on this particular mind-turning thought.

1. Vajradarshini explores the Japanese imagery of dew, dew-frost and dew-drops as a metaphor for impermanence. Are there other artistic or poetic images for impermanence that have affected you?

2. Sabi is a kind of sadness – which is not unpleasant – at the fleetingness of life. Have you had any experience that is similar to this? If so what led to that experience?

3. *"Nothing beats real experience."*
   What have been the strongest experiences of death and impermanence in your own life?

4. How do you imagine your own death?

5. Have you made preparations for your own death, e.g. making a will, clarifying what sort of funeral you want, etc.?

6. Making plans whilst knowing they are provisional; making the most of life without hanging on to it; neither wasting time nor resisting the passing of time – what are your own responses to these 'koans' about death?

2.4.**4**

Karma and the Consequences of Our Actions

As with the previous two reflections, we have already encountered the teachings on karma and rebirth, this time in *Week 2, Part 4* of *Year One*. They are essential to a proper understanding of Buddhism and we will be exploring them at different points of the course in different ways. Here Ratnadharini explores the five niyamas, the relative priority of karma taking effect and the Yogācāra teaching of the four *ātma-kleśas*. She also looks at ways we can reflect upon these teachings in a practical way.

1. *"There is not much we can do about karma vipāka or pleasure and pain generally – the effects of something are non-karmic."*
   What are the implications of this for your practice?

2. We have an immediate response to our karma which is either a feeling of remorse or of a clear conscience. Have you had experience of this? If so, give some examples.

3. What is the immediate consequence for you if you respond to a situation with:

   - Anger.
   - Kindness.
   - Generosity.
   - Unmindfulness.

4. How have you changed as a result of your spiritual practice? You could discuss this with a good friend to get their perspective.

5. Spend some time each day this week asking the question, "What will be the future effects of my current mental state?"

6. What do you make of the Yogācāra teaching of the four ātma-kleśas? And of the gradual process of accumulating skilful actions until at some point a more fundamental shift in our consciousness takes place?

7. *"We have a huge responsibility to the world through understanding karma and its consequences."*
   What are your reflections on this?

8. Do you have any particular personal precepts that you could take in regard to this material?

2.4.5
The Defects and Dangers of Samsāra

This talk focuses more particularly on the *lakṣaṇa* of *duḥkha* or unsatisfactoriness. Maitreyi gives a thoughtful and stimulating account both of the traditional teachings on suffering as well as exploring themes such as guilt, blame and betrayal.

1. What are the implications of seeing saṁsāra as something we do – *samsarising* – rather than as a place?

2. Saṁsāra literally means 'to circle or go round' (or 'perpetual wandering' or 'round of rebirth' according to Nyanatiloka). Maitreyi suggests it is a repetitive cycle that always returns to the beginning; that nothing new comes from it; and that it is a vicious circle where our actions based on ignorance compound our sense of ignorance. Can you see this tendency and pattern in your own mind and patterns of behaviour?

3. Maitreyi suggests that we often equate suffering with blame and guilt (because of Christian conditioning). Is this something you are prone to? If so, how can you change this pattern?

4. To what extent do you think you are trying to fix samsara and make it palatable?

5. What can you learn from James Hillman's thoughts on betrayal?

6. "The ability to be with one's suffering is the place of the spiritual warrior." (Pema Chodron) or, "The gap between feeling and craving is the battlefield of the spiritual life." (Sangharakshita). What do you make of these statements and of what relevance are they to you?

7. Renunciation of samsara leads to freedom and compassion for others – do you have a sense of this in your own life?

2.4.**6**
The Levels and Aspects of Going for Refuge

This week, we move from the Four Mind-turning Reflections to Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. The purpose of the reflections is to turn our minds away from saṁsāra and towards the spiritual life and it is in Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels that we give positive expression to that which we are moving towards (rather than away from). Obviously we have already touched on this central Buddhist theme in the material for *Part 1* of *Year One*, so what we will be exploring here are two important teachings of Sangharakshita that explore the nature of Going for Refuge from different perspectives. These are the levels and the aspects (sometimes also referred to as dimensions) of Going for Refuge. It concludes by placing Going for Refuge in the widest possible context of the Higher Evolution and what Sangharakshita has poetically referred to as 'Cosmic Going for Refuge'.

Please read the following extract from chapter four of *Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition*, Subhuti, Windhorse Publications ISBN 0904766683.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

Going for Refuge consists essentially in turning from the mundane to the transcendental. One first acknowledges that there is a higher reality, embodied in the Three Jewels. Recognizing that one can actually realize that reality oneself, one feels an overwhelming and intuitive response to it. One re-orientates one's whole being in its direction, gradually disentangling oneself from the motivations and interests that had previously driven one.

> One goes for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha,— or, in more contemporary idiom, commits oneself to them,— when one decides that to attain Enlightenment is the most important thing in human life, and when one acts — or does one's best to act — in accordance with that decision. This means organizing one's entire life, in all its different aspects, in such a way as to subserve the attainment of Enlightenment.

Although we have spoken of a single act, it is not an act that is performed but once in an individual's lifetime. At every stage of spiritual life one must turn more and more radically from the mundane to the transcendental. Thus Going for Refuge:

> ...takes place on different levels, passage from one to another of which constitutes one's spiritual life as a Buddhist.

Furthermore, that act does not take place simply in one department of life. It is a total act involving every nerve and fibre of one's being, having repercussions in all aspects of one's experience and activity. That single act can then be seen from many different points of view, corresponding to the many different categories into which human life can be divided. Thus, there are different aspects or dimensions of Going for Refuge. The recognition that Going for Refuge has levels and dimensions allows us to see more of its real nature. Going for Refuge is dynamic in that it is repeated more and more wholeheartedly at every level of the path. It is comprehensive, in that it eventually must transform every aspect of human experience.

Levels of Going for Refuge

Sangharakshita has distinguished five levels of Going for Refuge: Cultural, Provisional, Effective, Real, and Absolute. Although this classification is his own, it has traditional precedent, for the Pāli texts distinguish the mundane from the transcendental Going for Refuge.

In Sangharakshita's system, the lowest level is 'Cultural' Going for Refuge, which he sometimes also calls Ethnic or Formal. Here being a Buddhist is more or less nominal. It is not a matter of personal spiritual conviction but of group membership, and the formula of Going for Refuge is recited with little consciousness of its real significance.

> [This is] the Going for Refuge of those Eastern Buddhists who [do] not actually follow Buddhism as a spiritual teaching (though they might be positively influenced by it on the social level), and who [make] no effort to evolve spiritually, but who [are] nonetheless very proud of Buddhism as part of their cultural heritage and who definitely [consider] themselves (ethnic) Buddhists. Such people [recite] the Refuges as an affirmation of their cultural and national identity and even [go] so far as to claim that they [are] 'born Buddhists', though in truth one could no more be born a Buddhist than one could (according to the Buddha) be born a brahmin.

In the West, this level consists of those who participate in a Buddhist group for predominantly social reasons. Spiritually limited as is this Cultural Going for Refuge, it is not without value. Such nominal Buddhists are at least influenced by the Dharma on the social and ethical level. Moreover, the Dharma is available to them as a positive ideal. Given sufficient opportunity and encouragement, they may move on to higher levels of Going for Refuge.

At the next level, 'Provisional' Going for Refuge, there is some definite response to the Three Jewels and some awareness of their true significance. One who goes for Refuge provisionally will experience strong feelings of devotion and reverence towards the ideal. He or she will acknowledge the worth of those who are fully committed to the spiritual path.

> [He or she has] started taking Buddhism seriously to some extent, even started practising it to some extent, but [does] not really commit himself (or herself) either to Buddhism or to his (or her) own spiritual development. He (or she) might, however, be aware of the possibility, even the desirability, of committing oneself, and might be thinking of doing so later on.

Such a person might be the member of a traditional Buddhist culture who has begun to have some real understanding of what Going for Refuge means. In the Western context, they would be among those associated with a Buddhist movement, regularly attending classes in meditation and Dharma study. However, despite devotion to the Three Jewels and some

understanding of the Dharma, they still have many other competing interests and ambitions. These do not, at this stage, allow effective dedication to the spiritual path.

By contrast, one who goes for Refuge effectively can put enough energy behind Going for Refuge to make it an effective act. Despite other competing interests and ambitions, they are sufficiently drawn to the Three Jewels to be able to commit themselves to making systematic steps towards them. It is really at this point of 'Effective' Going for Refuge that the spiritual life begins in earnest. Here, the decisive reorientation from the mundane towards the transcendental is made. However, success is not yet assured, even on reaching this stage. Although one has turned towards the transcendental, one has not yet made the transition to it: one has no direct experience of the Dharma. If one ceases in one's efforts one will be inexorably drawn away from the path. Indeed, Going for Refuge can only remain effective at this stage if the individual is surrounded by conditions that support his or her efforts. Such conditions include genuine spiritual friendship, real Dharmic guidance, even living and working situations that enhance rather than detract from the following of the spiritual path.

It is only with 'Real' Going for Refuge that one gains that transforming insight that brings one on to the transcendental path. So important is this transition that we must briefly explore its significance. In the Buddha's original teaching, the spiritual path is divided into two great halves: mundane and transcendental. When one first sets out on the path, one's essential view of things is still worldly. There is intellectual understanding of the Dharma and emotional attraction to it, but one's deeper psyche is untransformed. One's Going for Refuge may be effective enough to keep one moving forward, but it is not yet real, so that one may still fall back if one relaxes one's efforts. This is the mundane path. In the course of Going for Refuge more and more effectively, one's intellectual understanding of the Dharma and emotional attraction to it are transformed into prajñā or Wisdom. Seeing things now as they really are, one cannot fall back into a mundane way of looking at things. From then on, one sees things from the point of view of Enlightenment, not of the world. One has gained the transcendental path. This is the point where the creative mind predominates over the reactive—although the reactive is not yet exhausted. It is the point on the path of the Higher Evolution where transcendental consciousness arises and one becomes a. true individual. We will be exploring further Sangharakshita's views on this transition in later chapters.

Real Going for Refuge is the 'point of no-return' at which one cannot fall back from the path. One's whole outlook has been utterly transformed by a glimpse of the true nature of reality. So penetrating is this glimpse that one can no longer be drawn from a wholehearted quest for complete and full Enlightenment. One is now, indeed, assured of gaining Enlightenment because one cannot, so to speak, help making the effort that will bring one to it. This crucial transition is the first goal of spiritual life. Different Buddhist traditions speak of this transition in different ways: Stream Entry, Irreversibility from Full and Perfect Enlightenment, attaining the path of Vision, the seeing of the jñānasattva, the Opening of the Dharma Eye, etc. Since these different ways of speaking of this transition belong within different doctrinal systems, most are seen within their own systems as different experiences. However, Sangharakshita reconciles all these various ways of viewing the fundamental Buddhist act by referring them back to Going for Refuge. All refer to Real Going for Refuge.

'Absolute' or 'Ultimate' Going for Refuge is the point of full Enlightenment. Here, the cyclic trend of conditionality is completely exhausted and there is only a spontaneous unfolding of the spiral trend in unending creativity. Here even Going for Refuge is transcended, since one has oneself become the refuge. In fact, in so far as all dualistic thought has been left behind, there is no refuge to go to and no one to go to it. Once again, Sangharakshita is keen to guard

against thinking of Absolute Going for Refuge as a fixed place, in which the Enlightened settle down. He points out that even the Buddha seemed to feel the need of some higher principle.

> After his Enlightenment, the Buddha looked around the cosmos and saw that there was no being whom he could live worshipping and reverencing. It is as though the Buddha himself, even after his Enlightenment, felt this need to look up to something beyond. He eventually realized that there was the Dharma, there was that transcendental law in accordance with which he had realized the Truth and become the Buddha. So he resolved to live worshipping and revering that.
>
> [This makes it clear that] we shouldn't think of Enlightenment as a sort of fixed, final, terminal state, lying literally at the end of a path. That is, up to a point, a helpful way of thinking, but you also need to think of Enlightenment as always, as it were, being there. You have to have both ideas at the same time, which is not a very easy thing to conceive of.

Aspects of Going for Refuge

In this way Sangharakshita identifies Going for Refuge as the act that characterizes every stage of the path. Indeed, the following of the path consists in deepening and ever deepening one's Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels. He reconciles, in this single concept that all schools acknowledge, all the different conceptual maps employed by the various schools to chart the stages of the path. Not only are they reconciled in it but they each make their distinctive contribution to drawing out its full meaning and significance. Each approaches that fundamental act from a particular point of view, throwing into relief one or another aspect of it.

> These are the conclusions I have come to in the course of the last twenty-five years or so. I have more and more seen everything as contained within the Going for Refuge. I don't see the arising of the bodhicitta or Tantric initiation, for instance, as going beyond the Going for Refuge, but only as revealing different aspects of it more fully and more clearly. At the very beginning, there were just the bare fundamentals, which were sufficient. As time went on, as so many people went for Refuge, people with so many different needs and so many different approaches, there was more and more elaboration, and that elaboration enriched the concept of Going for Refuge. But the different approaches ended up smothering and concealing the Going for Refuge, rather than revealing it.

Sangharakshita's idea of those approaches as dimensions of Going for Refuge once more reveals the true meaning of that act. His perspective does not negate later elaborations but shows them as enrichments of the central concept.

The language of the Bodhisattva Ideal is perhaps the best-known alternative to that of Going for Refuge. This speaks of the basic act in terms of the arising of the bodhicitta, the 'Will to Enlightenment', which is a deep urge to go forward on the path for the benefit of all beings. Clearly it draws out what Sangharakshita calls the 'altruistic dimension of Going for Refuge'. There cannot really be two separate paths, one individualistic and one altruistic, between which one can choose, as the popularized Mahāyāna may seem to suggest. The spiritual path is of its very nature altruistic, a growth in harmony, friendship, and compassion. Ultimately it completely transcends even the distinction between self and other. Going for Refuge means becoming more and more altruistic.

The arising of the bodhicitta became detached from Going for Refuge for the reasons we have already explored. There was a degeneration and narrowing of the original ideal. Since the Mahayanists did not have an idea of historical development, they could not identify that narrowed ideal they inherited as a degeneration. They had to accept it as the direct teaching of the Buddha. They could only correct what they saw as the Hīnayāna's one-sided individualism by erecting a new and higher path on top of the old and narrowed one, recasting the spiritual path and its definitive act in terms of altruism. Modern Buddhists need not accept this stacking up of teachings. They must surely find a different way of relating the language of the Bodhisattva Ideal to the basic teachings of Buddhism. This can only be done by relating the Bodhisattva Ideal back to Going for Refuge and seeing it as an exploration of but one of its aspects. The arising of the bodhicitta and the Bodhisattva Ideal reveal the altruistic dimension of Going for Refuge.

Sangharakshita considers that the Bodhisattva Ideal in particular needs putting into perspective for urgent methodological reasons:

> You can't even consider the description of the Bodhisattva [as working for inconceivable lifetimes to save all sentient beings] as applying to the ordinary practicing Buddhist. It is absolutely inconceivable. It has got out of all proportion as far as you personally and almost any other human being are concerned. Therefore, I see the Bodhisattva Ideal and the bodhicitta, presented in that way on that scale, as representing the archetype. We participate in that to the extent that we can, but we do not take it upon ourselves in its entirety. We, as ordinary human beings, can't possibly do that. In a way, the Bodhisattva Ideal and the arising of the bodhicitta in the Mahāyāna tradition have lost all connection with the individual practice of the individual Buddhist. Therefore I think it is all the more necessary to fall back on the Going for Refuge as the basic Buddhist act, not on the arising of the bodhicitta and becoming a Bodhisattva – which represent the archetype of Going for Refuge, on a cosmic scale.

Although Sangharakshita draws on and is greatly inspired by the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva Ideal, he thinks it should be taken as myth rather than as a practicable spiritual ideal for the individual. Although it should quickly be noted that to say it should be taken as myth, in Sangharakshita's thinking, does not mean that it should be dismissed or treated as a mere allegory. As we shall see later, he places great importance on archetype and myth. However, he thinks that one should be careful not to take myth literally. He does not think, for instance, that it is appropriate for individuals to take the vow of the Bodhisattva to save all sentient beings, as is commonly done in the Mahāyāna and as he did himself in 1964. He now considers that the Bodhisattva vow, dedicating oneself to the Enlightenment of all beings, can only be thought of in collective terms.

> I see less and less the taking of Bodhisattva vows as an individual thing in the ordinary sense. The Bodhisattva vow goes beyond the framework of subject and object. It goes beyond the distinction between one's own individual development and helping other people to develop. So the vow cannot be taken by individuals. If you take some of these Bodhisattva vows seriously, you cannot, if you've got the least scrap of imagination, imagine yourself as an individual ever carrying them out. Something different is clearly involved: a process in which you may participate but which is not anything that you as an individual can ever do. I have, therefore, tended to think that the Bodhisattva vow should be 'taken' by the Order as a whole. The Bodhisattva spirit, the bodhicitta, should pervade the Order as a whole and all its

> activities. This is why, from quite early on, I spoke of the Order as embodying the figure of the thousand-armed, eleven-headed Avalokiteśvara, with each Order member being one of those thousand arms or thousand hands, each bearing its particular implement or emblem.

Sangharakshita considers Tantric initiation too as an aspect of Going for Refuge:

> I don't regard the Going for Refuge to be introductory to the arising of the bodhicitta, and the arising of the bodhicitta to be introductory to abhisheka or Tantric initiation. In the same way as the arising of the bodhicitta, I regard the abhisheka as an aspect of Going for Refuge, Going for Refuge is the fundamental, basic, definitive Buddhist act. It is all contained there. It has all grown out of that or been elaborated from that. You could say that the abhisheka represents the release of the tremendous energy inherent in the act of Going for Refuge itself. Your own Going for Refuge releases energy. Abhisheka is not something that you get given to you as an extra sort of goody, after you have Gone for Refuge.

Another aspect of Going for Refuge is drawn out by the language of 'Going Forth' into homelessness—the act of leaving behind all worldly ties and of renouncing the group. This act is represented in most Buddhist monastic traditions by the 'lower' or śrāmaṇera ordination. However, it has a much broader significance than this ceremony suggests. At every stage of the path one must leave behind the lower to move on to the higher. If one is to go for Refuge to the Three Jewels, one must Go Forth from mundane refuges. This is not merely an inward process of changing attitudes but has direct practical consequences. Going Forth, Sangharakshita notes:

> Draws attention to the extent of the reorganization which, regardless of whether or not one becomes a monk in the formal sense, the experience [of Going for Refuge] inevitably brings about in the pattern of one's daily life.

Another term, Stream Entry, draws attention to the 'permanent and far-reaching effects' of the fundamental Buddhist act. Going for Refuge itself, while it is the primary term for that basic act, 'draws attention to the emotional and volitional aspect of this experience'.

Sangharakshita considers that the language of Going for Refuge provides the most helpful model of spiritual life. Even though ultimately all duality is transcended in Enlightenment, our conception of spiritual life cannot but be dualistic. We must think that there is a state we are now in and a state that we wish to attain. How we think about the relationship between those two states has major repercussions on our spiritual life. One can think of the state one wishes to attain either as something outside one that one is opening oneself up to or as a potential one has within one that one is trying to reveal. Going for Refuge speaks the language of opening oneself to the higher. Some Buddhist, and some non-Buddhist, traditions speak the language of revealing one's potential. In so far as you are the Buddha potentially, then the Buddha is, it is said, already within you. The best-known example of this is the Zen saying that you are the Buddha already. While this has some metaphysical validity, Sangharakshita considers it methodologically unhelpful:

> This language of potentiality is very, very dangerous – not in the sense that it's untrue, but that it can be misunderstood and misapplied. The danger is that you start thinking of these higher levels as potentialities of you [as you now are] as though you can attain them, achieve them, appropriate them, while remaining yourself

> unchanged. But you can't. The accent is so heavily on you that you can't really become that higher potential. For you to achieve that higher level, paradoxically you have to cease to exist: you have to die so it can take your place. It's much better to put it all the other way round, and to speak not of this higher potentiality belonging to you, but of yourself as belonging to that higher potentiality. It's not that you've got to appropriate it: you've got to surrender to it. You've got to go for Refuge to it. Otherwise the egotistical attitude remains unchanged and you just go on appropriating and appropriating.

The language of potentiality is quite common in Western Buddhist circles and Sangharakshita thinks it is often used for populist reasons: it flatters people to think that they are potential Buddhas—even more that they are the Buddha already. However, they do not then make the kind of radical change necessary really to become Buddhas. They do not go for Refuge to the Buddha. Thus, Going for Refuge is fundamental to Buddhism in another sense: there is no spiritual development without dying to what one now is so that one can be reborn as what one goes for Refuge to.

The context of Going for Refuge

Thus Sangharakshita reveals the true significance of Going for Refuge as the fundamental Buddhist act, repeated at every stage of spiritual life and including every aspect of experience. However, one should not think of Going for Refuge as an isolated act: it belongs in a wider context. In The History of My Going for Refuge, Sangharakshita shows first the social context of Going for Refuge. Although it is the act of an individual, many individuals may make it. By doing so, they come into a new and significant relationship with one another. Sharing as they do commitment to the spiritual path, there is a very deep connection between them. Those who genuinely and effectively go for Refuge share a harmony and empathy that amount to a new kind of consciousness. The nature of this new kind of consciousness is quite hard to understand and communicate, since it is neither of the group nor of the individual, but above and beyond them both. It combines the complete autonomy of the individual with complete harmony with others who share the same commitment to the path. It is:

> ...a special kind of consciousness common to, in a sense even shared by, a number of truly human individuals who follow the same spiritual disciplines and have the same spiritual ideals, or who are engaged in the same creative activities.

This new kind of consciousness characterizes the sangha or spiritual community. Thus, the social context of Going for Refuge is the sangha.

Going for Refuge belongs also within the context of the Higher Evolution. As we have seen, the Higher Evolution is that series of ever higher states of awareness through which, with conscious commitment and personal effort, the individual gradually ascends. Effective Going for Refuge is the act of commitment that the self-aware individual makes at the outset of his spiritual career, dedicating himself to the path. This is clearly illustrated in the teaching of the twelve positive nidānas. These are the links in the progressive order of conditionality that form the path, whether we talk of it as the creative Spiral or the Higher Evolution. The first nidāna or link is duhkha or 'suffering': the inevitable experience of pain, frustration, and imperfection that comes from being bound up with the wheel of cyclic conditionality. As Sangharakshita says, what duhkha really means is:

> ...in positive terms, that Nirvana alone is peace, and negatively that conditioned things are painful because we seek in them for that absolute bliss which only the

> Unconditioned can bestow and have, therefore, inevitably to experience disappointment and frustration.

Once one becomes aware that cyclic existence, the reactive mind, or the Lower Evolution are inherently unsatisfactory, then one can be open to the mind's deeper creative potential. And so, in dependence on duḥkha, arises śraddhā. Śraddhā is often translated as 'faith', but this has, for many people in the post-Christian West, quite the wrong connotations:

> Śraddhā is not faith in the sense of belief, or in the sense of believing to be true something which cannot be rationally demonstrated. If we want a definition of faith we may say that it is 'the emotional response of what is ultimate in us to what is ultimate in the universe'. Faith is an intuitive, emotional, even mystical response to what is of ultimate value. For Buddhism, faith means specifically faith in the Three Jewels.

That response, when felt sufficiently deeply and strongly, will result in one's committing oneself to the Three Jewels. That act of commitment is Effective Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge is therefore the active dimension of śraddhā or faith.

Although Going for Refuge first appears in a decisive form at the nidāna of śraddhā, it is present in every stage of the path. No step in the Spiral Path of the positive nidānas is really left behind. Each is taken up and transcended in the succeeding, higher stage. Thus the highest link in the positive chain includes all the other links, although it also passes beyond them. Going for Refuge is present at each stage as that ever more radical turning towards the Three Jewels. It is Going for Refuge that drives one to leave behind what one has presently achieved and to seek yet greater heights. Going for Refuge therefore takes place within the context of the Higher Evolution, of which it is the vital fuel and spark.

While Sangharakshita identifies Going for Refuge as the dynamic of the Higher Evolution, he stresses that Going for Refuge is the expression within the context of Buddhism of a general principle: the principle of moving from the mundane to the transcendental, from the Conditioned to the Unconditioned. That principle is also expressed in non-Buddhist traditions, albeit often obscurely and distortedly:

> At least for some people operating within some other religions, there is some movement from what we would call the Conditioned to the Unconditioned, buried underneath them. They don't have to be organized religions. One can even see some such movement in the works of great artists and writers - there is a movement from the mundane to the transcendental, at least for some of them. The general principle is the same. But often it is mixed with other things, and even if there is some faint reflection of the principle, it is often so obscured by these other factors as to be virtually valueless. For instance, you might think that you go from the Conditioned to the Unconditioned by believing in a personal God who is going to save you and transport you there. That would not be Going for Refuge in our sense.

This principle is not 'Buddhist' in the limited sense. It is part of the universe itself and simply finds particularly clear and powerful expression in the Buddhist concept of Going for Refuge. The Higher Evolutionary context is therefore universal.

The Higher Evolution itself, however, takes place within the context of the wider evolutionary process. Although the two halves of the total process are quite distinct with very different

characteristics, nonetheless there is a single thread running through them. There is an 'upward movement of life and consciousness' that can be seen in both the Lower Evolution of species and the Higher Evolution of the individual, although in the Lower Evolution that upward movement is not the expression of a conscious intention, as it is in the Higher. Thus, there is:

> ...a parallel, or even a partial coincidence, between the process of spiritual development as depicted in traditional Buddhist teaching and the course of human [Lower] evolution as described by modern science.

That parallel or partial coincidence is not without basis in Buddhist tradition. The Bodhisattva, the Buddha-to-be, is often represented as having been born even as an animal in some of his previous lives. The term 'Bodhisattva' was originally applied to the Buddha from the time of his birth to the time of his Enlightenment when he became the Buddha. However, his struggle for Enlightenment came to be seen as spanning not merely one life but myriads of lives. There is a large class of literature, the Jātakas, which tells of the previous lives of the Buddha, showing him perfecting the path over countless ages. Some of the Jātakas are contained in the canons of various schools; others are non-canonical, although they are among the best known and best loved literature of Buddhism. In the canonical Jātakas, the Bodhisattva appears as a famous seer or teacher or king. As Sangharakshita says, he is seen:

> ...taking the lead, whether in the sphere of ethical and religious life or in the sphere of political activity.

In the non-canonical stories he is depicted rather more broadly, and it is in these tales that he sometimes appears as an animal. In whatever form he appears, he is always the outstanding figure in the group in which he is found; he is always taking the lead, thus representing 'the growing point of evolution within each class or group of beings'. At the same time, he is the Bodhisattva, the being who is totally dedicated to the pursuit of Enlightenment. In this way the non-canonical Jātakas signify that the Lower and Higher Evolutions are aspects of a single 'upward movement of life and consciousness'. So Sangharakshita speaks of a single principle manifesting at every level of evolution, whether Lower or Higher. This principle is, for the Mahāyāna, the bodhicitta or 'Will to Enlightenment'. Sangharakshita calls it the 'Bodhisattva principle' or the 'Principle of perpetual self-transcendence'. It is this principle of self-transcendence that we have seen as the upward movement of life and consciousness, underlying both the Lower and Higher Evolutions. Always, at every stage and phase of the evolutionary process, the principle of perpetual self-transcendence manifests itself.

That upward surge of life and consciousness is, of course, within the context of the Higher Evolution, Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge can, however, be seen to be present not just in the Higher Evolution but at every stage of the evolutionary process because:

> Looking at the process, what one in fact saw was a Going for Refuge. Each form of life aspired to develop into a higher form or, so to speak, went for Refuge to that higher form. This might sound impossibly poetic, but it was what one in fact saw.

In the Higher Evolution that aspiration to develop into a higher form becomes conscious of itself in and through the committed individual. When it does so it is Effective Going for Refuge. But Going for Refuge is present at every level and stage and is identical with the principle of self-transcendence, with the Bodhisattva principle, and with the bodhicitta. The language of the Bodhisattva principle and of the bodhicitta simply draws out its altruistic dimension.

Considered as the universal principle that underlies the entire evolutionary process, Sangharakshita calls this the 'Cosmic Going for Refuge':

> I have spoken of a Cosmic Going for Refuge. I have identified in Going for Refuge the whole principle of evolution. It is not just a little Buddhist practice. It is a reflection, within the context of Buddhism, of a principle that governs the whole of life and attains greater and greater clarity of expression until it gains its greatest clarity of expression in Going for Refuge. Going for Refuge is at the centre of Buddhism because evolution is at the centre of life.

Sangharakshita has advanced his idea of the Cosmic Going for Refuge rather tentatively, and has never written systematically on the subject. Clearly there is a great deal of room for misunderstanding and for taking literally what is meant as a poetic metaphor:

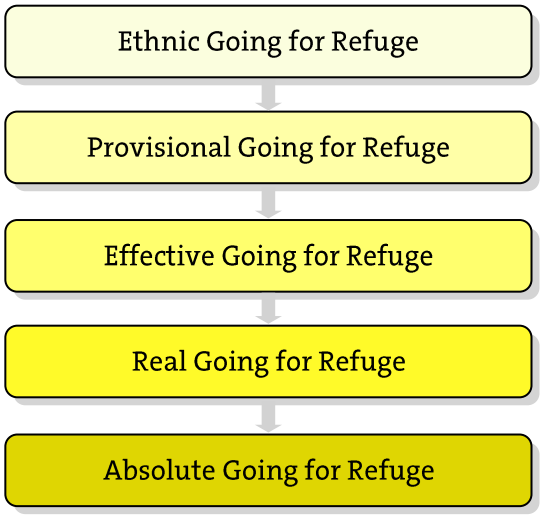
> When I spoke of the Cosmic Going for Refuge, which I did in a rash moment, I wasn't thinking in terms of a sort of collective Going for Refuge on the part of the whole cosmos. I was thinking that every individual thing in the cosmos might be said to have an inbuilt tendency to transcend itself. At least it has the possibility of transcending itself, given the right circumstances and conditions. I wasn't making an objectively, scientifically verifiable statement so much as speaking in more poetic and metaphorical terms.

The point of this metaphor, Sangharakshita says, is to communicate that ultimately the cosmos has meaning and purpose. The universe is not simply a mechanism that has evolved human consciousness by a random process. Spiritual life, as we have already seen, necessarily involves us thinking dualistically: what we now are is different from what we are trying to become. It is the spiral path that connects the one to the other, and we ascend that path by Going for Refuge to what we are trying to become. The Higher Evolution is thus purposive, because we are consciously working towards a goal. But how are we to understand the Lower Evolution? How are we to resolve the gap between what we once were and what we now are? What has brought us to the point of Going for Refuge? We can either see that process as fortuitous or as itself having a purpose. Taken literally, both are equally untrue, since they are applying limited concepts drawn from our ordinary sense experience to the universe as a whole. However, from a spiritual point of view, the metaphor of the entire universe as having a purpose is far nearer the truth and far more helpful. It comes nearer to expressing the Buddha's insight into the essential interconnectedness of all things.

The individual's spiritual efforts are not merely the efforts of an individual entirely isolated from everything else: they take place within a vast context. The individual's efforts and the upward movement of life and consciousness that is their context are both manifestations of the single principle of the Cosmic Going for Refuge. They are therefore organically connected. The individual can reveal ever more of the significance of his or her own efforts because those efforts are interconnected with the entire context. Through those efforts, because of that interconnectedness, he or she reveals 'something of the nature and significance of the wider context itself'. Going for Refuge is then the key to evolution itself—a key in the sense of:

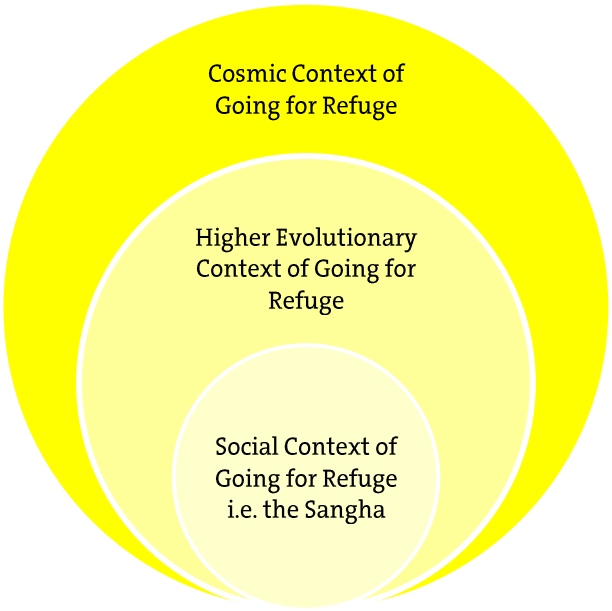
> ...a concept, or an image, in the light of which the whole process can not only be rendered more intelligible but brought within a wider, more 'cosmic' context. Through our Going for Refuge we are united, as it were, with all living beings, who in their own way, and on their own level, in a sense also [go] for Refuge. Thus Going for

Refuge [is] not simply a particular devotional practice or even a threefold act of commitment, but the key to the mystery of existence.



The Levels of Going for Refuge

The Aspects or Dimensions of Going for Refuge



The Contexts of Going for Refuge

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Suggestions for reflection, research, and discussion

1. *"Going for Refuge consists essentially in turning from the mundane to the transcendental. One first acknowledges that there is a higher reality, embodied in the Three Jewels. Recognizing that one can actually realize that reality oneself, one feels an overwhelming and intuitive response to it. One re-orientates one's whole being in its direction, gradually disentangling oneself from the motivations and interests that had previously driven one."*
   (Quote from p.91 of the book or the opening paragraph of the extract). Have you noticed this disentanglement from motivations and interests that have previously driven you?

2. *"Going for Refuge takes place on different levels, passage from one to another of which constitutes one's spiritual life as a Buddhist."*
   (Quote from p.91 of the book or the second paragraph of the extract). Can you relate the deepening of your own spiritual life to these levels of Going for Refuge?

3. What do you think you need to do to make your Going for Refuge more effective?

4. What do you find most helpful about Sangharakshita's exposition of the Dimensions of Going for Refuge?

5. Why do you think it is important to have a wider context for Going for Refuge?

6. What do you make of Sangharakshita's poetic use of the term 'Cosmic Going for Refuge'?

As with all the modules of the Dharma Training Course, this module concludes with the opportunity to present a project to your group on a topic arising from the material you have been studying. You may wish to take one of the Suggested Questions and explore it in more detail than you have been able to in the weekly meetings, or you may want to take up a theme or question of your own. One suggestion is that you could compile some readings on one of the reminders – i.e. poems and Dharma readings – and read them out to the group whilst you are meditating. Given that the reminders are dealing with universal themes, there are many readings which you could choose to illustrate them. Whatever you choose, the purpose of the projects is to give you the opportunity to practise the second level of wisdom more fully, i.e. the level of reflection or *Cintā-mayī-prajñā*. It is also a good way to share something of your experience with the group.

Taking it further

If you want to explore the material in this module further or you are looking for references for your project, the following list may be helpful.

Suggested further reading for the whole unit

The Jewel Ornament of Liberation, Gampopa, translated by H. Guenther (Shambhala). This is one of the key texts in the development of the Tibetan Lam Rim teachings that Dhammadinna refers to. Gampopa was one of the two principle disciples of Milarepa. His works contain both the monastic Lam Rim approach of Atisha and the Mahamudra meditation teachings of Milarepa. Sangharakshita has led a number of seminars on various chapters from *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, including *The Working Basis* and *Instruction in the Transitoriness of the Composite* (i.e. this precious human life and death and impermanence).
http://www.shambhala.com/jewel-ornament-of-liberation.html

Indestructible Truth, Reginald Ray, ISBN 1570629102. Chapter 10, *Hīnayāna: The View explores the Four Reminders*.
http://www.shambhala.com/indestructible-truth.html

Themes from Gampopa's Jewel Ornament of Liberation by Padmavajra. This is a series of eight talks given by Padmavajra on a men's retreat at Padmaloka Retreat Centre exploring this key text of Tibetan Buddhism.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X39

Unit 1

The Path of Regular Steps and the Path of Irregular Steps, Sangharakshita in The Taste of Freedom. Dhammadinna refers to this important lecture of Sangharakshita's when talking about the need for good foundations for our spiritual life.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=118

http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/taste-freedom.pdf

Piṅgiya's Praises of The Way to the Beyond in *The Sutta Nipāta* translated by Saddhatissa, Curzon Press. We have already come across Piṅgiya's praises in *Week 6, Part 1* of *Year One*. It is the source of the quote 'eroding desire without harmful side-effects' (in Saddhatissa's translation).

Unit 2
The Three Jewels, Sangharakshita, ISBN 1899579060, Windhorse Publications. Dhammadinna refers to chapter 12, *The Human Situation* when exploring the human realm as central to the five other realms of the Wheel of Life.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-three-jewels/

The Buddhist Vision, Subhuti, Windhorse Publications. Chapters 7 and 8 are very good on the six realms of the Wheel of Life.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-buddhist-vision-a-path-to-fulfilment/

Know Your Mind, Sangharakshita, ISBN 0904766799, Windhorse Publications. Pp. 119-125 explore the three kinds of faith in more detail.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/know-your-mind-the-psychological-dimension-of-ethics-in-buddhism/

This material is also covered in the new *Year Four* module *Mind in Harmony*, and in Subhuti's book by the same name.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/mind-in-harmony-the-psychology-of-buddhist-ethics-ebook/

Unit 3
Wabi-Sabi: for Artists,Designers, Poets and Philosophers by Leonard Koren, Stone Bridge Press. Vajradarshini considers this to be the only decent book on the subject of Wabi-Sabi.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=jQelDAgr63oC&printsec=frontcover

Unit 4
Who is the Buddha?, Sangharakshita, ISBN 0904766241, Windhorse Publications. Chapter 7 is a detailed exploration of the traditional teachings on karma and rebirth.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/who-is-the-buddha/

Exploring Karma and Rebirth, Nagapriya, ISBN1899579613, Windhorse Publications. A detailed exploration of the Buddhist teachings on karma and rebirth written from a modern, some would say sceptical, perspective. It is good for the Pāli sources on karma.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/exploring-karma-rebirth-ebook/

Dreams and Rebirth, Sangharakshita. A talk on rebirth given at the Sheffield Buddhist Centre by Sangharakshita, July 8th 2008. Here Sangharakshita offers some personal considerations (not proofs) for rebirth and concludes with an exhortation to think through more fully our views on this important aspect of Buddhist teaching.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=LOC110

Rambles Around the Yogācāra and *Eight Verses for Training the Mind* both by Subhuti. These are very good for the Yogācāra and the ātma-kleśas.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X30
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X29

Old Souls by Tom Shroder, Simon and Schuster. Explores the scientific research of Ian Stephenson into cases of recall of previous lives.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=bbrRLqPtPtoC&printsec=frontcover

Unit 5
What is the Dharma?, Sangharakshita, ISBN 189957901X, Windhorse Publications. Pp 57-63 explore the different kinds of suffering, including Conze's four kinds of concealed suffering.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/what-is-the-dharma/

Betrayal, James Hillman in Loose Ends (Spring Publications). In three parts starting here:
http://www.blacksunjournal.com/psychology/18_betrayal-part-1-of-3-by-james-hillman_2001.html

When Things Fall Apart, Pema Chodron, ISBN 1570623449. Referred to by Maitreyi in her talk.
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=sBRYTFo_CQMC

Unit 6
Sangharakshita has given two talks on Going for Refuge, one in 1978 entitled *Levels of Going for Refuge* and one in 1982 entitled *Dimensions of Going for Refuge*. They are both required listening if you wish to understand more deeply his thinking on the significance of Going for Refuge. You can access them both from Free Buddhist Audio.
Levels of Going for Refuge: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=137
Dimensions of Going for Refuge: https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=154

The History of My Going for Refuge, Sangharakshita, ISBN 0904766330, Windhorse Publications. Gives a more thorough and personal account of how Sangharakshita came to the realization that Going for Refuge is central to the Buddhist spiritual life.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=171
http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/history-refuge.pdf

Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition, Subhuti, Windhorse Publications. The earlier part of chapter 4, from which the above extract is taken, also places Going for Refuge in the context of the wider Buddhist tradition.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

2.5

The Way of Mindfulness

Contents

Module compiled by Vidyamala

This module has been designed to provide both a conceptual and an experiential introduction to the *Satipatthana Sutta*, as a key text on mindfulness from the Pali Canon.

To help deepen experience of *satipatthana* approaches to mindfulness this module includes home practice of both guided meditations and mindfulness in daily life. *Satipatthana* contemplation is a 'whole life' endeavour and it is important to cultivate mindfulness both on and off the cushion. You could approach this module as a kind of urban retreat. This will help you get the most out of it.

At the end of each week is a workbook for use with the home practice, to help you record and clarify the practices during the week between the group sessions.

The class structure for each week is as follows:

- Meditation or exercise.
- Discussion.
- The classes end with a chance to buddy up with another group member to go over the home practice for the next week and discuss how you will fit this into your life and possibly set up text, phone and/or email support for one another. After week one you will also have the chance to review home practice for the previous week in this part of the class.

A note on the overall approach
This course is designed to be *practical*.

A danger with *Satipatthana* contemplation is that we can approach the *sutta* with too literal a mind-set. The *sutta* has a structure that provides a 'snapshot' of any moment of time. It then identifies all the different aspects within that moment to give rise to deeper understanding of what it is like to have human experience and how we can use awareness to become completely free. But of course, life doesn't unfold as discreet moments. Rather, being alive is more like being submerged within a torrent of sense impressions, thoughts, emotions etc pouring through the moments. Sometimes they are chaotic, sometimes calmer, but there is always a great wealth of different experiences within any given moment.

If we are too literal we may get a little anxious about where our experience 'fits' within the map of the *sutta*. We attempt to map our experience exactly onto the map of the *sutta* and then get caught up in worrying about whether a certain mental event is '*citta* or dhamma'; or worrying about the distinction between *kaya* and *vedana* when in essence they almost co-arise.

So, during the course, there may be times when some of the boundaries between different dimensions to the *sutta* appear a little blurred. Try not to worry about this and understand that the whole approach of this module is an attempt to have a *lived experience* of getting *closer and closer to direct experience*. This trains us to use awareness to align all our behaviour and actions with Right View. When we are awake to what is happening in each moment we can then choose skilful responses rather than being trapped in unaware and habitual reactivity. This is the over-arching perspective of the *Satipatthana Sutta* and this Mitra study course is an attempt to honour this magnificent and extraordinary teaching from the Buddha.

Before the first class it is ideal to read over the *sutta* and listen to a talk by Vidyamala that goes over the *sutta* content and structure. Note that in one place in the talk Vidyamala mentions that *vedana* translates as 'sensation', but translates it as 'feeling' or 'feeling-tone' throughout the rest of this module. For clarity and consistency, she recommends using 'feeling' or 'feeling-tone' as the preferred translation of *vedana*.
http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=OM838

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to Vidyamala's talk on the *Satipatthana Sutta* if you have not done so before the class.

- Listen to the general awareness meditation six days out of seven and keep a diary of what you noticed during these practices. This guided meditation is aimed at cultivating non-reactive, present moment awareness of the body, the breath, sounds (as an example of a sense impression), thoughts and emotions. This kind of awareness is central to *satipatthana* contemplation.
http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M14

- Pay attention to what is happening and keep a diary of five aspects of sense experience you noticed each day; aspects that you really stopped and noticed. The aim is to begin to cultivate awareness within daily life.

Resources

Note that Appendix 1 includes:

- An abbreviated copy of the *Satipatthana Sutta* for reading out in class.
- An overview of the *sutta* that summarises the key aspects. Vidyamala talks through this document in her talk so please refer to this when listening.
- A transcript of Vidyamala's talk.

Optional extra reading

- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapters 1-5.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapters 1 and 2.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *general awareness meditation*. The first row is filled out as an example of how you might record your experience of the meditation.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Thursday 28th July *(sample)*	✓	I started out distracted and worrying about work. But I paid attention to the guidance and rested my awareness in my body and the flow of the breath and I was fascinated to discover that my distraction lessened as I stayed with my immediate sense experience. When I paid attention to the sounds I realised how I usually leave my body and go towards sounds and add a whole narrative about the cause of the sounds etc. It was quite different to stay grounded in my body and let the sounds be sense impressions flowing through my experience. The sounds were much less disruptive when I just let them be there rather than fighting them and longing for silence. I couldn't stop the sound of the traffic but I could change my attitude! I found it quite difficult to be aware of my thoughts without getting caught up with their content. It showed me how identified I am with my thinking and how rigid and stuck I can so easily become. I had moments of my thoughts flowing through my mind like clouds in the sky and I got a sense of how liberating it would be to live like this more often. I discovered how repetitive my thinking is as well! When I rested awareness in my emotions I quite quickly felt softer and more expansive. I was surprised! My emotions loosened up and I realised they are way less 'stuck' than I think. Overall the practice was a real revelation.
Day 1		
Day 2		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness

Diary for use when noticing *five aspects of sense experience*. The first row is filled out as an example of how you might record your experience.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:** **What five aspects of sense experience did you really notice?**
Thursday 28th July *(sample)*	✓	1. Stopping on way to work and looking up at the sky. Noticing the shapes of the clouds. 2. Listening to sounds while on the bus home from work. Noticing all the different sounds and letting them come and go. There was much more texture to the sounds than I had previously realised. 3. Stopping and smelling some flowers. It was lovely to stop thinking, and simply be with the sense of smell and enjoy it! 4. Making an intention to taste my supper as fully as I could. I noticed how I hardly ever give my attention to food in this way. It was fascinating to notice all the different flavours and I ate much slower than usual. 5. Feeling the water on my body in the shower. I formed an intention to be as present as possible to all the different sensations. It was an unexpected pleasure and, once again, I realise how usually I don't pay full attention to these simple daily activities 6.
Day 1		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Day 2		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What five aspects of sense experience did you really notice?
Day 3		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Day 4		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Day 5		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Day 6		1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

2.5.**2**

Introduction to the Body Contemplations

This unit provides an opportunity to deeply experience physical, embodied experience. This is an essential foundation of *satipatthana* contemplation. In the *sutta* quite a large section is devoted to this.

Mindfulness of Breathing is a key practice within Triratna. One of the aims this week is to learn how to deeply inhabit an *experience* of breathing as a way to become more mindful; rather than attending simply to an idea, or abstraction of breathing. Awareness of full-body breathing leads to interest and engagement with the Mindfulness of Breathing and other meditation practices.

Whenever there is a contracted physical, mental or emotional state in meditation and daily life, there will be subtle or gross 'breath holding'. Becoming aware of this and consciously releasing back into full body breathing can be a very good way to soften the body, mind and heart as a foundation for Dharma practice, and to cultivate flexibility and pliancy of mind/heart. The 'everyday mindfulness' practice this week will help us to become aware of this connection.

The three-diaphragm breathing enquiry practised in this unit is a way to investigate the experience of breathing within the whole body, with a particular emphasis on three key anatomical areas:

- The main central diaphragm that lies between the chest and the abdomen
- The pelvic diaphragm that lies at the base of the torso
- The vocal diaphragm that lies at the back of the mouth and the top of the windpipe.

When our breathing is relaxed and 'whole-body' then these three areas will all be soft and receptive to the flow of breathing.

Home practice for the coming week

- Do breath-based body scan (track 1) and/or the three diaphragm enquiry (track 2) each day and keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M15

- Notice moments of breath-holding during the day. Keep a diary of what you noticed each day. What caused you to go into inhibited breathing patterns?

Resources

Appendix 2 includes a summary of the body contemplations section of the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Optional extra material

- An audio file introducing the physiology of breathing (track 3). http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M15
- A document going into the physiology of breathing. http://www.breathworks-mindfulness.org.uk/images/PDF/information_on_breathing_Mindfulness_for_Health.pdf
- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapter 6.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapters 3 - 7.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *three diaphragm enquiry* and/or *breath-based body scan*.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:** **Which practice did you do? What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: Which practice did you do? What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 5		
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Diary for use with noticing *moments of breath-holding during the day*. The first row is filled out as an example of how you might record your experience.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: Notice moments of breath holding during the day. What caused you to go into inhibited breathing patterns?
Thursday 4th August *(sample)*	✓	• I caught myself holding my breath while standing in the queue for the checkout counter at the supermarket. • When I type I hold my breath. I never realised this before! • I noticed I held my breath when I was thinking of an argument I'd had with my partner. The more annoyed I got, the more I held my breath! Then I got more and more tense. It was a real eye opener to notice this and as I consciously relaxed my breath my mental states also calmed a little.
Day 1		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: Notice moments of breath holding during the day. What caused you to go into inhibited breathing patterns?
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		

2.5.**3**
Introduction to *Vedana*

Awareness of *vedana* is of vital importance in *satipatthana* contemplation. It provides us with a gap between *karma vipaka* (*vedana*) and karma (craving/aversion or faith) which creates future consequences. If we learn to experience *vedana* without automatically reacting with aversion to the unpleasant, craving to the pleasant, and confusion to the neutral, then we have the key to freedom. Awareness allows us to seize the moment and choose faith over craving/aversion and move from the wheel to the spiral.

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to *vedana* meditation each day and keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices. The meditation also includes becoming aware of neutral *vedana* to develop the practice.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M16

- Keep a diary of what *vedana* you notice in daily life.

Resources

Appendix 3 includes a summary of the *vedana* contemplation section of the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Optional extra reading

- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapter 7.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapter 8.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *vedana meditation.*

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 5		
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Notice *moments of vedana* during your day – the pleasant, painful or neutral feeling-tone that quickly arises on the basis of physical or mental stimulus. Usually we default to either aversion, when we have unpleasant *vedana*, or craving when we have pleasant *vedana*; and we may feel bored in the presence of neutral *vedana*. What is it like to 'wake up' to *vedana* and have a more vivid experience of direct experience?

A crucial aspect of *Satipatthana* practice is to get to know your direct experience. This is why we ask you to notice at least three experiences each day. (Of course there will be millions of moments of *vedana* but we are asking you to really notice at least three).

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Thursday 11th August *(sample)*	✓	1. Feeling painful sensations in my lower back. By acknowledging them I decided to move from my desk and stretch so I didn't get so strained and reactive. This felt new to me. Usually I tense against these painful feelings in my body and get cranky with myself and others. 2. Tasting an ice cream after work! It was pleasant. I noticed how usually I would crave more ice cream but by experiencing the taste and fascinating sensations of the ice cream in my mouth, and experiencing the pleasant flavours directly, I felt satisfied. Interesting! 3. Noticing irritation when someone I don't get on with came towards me. I became aware that I was experiencing unpleasant *vedana* based on seeing this person – opinions arising on the basis of the sense of sight. With this awareness I didn't go into a big inner drama about him. I stayed with the direct perception, the actual sense impressions, and immediately tension dissolved and eased.

		I still don't find it easy to be with this person but somehow it became much less 'sticky' when I caught my awareness before it defaulted into my usual inner grumbling and aversion.
Day 1		1. 2. 3.
Day 2		1. 2. 3.
Day 3		1. 2. 3.
Day 5		1. 2. 3.
Day 6		1. 2. 3.

2.5.**4**
What you Dwell on You Become

Re-visit the document in Appendix 3 summarising Contemplation of *Vedana*, focusing especially on the section on 'Pleasant feeling and the importance of joy' and the *nidana* chain graphic.

In this unit you'll learn how to identify and pay attention to *vedana* that contains the first glimmerings of freedom within it. Using awareness you can not only let go of reacting to *vedana* that could lead you into greed, hatred or delusion; but you can also learn to notice and then dwell upon *vedana* that has a quality of expansiveness within it. Then positive emotion as a karma/action will naturally arise and you can move up the spiral path.

The main point is that *positive emotion isn't random*. It starts somewhere. It starts with *vedana*. Learning the skill of really *knowing your vedana* means you can also develop the skill to cultivate positive emotion with more and more intentionality and ease.

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to 'unworldly' *vedana* meditation each day.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M17

- Keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices.

- Keep a diary of *vedana* that has the 'seeds of release' within it in daily life and what happens when you rest your awareness there.

Resources

Appendix 3 includes a summary of the *vedana* contemplation section of the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Optional extra reading

- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapter 7.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapter 8.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *'unworldly' vedana meditation.*

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Each day notice at least three experiences of *'unworldly vedana'* in your everyday life.

Keep a diary of *vedana* that has the 'seeds of release' within it in daily life and what happens when you rest your awareness there. These are sensations that have a feeling-tone of expansiveness: moments when you feel your heart open a little, or you feel a little lighter and more at ease. These moments of *vedana* are the seeds of expansive emotional states and it is important that we learn to recognise them, and value them, when they happen.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice?
Thursday 18th August *(sample)*	✓	1. Spending time with a friend. I noticed sensations of openness around my heart and I noticed pleasant sensations in my face from smiling. It was new to really pay attention to what this felt like rather than just getting carried away and over-excited. 2. I went for a walk in the park at lunchtime. It was sunny and warm. I sat on a bench for a while, doing nothing. I turned my phone off and soaked up the feelings of the sun on my skin and all the colours of the spring flowers. I noticed how the experience in my body changed as I relaxed into this experience. My body felt softer and my breathing became deeper and slower. It felt good to attend to these experiences in an immediate way rather than being lost in thoughts or worrying about my afternoon at work; or distracting myself by going on Facebook on my phone! 3. I decided to put on some classical music to see what effect that would have on me. I hardly ever do this so it was interesting to make time for this new experience. I chose something slow and melodic as I'd had a hectic day. At first I felt a bit numb and distracted. But gradually the music started to have a positive effect. I could feel the numbness dissolving a little and my heart felt softer and more open. My hands relaxed and my breathing eased. I felt moved. By the end of this session I felt completely different to how I felt at the beginning. This was a good discovery for me.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice?
Day 1		1. 2. 3.
Day 2		1. 2. 3.
Day 3		1. 2. 3.
Day 4		1. 2. 3.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice?
Day 5		1. 2. 3.
Day 6		1. 2. 3.

2.5.**5**
Introduction to *Citta*

Citta is:

- The 'shape' of the heart/mind.
- The state of the heart/mind – mood.
- Broad inclinations and tendencies.
- Ethical status of consciousness.

Citta is karmic and will therefore lead to future consequences so it is very important to 'know your mind' and to take responsibility for it.

Getting to know your *citta* without automatically judging it and reacting to it is a crucial element of *Satipatthana* contemplation. Awareness itself is transformative in this regard. Becoming *aware* of your mind means you are no longer lost in it and over-identified with its content.

Crucially, by learning to discern the state of your *citta* you can learn to dis-identify with negative states and to pay more attention to positive states so they naturally build and grow. This is how transformation and liberation occurs. (This can be described as "what we dwell on we become", as introduced in Unit 4). Or to borrow from the *Dvedhavitakka Sutta* – the two sorts of thinking:

> Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with non-ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmfulness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmlessness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmfulness.
>
> Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with non-ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with non-ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmlessness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmfulness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmlessness.

The key aspect here is: *"Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking & pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness"*. This is central to all Buddhist practice and can be seen very clearly in the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to *citta* meditation each day.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M18

- Keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices.

- Keep a diary of moods. Notice what happens when you bring awareness to your mood in daily life - to look 'at' your mind rather than 'from' it. It may not be pleasant but is it transformative in the sense of taking some of the energy away from negative states? And does it allow positive moods to strengthen?

Resources

Appendix 4 includes a summary of the *citta* contemplation section of the *Satipatthana Sutta*.

Optional extra reading

- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapter 8.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapter 9.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *citta meditation*.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Keep a diary of moods. Notice what happens when you bring awareness to your mood in daily life - to look 'at' your mind rather than 'from' it. It may not be pleasant, but is it transformative in the sense of taking some of the energy away from negative states? And does it allow positive moods to strengthen?

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Thursday 25th August *(sample)*	✓	Negative mood: I work up in a bad mood today. Tired, stressed and irritable. I caught myself dreading the day and expecting it to be awful. So I decided to step back a little and be less over-identified with my thoughts and mood. It wasn't easy but it did help. I felt less of a victim and more open to the possibility that my mood might change and that the day wasn't necessarily a write-off before it had barely begun! And, guess what, it did change and after lunch I felt great. It was good to then remember how I'd felt in the morning and to see how my decision to not over-identify with my mood set my day off on a different track. Positive mood: I visited a friend today who has just come out of hospital. He was obviously feeling tender physically and this gave him a quality of tenderness emotionally as well. I decided to try to tune into his mood rather than just trying to 'cheer him up'. We became very quiet and still together and dropped into a kind of peace that was quite remarkable. We stayed in this space for quite a while and the positive mood between us seemed to get stronger and stronger. When I left I felt very different from the somewhat ragged person who had arrived at the start of the visit. And I know he felt different too as he expressed his gratitude and appreciation to me and he looked much softer and at peace.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Day 1		Positive mood: Negative mood:
Day 2		Positive mood: Negative mood:
Day 3		Positive mood: Negative mood:
Day 4		Positive mood: Negative mood:
Day 5		Positive mood: Negative mood:

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Day 6		Positive mood: Negative mood:

2.5.**6**

A Penny for your Thoughts

In this unit we home in on the foundation of the previous one and also move into the territory of *dhammas* - often translated as 'mind objects'. (We will go into the more general and over-arching way *dhammas* can be understood more in Unit 7). The aim of this week is to develop some *pragmatic skills* for working with mental/emotional events as we align ourselves with the Dharma. The intention here is to develop some simple and constructive ways to work with the mind both in and out of meditation.

One useful analogy for the distinction between mindfulness of *citta* and mindfulness of mind objects is to imagine you are looking out from a hill-top at a vast plain populated with various animals. The perspective of *citta* is to see out across the whole plain and get a general sense of the landscape: the colours, shapes, forms etc with a broad perspective. If you look through a pair of binoculars you can pick out the details of individual animals in a lot of detail. This is the perspective of getting to know your mental events with quite a degree of specificity – to clearly discern the contents of your mind. On the basis of this clear knowing, you can then choose how to respond, rather than being trapped in habitual reactivity. This skill of working creatively with the contents of the mind is the main learning objective for this week.

It is also important to **recognise and value positive and skilful mental and emotional events** when they occur. Positive emotional states can build when we learn how to work with and reduce the hold of negative mental and emotional states using the methods introduced in the exercise part of the class. It's as if, once the clouds/fog of defiled thinking subsides, the light of the Dharma can naturally shine when you attend to the seeds of release and expansiveness within you with intentional, non-grasping awareness, aligned with Right View.

Note

For practical purposes, the thinking and emotional aspects of experience are conflated in the exercises this week as, in reality, they are so interwoven that it makes sense to work on them together. There are very few thoughts that don't have some degree of emotional tone; and very few emotions that don't have associated thoughts. Of course very elevated positive emotion can be quite free of mental activity, but most of us will benefit from learning how to manage the usual discursive mental/emotional 'chatter' that tends to dominate our minds/hearts.

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to the thoughts/emotions meditation each day.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M19

- Keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices.

- Keep a diary of what you notice as you use the two main approaches to mindfulness of thoughts/emotions in daily life.

Resources
Appendix 5 includes tips and tools showing different ways to mindfully work with thoughts and emotions.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *thoughts/emotions meditation*.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:** **What did you notice?** **If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Keep a diary of what you notice as you use the two main approaches to mindfulness of thoughts/emotions in daily life.

1. Acknowledging and letting go. What happens when you allow thoughts/emotions to come and go like the weather?
2. Breathing *with* intense thoughts and emotions and giving them space so they can naturally subside. What happens if you 'turn towards' more difficult emotions and breathe with whatever you are experiencing?

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Thursday 1st September *(sample)*	✓	Letting thoughts come and go: I spent time on the bus today really 'watching' my thoughts as if they were a movie, or clouds passing across the sky. I was curious to gain some perspective on my thoughts rather than it just being like a radio station chattering on incessantly. I realised that most of my thinking is inconsequential, repetitive, unimportant rubbish. It felt great to sit back and ground my awareness in my body and my breath, with a warm sense of curiosity. Then I allowed my thoughts to pass through my mind like the weather, rather than getting carried away and intoxicated with the content of my thoughts, as I so often do. I felt much more spacious as a consequence. It was fascinating to neither push the thoughts away, nor get seduced by them, but rather to let them flow by as mental events. They did calm quite considerably as I did this, which I also found interesting. Breathing with intense emotion: My grandmother is sick at the moment and I am very close to her. I keep worrying and no matter how much I try to let go of the worry it just comes back. So I decided to 'turn towards' the worry and let myself feel the emotions of love, fear, hope, anxiety etc. I grounded my awareness deep in my body and breathed with these emotions as they swelled up within me. It was fascinating to experience what happened when I stopped resisting and fighting these emotions and also stopped 'worrying about worrying' and

		simply experienced the emotions directly. Gradually I calmed down and the emotions of love started to dominate rather than the more surface feelings of anxiety and fear. I accepted that of course I am worried about her because I love her so deeply. This was quite a beautiful experience.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		
Day 6		

2.5.**7**
Contemplation of *Dhammas*
Conditionality, and the Hindrances/Awakening factors

The *dhammas* section of the *Satipatthana* is quite extensive and contains five sub-sections. These can be categorised as follows:

Specific mental qualities

- The five hindrances.
- The seven awakening factors.

Analyses of experience into specific categories

- The five aggregates.
- The six sense-spheres.
- The four noble truths.

These are **progressive**. Anālayo says that in the fourth *satipatthana* there is clearly 'a temporal progression towards realisation involved': from the hindrances through to the noble truths.

> Based on a sufficient degree of mental stability through overcoming the hindrances, contemplation of *dhammas* proceeds to an analysis of subjective personality, in terms of the five aggregates, and to an analysis of the relation between subjective personality and the outer world, in terms of the six-senses. These two analyses form a convenient basis for developing the awakening factors, whose successful establishment constitutes a necessary condition for awakening. To awaken is to fully understand the four noble truths "as they really are", this being the final exercise among the contemplations of dhammas and the successful culmination of *satipatthana* practice.[1]

Five hindrances → five aggregates → six sense-spheres → seven awakening factors → four noble truths

Contemplation of dhammas is also **particularly concerned with recognising the conditioned nature of the phenomena under observation**. In fact, the main instruction for most of the contemplations of dhammas directly mentions conditionality, while in the previous *satipatthana*s this happens only in the refrain, i.e. the other sections of the sutta simply cultivate awareness of the presence or absence of experience of body/*vedana*/*citta*, so

1 Anālayo, *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realisation*, pp. 184-185, Windhorse Publications, 2003.

this is a very interesting development in this section. Not only is the Buddha asking us to be aware, he is now asking us to be aware of the *conditioned nature* of experience and try to create conditions within our lives whereby the unskilful is less likely to arise and the skilful is more likely to be strengthened. We are also being asked to see into the truth that **everything is conditioned**, i.e. everything arises in dependence on causes and conditions and that nothing exists independently, in and of itself.

This aspect of the *dhammas* section is fascinating as *sati* is a receptive quality of awareness and most of the *sutta* is based on the notion that awareness itself is transformative when aligned with Right View. But here we are making our awareness more consciously intelligent by also reflecting on how our experience arises in dependence on certain conditions, and how *Satipatthana* contemplation includes more actively creating conditions for the future arising of the skilful and the future non-arising of the unskilful. Sati-sampajanna is an important term in this regard as it includes both present moment awareness and clear comprehension/continuity of purpose:

> Despite their different emphases, mindfulness and clear comprehension of purpose, often appear as a compound term in Pali, **Sati-sampajanna** and the two words can be considered to be so close in meaning as to be virtually interchangeable. These is no precise word in English for this kind of recollection, and it's difficult to come up with a definition that evokes its spirit. One might say that it is going about one's daily life without ever forgetting one's higher purpose ... The subtle interplay between awareness and recollection has the effect of integrating one's whole experience and continually re-establishing a sense of harmony and direction. **Sati-sampajanna** has a balancing and integrating quality that permeates every area of experience, to bring about a whole way of life, concentrated not so much on a future goal as on the dynamic cumulative nature of the path itself.[2]

The hindrances and awakening factors are the focus in the home practice for this unit. In some of the versions of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the hindrances and the awakening factors are all that are listed under the contemplation of dhammas. Therefore this is the unanimously accepted core of the contemplation of dhammas, i.e. the five hindrances and seven awakening factors. The meditation for this week is about developing awareness of how these two sets of experiences play out in life, as they are so practically useful on the path to ever-greater wisdom and compassion. As in other sections of the *dhammas* contemplation, **the conditioned nature** of the hindrances/awakening factors is also of crucial importance.

Home practice for the coming week

- Listen to the hindrances /awakening factors meditation each day.
  http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=M20

  You may like to use the handout in Appendix 6 to help you in your practice. You could place it on the floor in front of you and refer to it within the meditation, if you find it helpful.

- Keep a meditation diary of what you noticed in these practices

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2 *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, Windhorse pubs, page 23.

- Keep a diary of what you notice in daily life re the presence/absence of hindrances and awakening factors and the conditions that gave rise to these experiences.

- Read the concluding chapters from both Sangharakshita's and Anālayo's books as preparation for next unit.

Resources
Appendix 6 includes:

- An overview of the *dhammas* contemplations.
- Hindrances and Awakening Factors handout for use during meditation.

Optional extra reading

- *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realization,* Anālayo, chapters 9-14.
- *Living with Awareness*, Sangharakshita, chapters 10-15.

Meditation
Diary for use with the *hindrances / awakening factors meditation.*

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:** **What did you notice?** **If you didn't meditate, why not?**
Day 1		
Day 2		
Day 3		
Day 4		
Day 5		

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments: What did you notice? If you didn't meditate, why not?
Day 6		

Everyday Mindfulness
Keep a diary of what you notice in daily life regarding the presence or absence of hindrances and awakening factors, as well as the conditions that gave rise to these experiences.

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Thursday 28th July *(sample)*	✓	Hindrance: had periods today where I was back in familiar patterns of restless and anxiety. It was very helpful to simply name it as such rather than being lost in it. I stopped and said to myself. "This is restlessness and anxiety. It is one of the hindrances the Buddha identified as common to many people, so I am not unusual in experiencing these states." (That really helped as sometimes I think I am a hopeless case! It was helpful to name these mental states as conditioned phenomena that often arise when trying to live a human life in this crazy world). When I looked at the conditions that gave rise to the restlessness and anxiety I quickly identified them as: not taking a break when starting to get stressed; habits of holding my breath which leads to more tension; a tendency to obsess about getting 'to the end of the list' (utterly futile of course); a loss of the ability to prioritise which means I jump from one activity to the next without conscious choice. I decided to stop every hour and do a few minutes of breathing meditation to try prevent the future arising of restlessness and anxiety – or at least reduce the hold of this hindrance on me. Awakening Factor: I felt moments of joy today! Often when this happens I think it is a fluke, so it was helpful to think of the conditions that gave rise to this positive emotion. I could see it arose from these conditions: going to bed early last night and getting good sleep; meditating this morning and doing the Metta Bhavana; deciding to cycle to the park; once at the park I spent time sitting on a bench watching the ducks and looking up at the clear, blue sky; a heron flew over and I thought my heart would leap out of my body as it was so beautiful. Then I stayed with the emotion that arose from that experience and imagined my whole body was a sponge soaking up all that joy.

		It was a fantastic experience and striking to consider how I would never have had it if I'd gone about my day in my usual "head down, stuff to do" way. By simply creating conditions that enabled me to be much more aware of my environment I was able to have my 'heron moment' and my whole day felt different as a consequence.

Day and date	**Did you do the practice?**	**Comments:**
Day 1		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:
Day 2		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:
Day 3		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:
Day 4		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:

Day and date	Did you do the practice?	Comments:
Day 5		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:
Day 6		Hindrance: Awakening Factor:

2.5.**8**
Keep Calmly Knowing Change

This unit discusses the whole *sutta* and how it holds together, as well as the main themes.

Sangharakshita's and Anālayo's concluding chapters provide excellent summaries. Please read these before this class.

Anālayo's Summary
Anālayo sums up the whole *sutta* as *Keep Calmly Knowing Change*[3] as the basis for discussion.

Keep = continuity (diligence in definition verse) and comprehensivity (internally and externally in refrain)

Calmly = the need in definition and refrain to undertake *satipatthana* contemplation 'free from desires and discontent' and 'free from any clinging or dependence'.

Knowing = bare mindfulness (sati) combined with clearly knowing (sampajanna) in definition verse; and the refrain which speaks of contemplating merely for the sake of 'bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness'.

Change = the knowing is directed to the arising and passing away of body, feelings, *citta* and dhammas. This helps lead to an understanding of conditionality as well as being a gateway to all three laksanas. This growth of insight into the unsatisfactory and empty nature of conditioned existence, based on direct realisation of impermanence, is what Anālayo is referring to with 'change'.

Sangharakshita's Summary
Sangharakshita refers to all the teachings of the *satipatthana* as having one end in view: Transformation. He says that the defining principle of Buddhism is that states of consciousness never arise haphazardly but are always the product of definite conditioning factors.

3 Anālayo, *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realisation*, Windhorse Publications, 2003, page 267ff.

Translation of the *Satipatthana Sutta*
By Nanamoli, with some adaptation by Anālayo

This is slightly abbreviated for reading out in the class. Some of the repetitions of the refrain have been edited. For a full version please see Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realisation*, Anālayo, Windhorse Publications, 2003. Pp 3-13.*

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living in the Kuru country at a town of the Kurus named Kammasadhamma. There the Blessed One said this:

[DIRECT PATH]
"This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realization of *Nibbana*, namely, the four *satipatthanas*.

[DEFINITION]
"What are the four? Here, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. In regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas*, diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desires and discontent in regard to the world.

[BREATHING]
"And how does he in regard to the body abide contemplating the body? Here, gone to the forest, or to the root of a tree, or to an empty hut, he sits down; having folded his legs crosswise, set his body erect, and established mindfulness in front of him, mindful he breathes in, mindful he breathes out.

"Breathing in long, he knows 'I breathe in long', breathing out long, he knows 'I breathe out long.' Breathing in short, he knows 'I breathe in short,' breathing out short, he knows 'I breathe out short'. He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body,' he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body.' He trains thus: 'I shall breathe in calming the bodily formation,' he trains thus: 'I shall breathe out calming the bodily formation.'

"Just as a skilled turner or his apprentice, when making a long turn, knows 'I make a long turn', or when making a short turn knows 'I make a short turn' so too, breathing in long, he knows 'I breathe in long' ... (continue as above). . . .

[POSTURES]
"Again, when walking, he knows 'I am walking'; when standing, he knows 'I am standing'; when sitting, he knows 'I am sitting'; when lying down, he knows 'I am lying down'; or he knows accordingly however his body is disposed.

[ACTIVITIES]
"Again, when going forward and returning he acts clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away he acts clearly knowing; when flexing and extending his limbs he acts clearly knowing; when wearing his robes and carrying his outer robe and bowl he acts clearly knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food, and tasting he acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating he acts clearly knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, and keeping silent he acts clearly knowing.

[ANATOMICAL PARTS]
"Again, he reviews this same body up from the soles of the feet and down from the top of the hair, enclosed by skin, as full of many kinds of impurity thus: 'in this body there are head-hairs, body-hairs, nails, teeth, skin, flesh, sinews, bones, bone-marrow, kidneys, heart, liver, diaphragm, spleen, lungs, bowels, mesentery, contents of the stomach, faeces, bile, phlegm, pus, blood, sweat, fat, tears, grease, spittle, snot, oil of the joints and urine.'

"Just as though there were a bag with an opening at both ends full of many sorts of grain, such as hill rice, red rice, beans, peas, millet, and white rice, and a man with good eyes were to open it and review it thus: 'this is hill rice, this is red rice, these are beans, these are peas, this is millet, this is white rice'; in this way he reviews this same body ...

[ELEMENTS]
"Again, he reviews this same body, however it is placed, however disposed, as consisting of elements thus: in this body there are the earth element, the water element, the fire element, and the air element'.

"Just as though a skilled butcher or his apprentice had killed a cow and was seated at a cross-roads with it cut up into pieces; in this way he reviews this same body ...

[CORPSE IN DECAY]
"Again, as though he were to see a corpse thrown aside in a charnel ground - one, two, or three days dead, bloated, livid, and oozing matter ... being devoured by crows, hawks, vultures, dogs, jackals, or various kinds of worms ... a skeleton with flesh and blood, held together with sinews ... a fleshless skeleton smeared with blood, held together with sinews ... a skeleton without flesh and blood, held together with sinews ... disconnected bones scattered in all directions ... bones bleached white, the colour of hells ... bones heaped up, more than a year old ... bones rotten and crumbling to dust - he compares this same body with it thus: 'this body too is of the same nature, it will be like that, it is not exempt from that fate'

[REFRAIN]
"In this way, in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body internally ... externally ... both internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in the body. Mindfulness that 'there is a body' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That too is how in regard to the body he abides contemplating the body.

[FEELINGS]
"And how does he in regard to feelings abide contemplating feelings?

"Here, when feeling a pleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel a pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unpleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel an unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a neutral feeling he knows 'I feel a neutral feeling'.

"When feeling a worldly pleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel a worldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly pleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel an unworldly pleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly unpleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel a worldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling an unworldly unpleasant feeling, he knows 'I feel an unworldly unpleasant feeling'; when feeling a worldly neutral feeling, he knows 'I feel a worldly neutral feeling'; when feeling an unworldly neutral feeling, he knows 'I feel an unworldly neutral feeling.'

[REFRAIN]
"In this way, in regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in feelings. Mindfulness that 'there is feeling' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how in regard to feelings he abides contemplating feelings.

[MIND]
"And how does he in regard to the mind abide contemplating the mind?

"Here he knows a lustful mind to be 'lustful', and a mind without lust to be 'without lust'; he knows an angry mind to be 'angry', and a mind without anger to be 'without anger'; he knows a deluded mind to be 'deluded', and a mind without delusion to be 'without delusion'; he knows a contracted mind to be 'contracted', and a distracted mind to be 'distracted'; he knows a great mind to be 'great', and a narrow mind to be 'narrow'; he knows a surpassable mind to be 'surpassable', and an unsurpassable mind to be 'unsurpassable'; he knows a concentrated mind to be 'concentrated', and an unconcentrated mind to be 'unconcentrated'; he knows a liberated mind to be 'liberated', and an unliberated mind to be 'unliberated.'

[REFRAIN]
"In this way, in regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in regard to the mind. Mindfulness that "there is a mind' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. That is how in regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind.

[HINDRANCES]
"And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas*. Here in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five hindrances. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five hindrances?

"If sensual desire is present in him he knows 'there is sensual desire in me' if sensual desire is not present in him he knows 'there is no sensual desire in me'; and he knows how unarisen

sensual desire can arise, how arisen sensual desire can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed sensual desire can be prevented.

"If aversion is present in him, he knows 'there is aversion in me'; if aversion is not present in him, he knows 'there is no aversion in me'; and he knows how unarisen aversion can arise, how arisen aversion can be re moved, and how a future arising of the removed aversion can be prevented.

"If sloth-and-torpor is present in him he knows 'there is sloth-and-torpor in me'; if sloth-and-torpor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no sloth-and-torpor in me'; and he knows how unarisen sloth-and-torpor can arise, how arisen sloth-and-torpor can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed sloth-and-torpor can be prevented.

"If restlessness-and-worry is present in him, he knows 'there is restlessness-and-worry in me'; if restlessness-and-worry is not present in him, he knows 'there is no restlessness-and-worry in me'; and he knows how unarisen restlessness-and-worry can arise, how arisen restlessness-and-worry can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed restlessness-and-worry can be prevented.

"If doubt is present in him, he knows 'there is doubt in me'; if doubt is not present in him, he knows 'there is no doubt in me'; and he knows how unarisen doubt can arise, how arisen doubt can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed doubt can be prevented.

[AGGREGATES]
"Again, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five aggregates of clinging. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the five aggregates of clinging?

"Here he knows, such is material form, such its arising, such its passing away; such is feeling, such its arising, such its passing away; such is cognition, such its arising, such its passing away; such are volitions, such their arising, such their passing away; such is consciousness, such its arising, such its passing away.'

[SENSE-SPHERES]
'Again, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the six internal and external sense-spheres?

"Here he knows the eye, he knows forms, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

"He knows the ear, he knows sounds, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

"He knows the nose, he knows odours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

"He knows the tongue, he knows flavours, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

'He knows the body, he knows tangibles, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter can be prevented.

"He knows the mind, he knows mind-objects, and he knows the fetter that arises dependent on both, and he also knows how an unarisen fetter can arise, how an arisen fetter can be removed, and how a future arising of the removed fetter cart be prevented.

[AWAKENING FACTORS]
"Again, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the seven awakening factors. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the seven awakening factors?

"Here, if the mindfulness awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the mindfulness awakening factor in me'; if the mindfulness awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no mindfulness awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen mindfulness awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen mindfulness awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the investigation-of-dhammas awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the investigation-of-*dhammas* awakening factor in me'; if the investigation-of-*dhammas* awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no investigation-of-*dhammas* awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen investigation-of-*dhammas* awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen investigation-of-*dhammas* awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the energy awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the energy awakening factor in me; if the energy awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no energy awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen energy awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen energy awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the joy awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the joy awakening factor in me; if the joy awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no joy awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen joy awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen joy awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the tranquillity awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the tranquillity awakening factor in me'; if the tranquillity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no tranquillity awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen tranquillity awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen tranquillity awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the concentration awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the concentration awakening factor in me'; if the concentration awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no concentration awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen concentration awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen concentration awakening factor can be perfected by development.

"If the equanimity awakening factor is present in him, he knows 'there is the equanimity awakening factor in me'; if the equanimity awakening factor is not present in him, he knows 'there is no equanimity awakening factor in me'; he knows how the unarisen equanimity awakening factor can arise, and how the arisen equanimity awakening factor can be perfected by development.

[FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS]
"Again in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths. And how does he in regard to *dhammas* abide contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths?

"Here he knows as it really is, 'this is *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is, 'this is the arising of *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is, 'this is the cessation of *dukkha*'; he knows as it really is, 'this is the way leading to the cessation of *dukkha*.'

[REFRAIN]
"In this way, in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* internally ... externally ... internally and externally. He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in *dhammas*. Mindfulness that 'there are *dhammas*' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness. And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world. "That is how in regard to *dhammas* he abides contemplating *dhammas* in terms of the four noble truths.

[PREDICTION]
"If anyone should develop these four *satipatthana*s in such a way for seven years, one of two fruits could be expected for his: either final knowledge here and now or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning. Let alone seven years ... six years ... five years ... four years ... three years ... two years ... one year ... seven months ... six months ... five months ... four months ... three months ... two months ... one month ... half a month ... if anyone should develop these four *satipatthana*s in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for his: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning. So it was with reference to this that it was said:

[PATH]
"This is the direct path for the purification of beings, for the surmounting of sorrow and lamentation, for the disappearance of *dukkha* and discontent, for acquiring the true method, for the realisation of *Nibbana*, namely, the four *satipatthanas*."

That is what the Blessed One said. And everyone was satisfied and delighted in the Blessed One's words.

Overview of the *Satipatthana Sutta*
By Vidyamala

Please refer to this when listening to her talk either before or after the first class. She goes through these next four pages in the talk.

Sati = mindfulness/awareness.
(U)Patthana = to be present with/placing near.
Satipatthana = presence of mindfulness, attending with mindfulness

In the *sutta* the term *satipatthana* has such meanings as:

- Four ways of attending mindfully.
- Four presences of mindfulness.
- Four ways of establishing mindfulness.
- Four ways to develop the mind of a Buddha.

A Direct Path to Overcome *Dukkha*

Keep Calmly Knowing Change
How Anālayo sums up the main thrust of *satipatthana* (page 267 of his book).

Keep = continuity and effort required to maintain *satipatthana* contemplation, to remain present.

Calmly = becoming free from being driven by desires and aversions to experience.

Knowing = quality of intelligent awareness – using faculty of self-reflexive awareness to move towards knowledge and wisdom.

Change = Insight into the true nature of things. Buddhism in one word = Impermanence/anicca (Sangharakshita). It is a mark of conditioned existence – it runs through everything (as well as the other two marks/ laksanas of insubstantiality & unsatisfactoriness). Learn to live with a sense of *flow* and use awareness to guide that flow towards freedom.

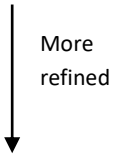
Three Main Elements of the *sutta*
The *sutta* has three main elements in its dramatic structure.

1. Definition
This is at the start of the *sutta*. It lists the attitudes to bring to *satipatthana* practice:

- *Appropriate effort* – diligence (atapi).
- *Intelligence and clarity applied to what is coming through senses* – clearly knowing (sampajanna).
- *Knowing right now* – mindful (sati).
- *Letting go of being a slave to likes and dislikes* – free from desires and discontent in regard to the world (abhijjhadomanassa).

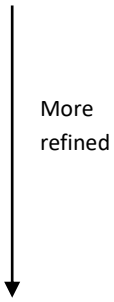
2. Four Objects of Awareness

- Body.
- *Vedana* (feelings or feeling-tone).
- *Citta* (shape of mind/heart, mood).
- *Dhammas* (mental and emotional events seen from perspective of the Dhamma).



3. Refrain
This happens between each section like a drum beat. It lists ways to develop perspective and insight.

- *Internally / externally*. Self / other.
- *Arising / passing away*. Impermanence, insubstantiality, unsatisfactoriness, which are the three laksanas, or marks of conditioned existence.
- *Mindfulness enough for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness*. Don't become caught up with experience.
- *Independent, not clinging to anything in the world*. Mindfulness is cultivated and sustained without any clinging - simply for sake of gaining Enlightenment.



Overall Context and Approach of the *Satipatthana Sutta*
Practising according to methods outlined in *sutta* rest on knowledge that we *want to be free*. We have already tasted freedom in some way to embark on the path. We can rest our practice on this quality of **faith**.

Luminosity and openness are **natural** when we stop creating confusion and contraction in our minds.

Movement towards the light is something we can recognise within all life and within us. The *sutta* helps us align our heart/minds with this and gradually become more and more *free, awake, enlightened*.

Mindfulness / awareness = the key
Also, by implication, **love.**

> From my own experience there is no difference between mindfulness and loving kindness. Think about it. When you are fully loving, aren't you also mindful? When you are fully mindful, is this not also the essence of love?
>
> - Dipa Ma.[4]

Sati transforms the mind by its very nature, its presence. When we are aware our experience changes from being blind to being conscious.

Sati is the middle way between suppression and reaction.[5]

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4 *Dipa Ma: the life and legacy of a Buddhist Master*, Amy Schmidt.
5 Reaction is sometimes spoken of as indulgence or over-identifying with experience.

> Important aspets of *sati* are bare and equanimous receptivity, combined with an alert, broad, and open state of mind.[6]
>
> - Anālayo.

This middle way allows *space and choice* to open up within the flow of experience. The fog of defilements can settle. The mud of murky water can settle to the bottom, leaving the water more clear and still. We can learn to rest within a sense of space where we are less suppressing/reactive and there is more **choice**.

We can **choose where we rest our awareness.**

Buddhism teaches: **what you dwell on you become.**

Rest on **seeds of skilfulness, openness, release.**

By laws of conditioned co-production, quite naturally become
Enlightened, awake, wise, compassionate.

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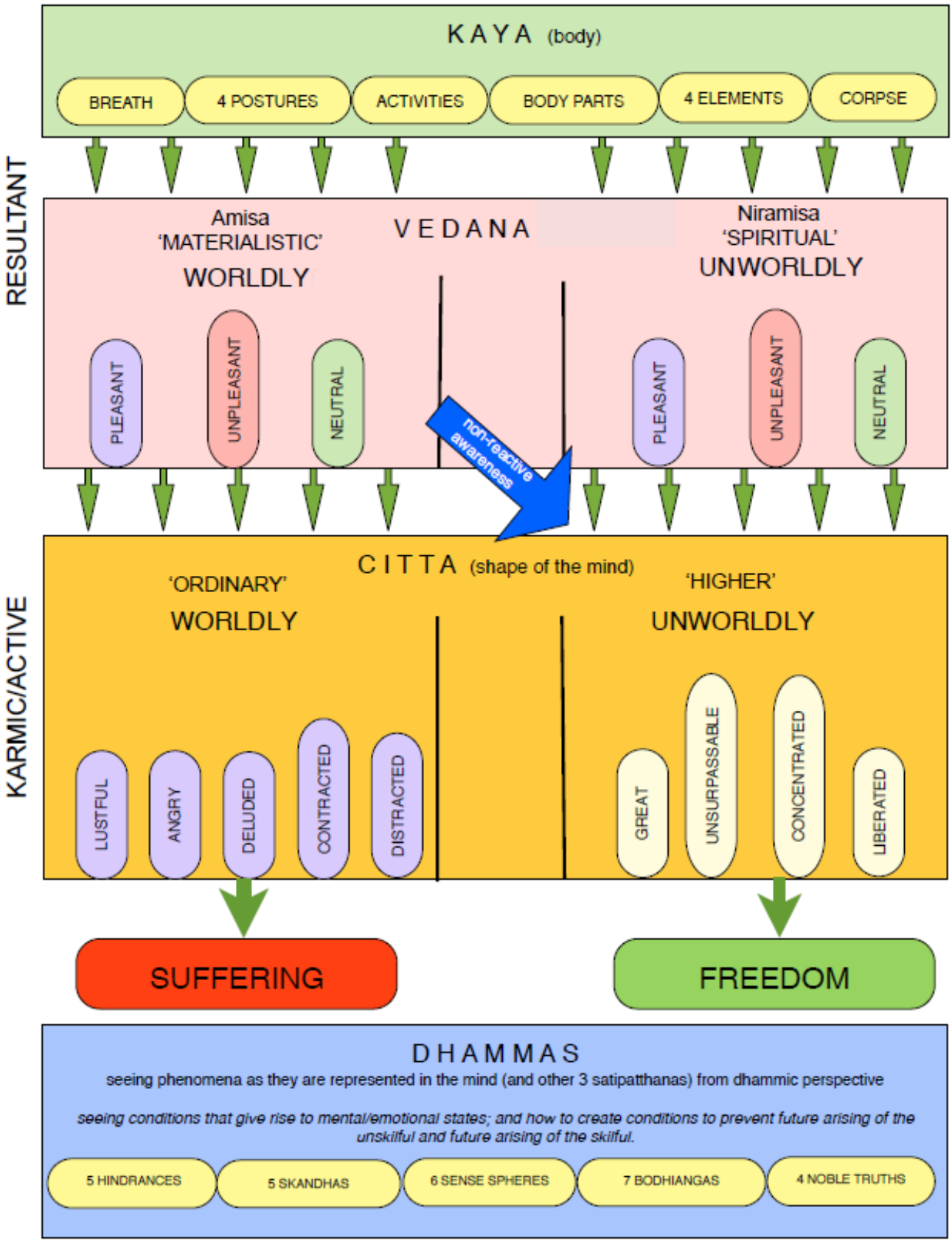
[6] Anālayo, *Satipatthana: The Direct Path to Realisation*, p. 267, Windhorse Publications, 2003.


KAYA (body)
BREATH
4 POSTURES
ACTIVITIES
BODY PARTS
4 ELEMENTS
CORPSE
RESULTANT
Amisa
'MATERIALISTIC'
WORLDLY
VEDANA
Niramisa
'SPIRITUAL'
UNWORLDLY
PLEASANT
UNPLEASANT
NEUTRAL
non-reactive awareness
PLEASANT
UNPLEASANT
NEUTRAL
CITTA (shape of the mind)
'ORDINARY'
WORLDLY
'HIGHER'
UNWORLDLY
KARMIC/ACTIVE
LUSTFUL
ANGRY
DELUDED
CONTRACTED
DISTRACTED
GREAT
UNSURPASSABLE
CONCENTRATED
LIBERATED
SUFFERING
FREEDOM
DHAMMAS
seeing phenomena as they are represented in the mind (and other 3 satipatthanas) from dhammic perspective
seeing conditions that give rise to mental/emotional states; and how to create conditions to prevent future arising of the unskilful and future arising of the skilful.
5 HINDRANCES
5 SKANDHAS
6 SENSE SPHERES
7 BODHIANGAS
4 NOBLE TRUTHS

Talk on the *Satipatthana Sutta*

This is a lightly edited transcript of Vidyamala's talk providing an overview of the Satipatthana Sutta*. It was given on retreat at Taraloka 2015 and goes through the handout above.*

This is the 'Big Picture' introduction to the *Satipatthana Sutta*. Then hopefully when we come to do the specific aspects of it, you'll understand where it all fits in to the overall context.

If you want to do reading, these are two very good books: Anālayo's book, *Satipatthana: the Direct Path to Realisation,* and Sangharakshita's *Living with Awareness,* which is his commentary on the *sutta*. These are the two bibles I recommend you read. But, on that note, it's interesting on a retreat like this to reduce input, so we can look at our heart, mind, reactions, our own tendencies – coming closer and closer to this bundle of habits we call ourselves.

With little outside input, the turning the mirror back on ourselves becomes purer and clearer, and we can see ourselves more directly.

I'm not saying don't read, but I'm saying "think about it". Some of us are compulsive readers. It's like eating, we can use words like "junk food". Ask yourself "do I need to read?" If you feel it would be helpful see if it can be spiritual reading, rather than compulsive reading. So read something that will raise your consciousness and educate you.

Reducing input is a big part of what we do, which is why we have silence, why we come away from our normal lives, why we sort of unplug from the outside world so we get this opportunity to see into our own nature with much more purity and clarity.

The overall context and approach is very beautiful I find. I love this text, it's pure, it's simple, it describes how we can free own minds and hearts in very practical ways it's a very practical *sutta*. The overall context is: we are aligning ourselves with the natural way of things, with Reality, with 'the way things are'. The approach of this *Sutta* is that we relax into that. We have to put effort in obviously, just to work on our unskilful habits.

But the overall thrust is that the natural way of things is here right now. Reality is here right now. The potential for awakening is here right now.

It's as if there is a clear blue sky and all of our habits, our mental habits, our *samskaras*, what we have brought from the past, are like turbulent clouds. Usually we identify with the turbulent clouds as if that's all there is.

If you have been in a plane, when you're going through the clouds, when you look out the window it's as if that is all there is, these great cumulus clouds. Then you break out of that and there is the clear blue sky, which had been there all along, but when you are in the clouds you don't know that. So our normal way of living is in that point of flying in the clouds and you think that is all there is.

What the Buddha is saying is that those clouds, those habits, that way of being, is not all there is, in fact that it is a delusion, and identifying with it is the source of all our suffering. What we can learn to do instead is to identify with the clear blue sky of the mind. Let the clouds be there, let them come, let them go.

So it's a very interesting approach to the spiritual life, where we are relaxing into something innate, and we are also putting in the work of changing our habits, so we are not identifying with the clouds, but we are releasing the clouds. So it's a very interesting kind of effort. We will do some work around balanced effort during the retreat. How do you actually do that? How do you apply intention, apply effort, but the effort is in order to relax, rather than the effort to grasp onto something different.

We are learning to dis-identify with what we are experiencing, the conditioned arising. Usually what we do is identify with that as if it is the only thing. So you are having an angry state, you think "I am anger"; you don't even think that, you just are anger, and it feels incredibly solid and real.

With *satipatthana* practice you are learning to rest back, and to note the arising and passing of an angry emotion. That is very different from being an angry person. You are a person with the potential for awakening, who is having a passing angry emotion.

Another way that Anālayo talks about it, he says *"sati, which is mindfulness, is the middle way between repression and reaction"*.

So we are learning how to balance those two responses to life. At Breathworks we talk about the middle way being between blocking and drowning which is a similar kind of thing. Some of us are habitual blockers - something comes along and we turn away, we don't want that. Some are more inclined to drown - we just tend to fall into whatever arises and get overwhelmed. A middle way between denial and overwhelm is another way to talk about this middle way between suppression and reaction. Hopefully this week you will get a lot more agile at catching the arising of either one or these two habitual responses - of denial or overwhelm. My suggestion is that we are all doing both of those all the time.

Another part of *satipatthana* contemplation is that we don't judge ourselves. We don't think we are doing it all wrong because we are feeling angry. You think "how interesting, this is what anger feels like." This is anger – I note the arising, I note the passing away. Not "I should not be having anger because I'm a Buddhist in the ordination process, I should be beyond that". We can easily get into that idealism, where we think we shouldn't be having what we are having. Then we haven't only got the emotion, but then we've got judgement of the emotion and suppression of the emotion, which is another whole other can of worms.

So it's a very liberating approach where we are open. It's like resting back in an armchair and saying "come on life, bring it on". There is this confidence, this stability, balance, poise so that life can no longer throw you off course. If you have a narrow idea of the path, that "I shouldn't be having any negative emotions", then you are going to be thrown off course every time a negative emotion comes in; you are going to be knocked sideways.

But if it's like "I'm human, I'm going to have a negative emotion, here it comes, here it arises, here it passes away. Here is a positive emotion, it arises, it passes away. I'm in touch with the quality of consciousness which has something of the blue sky, that's beautiful." So it's a stable, broad, balanced, poised quality that we are cultivating in *Satipatthana* contemplation.

If you look at the top of page four (of the retreat handout), I'm suggesting that we all want to be free. This *sutta* rests on that assumption. You wouldn't engage with it if you didn't want to be free. That we are all here, there's something in each of us that is longing for a non-reactive heart and a free mind or we wouldn't be here. I would confidently assume that every single

intention last night was based on that longing. Twenty-six variations on that theme will be sitting on the shrine in there. It's lovely that we have all identified our own particular doorway into that. Having established our intention at the beginning of the retreat, we can rest in that confidence, that "I long to be free and I can be free" and all these teachings that we are going to be dwelling in over this retreat are all in aid of that longing for freedom.

It's a very clear path that the Buddha is laying out about how we can move closer and closer to that.

Confidence is an important part of practice. Often faith is translated as confidence: sraddha – faith, confidence. I exhort you all to be confident in your confidence. We're all confident enough to be here. We're confident enough to make our way in there and sit at the feet of the Buddha and rest in our longing freedom - to be a force for good in the world, rather than a destructive force.

Because one of the central teachings of the Buddha is conditionality, that rather than life being fixed and static, it's a flow passing through all the time. It's an arising and passing of conditions that are material, emotional, mental, gravity, biochemistry; it's all happening. So this form that I have here that has this name "Vidyamala" is in fact very alive and dynamic. There is nothing fixed and static, and the way that flow moves into the next moment, to some extent depends on my state of mind in this moment; not completely because I have physical things, biochemical things, going on that my state of mind can't necessarily alter. Like my state of mind is not going to infuse my spine. That's a quite important point as well because sometimes we think we can change everything with our minds. We can't, but we can change our ethical behaviour and the quality of our consciousness with our minds. So using that principle that life is a flow, every single moment we are making choices: mentally, choices emotionally, with our speech, our internal speech – our 'inside talk' - that sets up the conditions for how our life unfolds.

The Buddha is saying, by choosing to dwell upon that within us which has the seeds of release, we become a person who is conditioned to be moving towards freedom. So all the time we can choose what to do with our awareness, our attention. We're going to be teaching quite subtle skills on this retreat to identify the already existent seeds of release within us. That are always there. To notice them, catch them, to rest, to dwell there, then they will quite naturally bloom into positive emotion.

It's a lovely skill to learn, because I think sometimes, say with something like the Metta Bhavana, it can feel like we are trying to generate positive emotion from nothing, it can feel forced, like trying to squeeze something out of an empty toothpaste tube.

The lovely thing about this approach to practice is, rather than generating something from nothing, you find within you what's already there which has the seeds to positive emotion, and you choose to rest there, and then using the law of conditionality – "what we dwell on we become", positive emotion will naturally arise. So on the *vedana* day we are going to do some lovely exercises around that, to understand how positive emotion is also conditioned, where does it start from and how do we catch those little moments.

According to the Buddha, if we practice in this way we will become Enlightened. It's not we might, it's not if we are lucky, it *will* happen, because of this law of conditionality.

By choosing what we do with our awareness and our consciousness, we will move in the direction of freedom. I can guarantee that each one of us will have moved a little bit further at the end of these ten days. It might not be pleasant, but it will be true.

So let's begin to look at the whole sutta
Go back to page one of the (retreat) handout. Sati is one of the words for mindfulness. It means something like 'bare awareness'. Sati is the quality of being really present, right now, with whatever we are experiencing.

Upatthana is to be present with or placing near. So we're placing near mindfulness, or being present with mindfulness. There are various ways that it is translated.

- The four ways of attending mindfully.
- The four presences of mindfulness.
- The four ways of establishing mindfulness.
- The four ways to develop the mind of a Buddha.

Sometimes people talk about the Four *Satipatthana*s – of body, *vedana*, *citta* and *dhammas* as if they are four things, but scholars seem to agree it's more about the process. Other *sutta*s list four other things. It's the *process* of awareness that is important and in this *sutta*: body, *vedana*, *citta* and *dhammas* – they are four doorways into the quality of awareness. They are extremely good doorways as we will discover.

The Buddha has given us these doorways, based on his own journey and Enlightenment, and then looking back he has given this teaching to us saying, "you too can pass through these doorways and you too can know freedom of mind and heart".

It's called the direct path to overcome *dukkha*. It's a very important text. It's a very widely practised text, seen by many to be the root text on mindfulness in the Buddhist tradition. It's really great that Taraloka offers this retreat for all of us because it is such a central text. Any of us wanting to practise in our tradition, ideally would be really familiar with this *Sutta*, almost know it by heart. I don't know it by heart in Pali but I have become so familiar with it, in terms of what it is teaching, that it is at my fingertips and it is a lovely thing in daily life to have that. Ideally we would all have it at our fingertips as a map of awakening.

We are going to read the *sutta* out later this morning. At the end he says "if you follow this *sutta* you'll gain Enlightenment in seven years, no seven months, no seven weeks, indeed in seven days." We have got ten days. We've got time for a few down days!

Anālayo is quite brilliant. He has come up with this lovely summary. The four word summary is *Keep Calmly Knowing Change*.

Keep has the quality of continuity. Keep on the path, sustain your awareness. So it's moment by moment awareness, through the moments. Continued application of awareness and effort.

Calmly, that's becoming free from being driven by desires and aversions to experience. This middle way I've already introduced between denial and overwhelm – if we tread this middle way we are calm. We haven't got the pressure of suppression or the turbulence of overwhelm. We're calm, balanced, poised.

Knowing, is a quality of intelligent awareness. Quite interesting, so awareness isn't just neutral awareness, but we are using our intelligence to interpret our awareness, in a way - in the service of our longing for freedom. For example we might become aware of anger, and then we use our intelligence to know that, and to let it go. You could become aware of anger and think "oh great, anger - so I will become more angry". That would be unintelligent response. So we are using our discernment in terms of how do we relate to that which is arising moment by moment. It's becoming aware of awareness. Self-reflective awareness.

Change, this is very important. Insight into the true nature of things. Impermanence, anicca. Sangharakshita has said that in one of his early talks, I think it is *Between Twin Sala Trees*, "if all the Buddhist texts could be boiled down to one word, it would be impermanence". And Subhuti says that the whole of the Buddhist teaching is contained in this word impermanence. Anicca. So it's strongly brought out in the *sutta* of course, and it's one of the laksahanas – the marks of conditioned existence, the other two being insubstantiality and unsatisfactoriness (*anatta* and *dukkha*). As soon as you are aware of impermanence, by implication you are also becoming aware of insubstantiality and unsatisfactoriness. Everything is changing, even me. There is no fixed self. So it's not like you look out at the world outside and see change, but you don't apply that teaching to yourself. You too are change. We experience life as unsatisfactory because we don't get that. So we want the nice things to last, and they don't. We are always clinging onto life or we are pushing life away. When we push painful things away it is because we think it is something solid, whereas actually it's like water, flowing through our fingers.

So when we live with more Insight, with more understanding of the lakshanas we have open hands. It's a lovely gesture, this mudra. When we are allowing life to flow through our fingers and we aren't grasping or pushing away. Hands are interesting aren't they? They're expressive of our mental states. I think I said in the Body Scan yesterday that the fingers are so interesting, when the mind is in the future there is a subtle reaching in the fingers, and when the mind is in the past there is a subtle holding on. So if we really soften the fingers, we also soften the mind. So fingers are an interesting expression of what our mind is doing. During the day you could just check in on your fingers every now and again. See if they are reaching, that longing. Or are they holding onto something. Soften the fingers, soften the mind – it's brilliant. So we're learning to live with flow.

Moving on to the structure of the sutta
It's got an interesting structure, shape. It's dramatic, I love this about this *sutta*. And it's cumulative, a progressive *sutta*. At the beginning you have the *definition verse*. You get that verse once and it sets the scene. And the definition verse is telling us the *attitudes* to bring to all our *satipatthana* contemplation. Right at the start, set your intention, set attitudes in order to then flow into your awareness practice.

It says we need *appropriate effort*. The usual translation is diligence, which is fine but, some of us can misinterpret diligence and think it is a bit willed and strained. But it's a balanced effort. It's a tricky area for many of us. We are either trying too hard or drifting off. If you strain, eventually you will get bored of straining and then have a little daydream. Maybe you even sleep, wake yourself up and go back to straining again.

So balanced effort is interesting, you could do a whole retreat on balanced effort. Qi gong is brilliant for that, it's all about balanced effort and flow being in the body.

Next attitude is *intelligence and clarity, applied to what is coming through the senses.*

Sampajjana – a very important word – that includes this quality of *continuity of purpose*. Applying intelligence in the light of the goal, what we are moving towards, in relation to what is coming through our senses. Eg if you notice you are angry, instead of thinking "Yippee I'm angry, I'm going to stoke myself up over the next half hour" That would be be unaware. If you think "anger, here it is", you don't judge it, but you let it go. Because your goal is to be less in the grip of unskilful thoughts and emotions, and more in the flow of the skilful.

Another way it is talked about is being self-possessed. The opposite of being drunk. The ability to comprehend what is taking place. Sampajjana is not passive. It's quite an active quality. An alert state of mind. Using discernment, choosing what you do with what's arrived in the moment. How can you release that which is unskilful and cultivate that which is skilful?

Then we've got *sati*. Knowing right now. In the texts *Sati-sampajanna* is often a compound term, they come together. In *Living with Awareness* Sangharakshita calls *sampajanna* "clear comprehension of purpose". He says on page 23 "despite their different emphases, mindfulness and clear comprehension of purpose, often appear as a compound term in Pali, *Sati-sampajanna* and the two words can be considered to be so close in meaning as to be virtually interchangeable. These is no precise word in English for this kind of recollection, and it's difficult to come up with a definition that evokes its spirit. One might say that it is going about one's daily life without ever forgetting one's higher purpose ... The subtle interplay between awareness and recollection has the effect of integrating one's whole experience and continually re-establishing a sense of harmony and direction. *Sati-sampajanna* has a balancing and integrating quality that permeates every area of experience, to bring about a whole way of life, concentrated not so much on a future goal as on the dynamic cumulative nature of the path itself."

Then the fourth attitude in the definition verse of is *letting go of being a slave to likes and dislikes*. Letting go of preferences. We are setting aside rejection and acceptance and coming to wholeness. Anālayo describes it as having removed desires and discontent – being free from desires and discontent in regard to the world. Imagine being free of discontent? Wouldn't that be amazing! Quite hard to imagine, but lovely.

At the beginning of the *sutta* you have these four qualities being evoked and the Buddha is saying: "Please bring these attitudes to your *satipatthana* practice. If you want to wake up you must have these qualities". Assertive. He's certainly not saying just drift around for ten days. He's saying bring these attitudes to bear on your experience, and then relax. Very interesting, that koan.

Then we've got the *four objects of awareness*.

- Being aware of your *body*.
- Being aware of *feelings* or *feeling-tone*.
- Being aware of the *shape of your heart and mind, your mood, the broad emotional qualities that you have present*.
- Being aware of *dhammas*. One way of describing that is the content of the mind, your mental and emotional events seen from the perspective of the Dhamma. Those are progressively more refined. The body is the grossest level of awareness, then the subtle passing of mental and emotional states is obviously very fleeting and slippery.

In terms of the relationship between *citta*s and Dhammas: one way you can look at that is that *citta* is as if you are at the top of a mountain looking down on a scene; so you have a broad

perspective on the landscape, and then *dhammas* is you look down on that same landscape with a pair of binoculars and you are focusing on the specific elements that are dotted around on the plane. The Dhammic perspective is quite sharp and clear, it's not vague. You're really teasing apart the flow of experience, so you can come closer to it.

And then dramatically this is very interesting: between each section of the *sutta*, you have what's called the *chorus or the refrain*. I think of this as being like a big drum beat.
He's telling you to set up your attitudes, be aware of your body say. And then this big kind of drum comes in and tells you to use awareness of your body, in this instance, to develop Insight in the following ways:

The first way is to become aware of that experience of the body (when in body section) *internally* and *externally*, generally understood as being aware of it in yourself and other people. I like that interpretation because it takes it away from being a self-centred practice. So we are going to use it that way this week. I have a body, you have a body, we are interconnected, we're similar – we are not separated, isolated from one another.

Then we are going to be aware of the *arising and passing away*. This is impermanence and by implication insubstantiality and unsatisfactoriness. Be aware that this thing you are paying attention to is impermanent, it has no fixed essence.

And then we are asked to cultivate *mindfulness enough for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness*, which means: don't get caught up with the experience. So going back to flying through the clouds, and there is a big puffy cumulus cloud, you note it but then you don't obsess about the nature of the cumulus cloud, which one can actually, as clouds can be so amazing when you are flying through them. You just note it and stay centred, balanced and poised whilst you are looking at whatever is there.

So then we *abide independent, not clinging to anything in the world*. The highest level of mindfulness is attained and sustained without any clinging, for the sake of attaining Enlightenment. That is your highest purpose. You are not mindful for a good life, you are mindful to gain Enlightenment. To be completely free.

In the mindfulness world you often have discussions like "is a sniper mindful?" A sniper is very present. You'd be completely in your body, focussed, aware of the mind, what you are going to shoot, completely in your body, aware of your breath, highly present, highly mindful. But a sniper would be driven by greed, or aversion or a desire to kill. So you would say there is this clinging there. That is the difference between mindfulness that we are cultivating for Enlightenment and just being present in worldly life - what's your underlying purpose? What is your aim? So I would say a sniper isn't mindful in the full Buddhist sense, as the sniper's goal is very different from someone who wants to align themselves with reality.
Moving to the next page, where we chunk it down even more.

In the body section, there are six subsections.

- Awareness of *breath*.
- Awareness of *four postures* – sitting, standing, walking, lying down, by implication any posture. Be aware of the body at all times.
- Awareness of *activities*. The Buddha lists walking, wearing robes, eating, carrying the bowl, drinking, going to the toilet, falling asleep, waking up and falling silent. It's very

comprehensive. We could add in things like being on Facebook. Emails, computer addiction etc.

- Awareness of *body parts*, it goes into detail, things like sinus, pus, snot, bones, moisture etc. I think the point of that is we so identify with the body as being a thing. We're being asked to consider an image that it's like a grain of sand with a hole at each end.
- Awareness of the being composed of the *elements*, earth, water, fire and air, even more breaking it down. So tears are the water element; bone is the earth element.

We are asked to see the *body as a corpse*. This body that I am so identified with will one day be a skeleton, then nothing, dust. A powerful reflection.

We're going to focus mainly on breath, posture and activities. We are not going to go particularly into the dismemberment aspect of the sutta, for a few reasons. In the west I think we are so nihilistic that a lot of us are lacking in faith or a sense of moving towards something beautiful. Many of us are influenced by scientific materialist attitudes to life so when the skeleton rots away there is nothing, a big black hole. That's not so helpful for most of us. So we are not going to go there. We are going to focus much more on cultivating faith and be aware of breath, posture and activities within that context.

The next area is Vedana
Vedana is difficult to translate. It is sometimes translated as 'feeling', but I don't find that very helpful because in English 'feeling' is such a broad word, and what is meant is the raw bare experience. The initial arising of a raw bare experience, is it pleasant, unpleasant or neutral? It's not feeling angry. This is in the realm of the *citta*. Where would that anger start? It would have started with some flicker in the body. We're being asked to catch that first flicker. Thisi s such an important part of this *sutta* and I think *vedana* is the real working ground as you are getting closer to where an experience starts, and if you can catch that, you can let rest upon the *vedana* that is going to take you up the path, and you can let go of the *vedana* that is going to take you into reaction.

There are two classes of *vedana – worldly and unworldly, or materialistic and spiritual.* So there are certain *vedana* that has a latent tendency to stimulate greed, hatred and delusion. If you follow that *vedana* you will go backwards on the path. Classic examples that people talk about. You like cake, you walk past a cake shop, before you know it you are eating a cake. You don't know how that happened, but there was a visual sense as you walked past, that led to a pleasant *vedana* that you acted on, you had craving, desire and then you are eating the cake. Of course there is nothing inherently wrong with eating cake. But let's say on that day, you had an intention not to eat cake. How on earth did you then eat cake? That started with a visual impression followed by a *vedana* that you missed. Same with an argument. Where did that come from? It started with a *vedana*. You probably saw somebody that you are fed up with. There was a visual impression, or an unpleasant arising in the body. You did not catch it and before you know it you are into a full blown reaction.

Neutral *vedana* is interesting. I have been doing this work for more than a decade and I still don't really know what it is. It can be that which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant. But in my experience, as soon as you become aware of *vedana*, it seems to be either pleasant or unpleasant. So it could be all the *vedana* you are not noticing. So you could say the real work is to defrost all those icy landscapes of your emotional life that you are not aware of. And that within that there is going to be lots of *vedana* that you can then catch and become familiar with.

But the broad thing about worldly *vedana* is it is that which will lead you into a reactive states of mind. It will always have some kind of greed, hatred or delusion within it, some kind of ignorance or delusion within it.

Then there is this very interesting area of *unworldly vedana*, or spiritual *vedana*. This is *vedana* that is free of the latent tendency to stimulate the poisons and leads to progress on the path. So an example would be you are meditating and you get some kind of opening around the heart. I'm sure we have all had that and it's pleasant isn't it? There's that kind of "aah", just something that is happening, it's in the body, that would be unworldly pleasant *vedana*, and the Buddha's saying, stay with it.

With the worldly *vedana* he is saying "let it go". With unworldly *vedana*, he's saying "stay with it, rest there, and allow it to blossom into positive emotion".

Unpleasant unworldly *vedana*, apparently, is 'dissatisfaction with one's spiritual imperfections'. So it's this sense that there is always more to do, and if we don't have that, we won't be motivated to practise. It's that sense that there is always more to learn. I was reading Anālayo before and he's saying that in the texts it says that after the Buddha gained Enlightenment he still practised *satipatthana* and the Arahants still practised *satipatthana*, it never ends. Because if you think there is nothing more to do, you are just going to go to sleep again, aren't you.

It's a tricky one because dissatisfaction with spiritual imperfection can be something we beat ourselves with, and we get very strained and wilful and judgemental, and give ourselves a hard time. Again a very western preoccupation. We are very good at giving ourselves a hard time. It's possible that in some other cultures it's not such a tendency. So we need to be a little bit careful. I wouldn't want you to be sitting there beating yourselves up because you're not perfect, for the next ten days. But I would want you to have this curiosity, there is always more.

Something I've found fascinating about the spiritual life is that whenever I think I've got somewhere, six months later I'll have another experience and I'll think "I didn't know anything six months ago". So I've learned to not really assess my practice in terms of where I am on the path.

Where I'm at now is I just need to have confidence that there is growth happening, that is enough. I just need to be confident that there is transformation occurring, I'm becoming more aware, and more kind.

Neutral unworldly *vedana* is what arises in concentration. I think it's a very high level of equanimity. When you are completely still, clear, and there isn't any movement towards or away from, that would be neutral *vedana*. It hasn't got any movement either towards the pleasant or away from the unpleasant.

What's very interesting is that body and *vedana* are what are called resultant. In terms of karma and resultant, they arise as a result of a previous moment. We can't do anything about the body and the *vedana* aspect in this moment, because they've just arrived in our experience because of an action we took a moment ago.

So to unpack this: here I am, sitting here. This body is the way it is to some extent because of previous actions, to some extent it's other levels of conditionality at work. But here it is, I can't

suddenly have a different body. It's here, it's in this moment. The *vedana* I'm experiencing right now is here. It's arrived. I can't go back in time and think I want a different *vedana* in that moment. You can't do that. I've already had the past moments and here it is. I've got a body. I've got *vedana*.

The Buddha's saying there is a very important choice point between result and action. How I act in this moment, that's a choice that's active, and that will set up conditions for the next moment. So *citta* is active. *Citta* is something we are actively choosing in this moment, it's not conscious, but it's something that we are generating in this moment. It's our emotions, which is why becoming aware of body and *vedana* are so important. Because choosing how we respond to what has already arrived, that is the point of the unfolding of our spiritual life.
We have *Ordinary and Higher Citta* in the *sutta*. Ordinary includes the wholesome and unwholesome. We become aware of the presence or absence of lust, anger, delusion, whether our mind is contracted (sloth and torpor) or distracted (which is restlessness). We need to find balance between those two aspects.

A pleasant worldly *vedana* not caught will lead to desire. Unpleasant worldly *vedana* will lead to some kind of aversion. It's just the way of things.

The *higher states of mind* are where you have a great mind, an unsurpassable mind, a concentrated mind or a liberated mind.

The Buddha's saying if we can stay with the unworldly, the spiritual *vedana*, then these much more expensive states of mind will naturally arise. What we dwell on we become.
If we stick with the worldly, the ordinary, we end up with more suffering. And if we are able to follow the unworldly, the higher, then we end up with freedom. And that is what is so exciting about the sutta because that's not magic, it's not luck, it is conditionality at work, it's how things are. It really is that simple. Difficult to do, but simple to understand.

What we dwell on we become
There is the *dhamma's section*, which is very interesting because really it's about conditionality. This is the only section that goes into conditionality in a lot of depth. In the other sections, you are aware of the presence or absence of something, but in the *dhammas* section you are not only aware of the presence or absence of say the hindrances, but you are aware of what conditions contributed to this experience. In the case of the hindrances, how can I prevent the future arising, and in the case of a positive state, like an awakening factor, how can I create conditions to allow the future arising? So it's a bit like the four right efforts, in the *dhammas* section. It is seeing phenomena as they are represented in the mind, from a dhammic perspective. It's really hammering home the dhammic perspective and conditionality through the dhammas section.

There's a list of different teachings.

- The five hindrances.
- The five aggregates or skandhas.
- The six sense-spheres.
- The seven awakening factors.
- The four noble truths.

I'm going into all this because I find it really fascinating and hope that you do. But also, if you are serious about the Buddha's path, serious about wanting to get ordained into our tradition,

this is such good Dhamma. This is really going to build your Dhamma knowledge, which is important, to understand the teachings the Buddha gave us. So you are getting a really juicy bit of Dhamma in this text. There's a lot in it. It's got the lakshanas, it's got the gap between feeling and craving – choosing how you respond to your *vedana*. It's got all these lists. It's always good to know the lists of Buddhism because they are not random, they are there because the Buddha thought they would be helpful for us.

And it's got this really lovely confidence: *By choosing what you do with your awareness and attending to things skilfully, you will progress on the path.*

But first of all you need to know what is happening. A big part of the *sutta* is coming closer to what is actually happening right now. Waking up to what are you experiencing, without judgement, it's important we let go of the automatic "I shouldn't be having this experience" because, guess what, you are having it. How can you just meet it with kindness, equanimity, acceptance and then to let it go?

Culture is interesting. Regularly the Dali Lama meets with western scientists in a meeting called "The mind and life Institute". And Sharon Salzberg who, a lot of you will know, she's a Buddhist teacher in America, who's written a lot about loving kindness and so on. She asked the Dali Lama about working with self-hatred and he really could not understand the question, at first people thought it was a translation issue. Eventually, he really did not understand the question because it seems it is quite a western phenomenon, this self-hatred, being hard on ourselves, self-denigration; he wasn't familiar with that as a widely experienced state of mind. In the Dalai Lama's culture self-hatred doesn't exist in the way we have it. Why do we have it? Christian conditioning? Doesn't matter why we have it, the fact is we do have it; which is why this text needs to be handled with care, and held by huge amounts of kindness and acceptance for us. You could use it in a nihilistic way and just give yourself a hard time for the next ten days every time you have a negative mental event. We don't want this, we want the opposite! We want you to come to terms with "this is my human mind, that's all it is, not a bad one or a good one; it's just a human mind and how can I love it and care for it, how can I liberate it?" We're going to be doing metta as well as mindfulness and really bringing the Buddha centre stage as an object of devotion. So we've got something to move towards, we're not just moving away from our reactive states, and possibly brewing self-hatred for ten days. We're going to place everything at the feet of the Buddha. He was a human being like us. Through his own efforts he freed his mind. We too can do that. Devotion is such a heart-opening experience, it's an antidote to what can become a very heady practice. We don't want that. We want you to be fully embodied, impassioned, adoring the Buddha as a symbol of your own potential.

Any questions?

Q. I appreciate what you felt yourself about *vedana*, your misgivings about the meaning and how it's usually translated. I've struggled for years to really get that word. But worldly *vedana* goes to worldly *citta*, responses; on the other hand it looks like you can force yourself along the blue arrow to where we really belong in the spiritual.

A. OK, good question. It prompts me to have a word of warning about maps. I've done the graphic because some of us are visual learners. But it looks neat. I have my body, a *vedana*, a *citta*, hindrance, here are awakening factors. Life is not like that. Life is a torrent, a waterfall. Every single moment we've got Body, *vedana*, *citta*, every moment, hindrances, awakening factors, like chaos. In fact a waterfall is a good analogy and one way we can think of Sati, is

that you are sitting on a ledge behind the waterfall. Life is pouring down, we are no longer getting carried away, we are watching it.

Q. I've actually done that!

A. Oh have you! Lovely, you can think of that during the retreat. Let's just think about what it's like: Here you are, sitting in a meditation, your knee is really hurting. You've got unpleasant *vedana*. You have an arising of tension, you have a mental state of "When is the bell going to go?" How many of us have had that? You're just longing for the bell. And you catch that. So you're already into *citta*, as you're having an aversion response. You catch that and drop back to your body, your knee is hurting, and you soften, you relax, you note: "I'm just having a mental event of aversion here". My knee is hurting, it's a flow of sensations. It's not me and my knee at all. Just an experience, a flow of sensations, I'm just going to rest there. You are making these choices, you rest there. There is a softening, your heart starts to open a wee bit, then you are into more expansive *citta*. That's the little blue arrow, non-reactive awareness. Your knee is still hurting, there's still the temptation to go on ranting for the next twenty minutes, about how dare they have such a long meditation and why won't they ring that bell, I'm sure we've all been there and I hate this retreat, why did I come? You have that choice, you also have the choice of catching it at any moment, and driving a wedge through that stream of negative mental events. It's another moment of body/*vedana*. We've got Body and *vedana* arising all the time. It's not that we only have one moment of choice. This label of the gap, I've never been that happy with that either. It's a bit like if you miss the gap you've had it. 'A moment of responsive awareness' is how I prefer to talk about the gap, every moment is another opportunity for responsive awareness. Every time we choose not to react to the unpleasant *vedana* or it might be desire. You might be sitting there thinking about lunch, another favourite of many of us, "What's for lunch today, we had celery and cashew nuts yesterday, won't be that today, what's the rest of the menu at Taraloka?" So you have desire, you catch it. "Why am I thinking about lunch, it's ridiculous? Here I am meditating. I've got this opportunity, come on , come back; drop into the breath, drop into the body and then, ahh, a little opening somewhere. Rest there. Seeds of release, rest in the opening heart, breathe, *metta*. Here I am loving myself, loving everyone else", and you are into the higher *citta*, just like that.

The map looks quite static. Every moment is a new chance. Even if we have unpleasant *vedana* going on, we will all have some pain in the week; we have a choice how we respond to it. If we can soften around physical pain, interestingly we can get quite expansive emotional states.

Q. What to do if in too much discomfort? Can you move?

A. Thank you. Another interesting awareness practice. Making that decision about when we are restless because of a restless mental state, and just being still would be a good practise for us, and when we are restless, because actually we really need to move. If you feel you need to move then of course we want you to move. We aren't trying to create perfect calm in the shrine room, because some of us would become rigid if we suggested this. If you are really sleepy I would encourage you to stand up. It works, more reason to wake up as there is further to fall!

This whole way of practice is about having a soft mind. A soft, receptive, poised, gentle, pliable mind. If you are sitting there rigid with discomfort, that's not going to give you a soft mind. The big thing is making a conscious choice. *Satipatthana* practice is making conscious choices – not driven by habitual responses, which might be to go rigid or to fidget. If it's fidgeting, it

might be interesting to experiment with being still. If your habitual response is to go rigid, then for you movement could be a rich experience.

We are putting ourselves in a lab, the mind and the body, heart, for ten days. It's really loving. It's a red lab with love pouring out of the walls; we are being bathed in this love all the time while we really look into our experience and examine it.

Overview of the Body Contemplations

Kaya
The Body Section of the *Satipatthana Sutta* has six sections, which collectively are a comprehensive list of ways to be mindful of the body. The purpose of these reflections is to encourage mindfulness of the body at all times and in all positions and circumstances.

The six sections are:

Breathing → four postures → bodily activities → anatomical parts → four elements → corpse in decay

This is a progressive series of contemplations beginning with the more obvious and basic aspects of the body and continuing towards a more detailed and analytical understanding of the nature of the body. The six contemplations offer a very detailed and thorough way of working with awareness of the body. Except for awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to activities, each of the other body contemplations is illustrated by a simile:

- Mindfulness of breathing is compared to the turner at his lathe.
- Contemplation of the anatomical parts to examining a sack of grain.
- Contemplation of the four elements to butchering a cow.
- The last exercise employs a mental image of the body in various stages of decay.

It is interesting that when reading this part of the *sutta* the body can seem to be described in rather negative terms. The purpose is not to demonise the body. Rather it's traditional in the early Buddhist texts to stress overcoming attachment, particularly sexual attachment and sexual desire. However, in a different *sutta*, the physical bliss of absorption is the object of the bodily contemplation so it isn't always linked to the repugnant and loathsome. Another reason why the unattractive aspect can sometimes seem dominant is to balance the fact that we're so attached to our bodies. We're so attached to caring about our beauty. The aim is to see the body merely as the product of conditions, a product with which one need not identify.

Anālayo offers a good simile for mindfulness of the body on page 122.

These contemplations can lead to concentration or they can lead to Insight.

1. Mindfulness of Breathing

Mindfulness of breathing is probably the most widely used method of bodily contemplation both today and in ancient times. The Buddha called it a noble and divine way of practice. The *Satipatthana Sutta* describes four steps to the practice which is one of the sources for the four stage *Mindfulness of Breathing* that we learn in Triratna. There is also another *sutta*, the *Anapanasati Sutta*, which adds another twelve steps, thereby forming a scheme with a total of sixteen steps, leading to both stability and Insight. This is a complete path in itself based on all four *satipatthana*s.

The mindfulness of breathing has a peaceful character and leads to stability of both posture and mind. The mental stability acts as an antidote to distraction and discursive thought.

The structure of this section is:

> Breathing in long he knows "I breathe in long", breathing out he knows "I breathe out long".
>
> Breathing in short he knows "I breathe in short", breathing out short he knows "I breathe out short",

Anālayo suggests the point here is to be aware of the length of each breath rather than to control the length of the breath. However, in reality when breathing is relaxed the in-breath tends to be shorter than the out-breath, so we can see some correlation between these instructions and those offered in the standard approach to Mindfulness of Breathing used in Triratna: In stage one we count after the end of the out-breath which is marking the longer phase of each breath. In stage two we count before each in-breath, which is marking the shorter phase of each breath.

> He trains thus: "I shall breathe in experiencing the whole body," he trains thus: "I shall breathe out experiencing the whole body,"

Here we are experiencing the whole breath as experienced in the whole body, which correlates to stage three of the Triratna Mindfulness of Breathing. One becomes aware of all the different sensations and movements of breathing as felt in the whole body: front, back, sides, inner sensations and sensations on the whole surface of the body.

> He trains thus: "I shall breathe in calming the whole bodily formation," he trains thus: "I shall breathe out calming the whole bodily formation'.

This is describing how the breath and the body naturally calm with increased awareness. The body also naturally becomes more tranquil as the breath becomes more refined and subtle. The fourth stage of the Mindfulness of Breathing has an emphasis on experiencing the more subtle sensations of breathing which supports this increased development of tranquillity and mental and physical calm.

The next two contemplations, awareness of the four postures and clear knowledge in regard to activities, are both concerned with directing mindfulness to the body in action.

2. Four Postures: walking, sitting, standing, lying down
In terms of the four postures, it covers doing any activity at any time. We can safely guess that the Buddha was referring to these four postures to indicate we should be aware of the body at all times, whatever position we are in. So mindfulness is to be experienced and cultivated off

the cushions in daily life, as well as in meditation. Mindfulness of the body in this regard is to be 'with' the body during its natural activities, instead of being carried away by various thoughts and ideas.

So this particular exercise constitutes the contemplation that fulfils the role of providing a firm grounding of awareness in the body. Awareness trained in this way constitutes an important foundation for more formal meditation, because diligent practice of this contemplation will bring the mind's tendency to distraction considerably under control. Bodily posture and state of mind are intrinsically interrelated, so the clear awareness of the one naturally enhances awareness of the other. In this way, contemplation of the four postures can lead to an investigation of the body's traditional interrelation with the mind.

3. Clear knowing in regard to a range of bodily activities
Once again, we can safely guess that the Buddha was referring to the importance of maintaining mindfulness at all times, whatever activity we are engaged in. In modern parlance we could add in mindfulness of computer and smart phone usage!

In the *sutta* the list of activities includes: going forward and returning; looking ahead and looking away; flexing and extending limbs; wearing robes and carrying outer robe and bowl; eating, drinking, consuming food, tasting; defecating and urinating; walking, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, talking, keeping silent.

Clear knowledge seems to be related to sense restraint. The practice of developing clear knowledge in regard to activity combines purposeful and dignified conduct with sense restraint in order to build up a foundation for the arising of Insight.

We can see how, compared to contemplation of the four postures, clear knowledge in regard to activities introduces an additional element, since the former consists only in their awareness of whatever posture or movement occurred naturally, while the latter includes purposely adopting a restrained and dignified behaviour.

Note:
The next three contemplations are mainly aimed at overcoming attachment to the body and seeing into its inherent unattractiveness. These contemplations can have dangers and are not particularly recommended for Westerners with our natural nihilism and tendencies to self-hatred without the guidance of a teacher or kalyana mitra. For the purposes of actual practice this module focusing mainly on the first three contemplations: breathing, activities and postures.

4. Anatomical parts
This is an analytical meditation surveying the constitution of one's body by listing various (thirty-one) anatomical parts, organs, and fluids. It is progressive starting with the grosser outer aspects and moving to the inner aspects of organic fluids. In some *sutta*s the Buddha adds: "and whatever other parts there may be" suggesting that the Buddha wants us to reflect on the way the 'whole' of the body is made up of many constituent parts.

The main purpose of this exercise is to drive home the realisation that one's own body and the bodies of others are not inherently attractive, which helps to overcome lust. Realising the absence of beauty in one's own body can also serve in particular as a countermeasure to conceit. It is thought this may have been in order to counterbalance the possible conceit that may have accrued from the excess of honour and veneration monks were receiving from

householders. The dangers of excessive contemplation of impurity can lead to loathing and repugnance and there's a story of the Buddha instructing some monks in this practice to such an extent that the monks committed suicide. Clearly this is not the aim. Rather the effect is to cool desire, not to stimulate aversion.

5. The four elements
Since the contemplation of the thirty-one anatomical parts covered mainly the first two elements of solidity and liquidity we now move on to include fire and air – or temperature and motion (circulation of blood and breath) in this more subtle contemplation. The fire can be developed through noting variations in bodily temperature, and to some extent the processes of digestion and ageing. Air represents a quality of motion both in the sense of different movements and also the sense of movements within the organism, such as a circulation of blood or the cycle of the breaths. This is trying to overcome the meditator identifying with the body: the body is no longer 'I' or 'mine' but simply a combination of the four elements. The meditation practice related to this is the six element practice, which is an Insight practice where one sees that the elements in the body are no different to the elements in the external world. This can help one overcome pride and conceit - the conceit of ego: 'misappropriation' of public property that is earth, water, fire and air. One comes to see that 'the body' is entirely without essence. This can thereby lead to insight into the impermanent and insubstantial nature of material reality. (The six element practice includes the two extra 'elements' of space and consciousness, in addition to earth, water, fire and air).

In the *Maharahulovada Sutta* the four elements are used for a different reflection that can be a useful counterpart to nihilism or self-loathing. Here, for example, we reflect that "just as the earth is free from resentment, even when various types of refuse are thrown on it, so too a meditator should develop a mind free from resentment".

6. Corpse in decay and meditation on death
This involves some degree of visualisation. or at least reflection, since meditators compare their own body with what they were seeing in the burial ground. Instructions in this has nine stages of decomposition and highlights two things:

- The repulsive nature of the body as revealed during the stages of its decay,
- The fact that death is the inescapable destiny of all living beings.

One of the central aims of contemplating a corpse in decay is to counteract sensual desire and also to counteract conceit.

An alternative insight to be gained through this meditation practice is the inevitability of death. As the concluding exercise among the body contemplations, a regular recollection of death can lead to the realisation that death is fearful only to the extent to which one identifies with the body. Being free from attachment to the body, one can be freed from any fear of physical death.

Overview of *Vedana*

Contemplation of 'feelings'
The Pali term for feelings is *'vedana'* from verb *'vedeti',* which means both 'to feel' and 'to know'. It comprises both bodily and mental feelings. It does not include emotion in its range of meaning. Although emotions arise depending on the initial input provided by feeling, they are more complex mental phenomena than bare feeling itself and are therefore rather the domain of the next *satipatthana*, contemplation of states of mind.

Nomenclature
Sangharakshita and Anālayo translate '*vedana*' as feelings, which is a word that has a broad meaning in English, ranging from "I feel cold" which would be the domain of *vedana*; to "I feel angry" which would more be the domain of *citta*. It is important that we understand 'feelings' in this context to be closely linked to the immediate sensation experienced in any moment. This is feelings in the sense of the hedonic tone of pleasant, unpleasant or neutral.

In the feeling / *vedana Satipatthana* there are three basic kinds of feeling outlined:

- Pleasant
- Unpleasant
- Neutral

Developing understanding and detachment in regard to these feelings has the potential to lead to freedom from *dukkha*. This is based on the simple but ingenious method of directing awareness to the *very first stages* of the arising of likes and dislikes, by clearly noting whether the present moment's experience is felt as 'pleasant', or 'unpleasant', or neither. This means we can interrupt the proliferation of emotions and actions that automatically arise on the basis of these initial feelings when we are not aware (usually knee-jerk craving on the basis of pleasant *vedana*, aversion on the basis of unpleasant *vedana* and ignorance on the basis of neutral *vedana*) - with all the accompanying reactions, projections, or justifications that follow and inevitably lead to more *dukkha*.

In the *satipatthana* instructions, mindfulness of the three feelings is followed by directing awareness to an additional sub-division of feeling into 'worldly' and 'unworldly'. This 6-fold classification represents the range of diversity of feeling. Worldly and unworldly can be translated in a number of different ways:

Worldly	Unworldly
flesh/sense pleasures	renunciation
sensuality	absorption
materialistic	dhamma
carnal	spiritual
regress on path	progress on path

In this division the Buddha placed emphasis on the mental and ethical consequences of all types of feeling.

This can be seen very clearly in the way he relates the 'worldly *vedana*' to the activation of the latent mental tendencies towards greed, hatred, or delusion i.e. the three poisons.

Unworldly *vedana* on the other hand does **not** have a latent tendency to stimulate the poisons. Unworldly pleasant and neutral feelings arise during deep concentration, and unworldly unpleasant feelings arise owing to dissatisfaction with one's spiritual imperfection.

By learning to discern whether *vedana* is likely, or not, to lead to the poisons, one can learn to pay attention to unworldly *vedana* and go up the spiral path (we will cover this more fully in unit 4), and to de-automate knee-jerk reactions on the basis of worldly *vedana*, using the power of awareness, to break free of circular and destructive patterns.

In a nutshell, the relationship between vedana and either craving/aversion if reactive, and dukkha/faith if creative, is absolutely crucial to satipatthana contemplation and indeed to the living of a Dharma life.

If we can create awareness of *vedana before* the sensations and feelings that are always flowing through our experience lead to full-blown reactive emotions or actions, then we have found a point freedom – a gap within which to introduce choice into how we live our lives. This has also been called the battlefield of the spiritual life, which indicates what a challenging practice it can be to de-fuse our most deeply held reactive habits based on desire/aversion.

This is clearly illustrated in the wheel of life and nidana chain (see the chart below) where the Buddha clearly identifies the space between *vedana* and craving (the wheel), or *vedana* and an awareness of *dukkha* then faith (going up the spiral), to be a crucial 'choice point' between karma (a resultant of past moments/actions) and *karma vipaka* (an action or 'cause process' that will produce future consequences). Each moment we have this choice but we can only make use of it if we are *aware of our vedana*.

Vedana and impermanence/insubstantiality
Another way of engaging with the *vedana* contemplation of the *Satipatthana Sutta* is to contemplate the *ephemeral and impermanent nature of feelings*. This means we can develop a degree of disenchantment and a non-attachment to our fleeting sensations and feelings. A poetic passage in the *Vedana Samyutta Sutta* compares the nature of feelings to winds in the sky coming from different directions. Just as the sky doesn't interfere with the winds, so we can allow the feelings to come and go without being buffeted about by them.

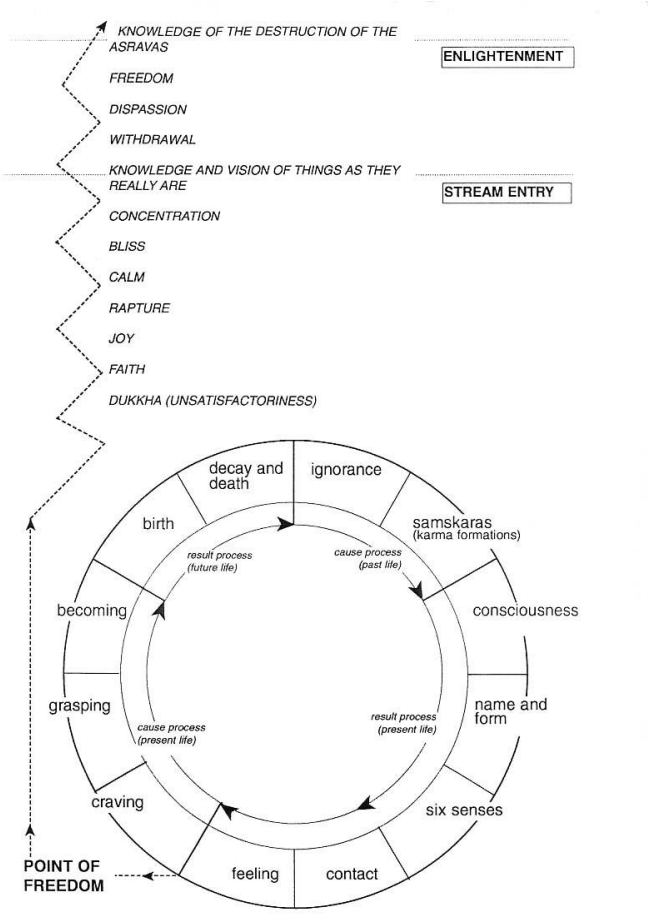


Figure: the nidana chains – the wheel and the spiral)

Pleasant feeling and the importance of joy

One of the Buddha's major contributions to the spiritual life as approached in ancient India, was the realisation that pleasant feelings are not simply to be avoided in the understanding that they inevitably lead to craving. On the eve of his awakening, the Buddha had exhausted the traditional approaches to realisation, which included asceticism. Then he remembered a time when he was a child when he had experienced deep concentration and pleasure and he came to the conclusion that the type of pleasure experienced in meditation was not unwholesome and therefore not an obstacle to progress. The realisation that the pleasure of absorption constitutes a wholesome and advisable type of pleasant feeling marked a decisive turning point in his quest. Based on this crucial understanding, the Buddha soon became enlightened. If we look at the spiral path to Enlightenment in the chart above we can see it contains a progressive series of emotions, which are all deeply positive and happy. Seen in this way the entire scheme of training the Buddha has given us offer a progressive refinement of joy.

We will spend a whole week learning how to identify *vedana* that contain the 'seeds of joy' within them in Unit 4.

Unpleasant feeling

The experience of unpleasant feelings can activate the latent tendency to irritation and aversion and lead to attempts to repress or avoid such unpleasant feelings. Aversion to pain can also fuel the tendency to seek sensual gratification, since from the unawakened point of view the enjoyment of sensual pleasures appears to be the only escape of pain. This creates a vicious circle in which, with each experience of feeling, pleasant or unpleasant, the bondage to

feeling increases. The way out of this vicious circle lies in mindful and sober observation of unpleasant feelings. It is possible to have a non-reactive awareness of pain on the simple physical level without having a proliferation of mental distress.

If unpleasant *vedana* is presenting more as an unpleasant memory or thought then it can be useful to still work with this via the body. Upon investigation you will find an 'echo' somewhere in your body – perhaps a tight chest or throat, or shallow breathing. Then the practice is simply to note it without adding emotions of aversion or craving, to the best of one's ability. Of course you will react, perhaps strongly, as none of us is perfect. But each moment presents a new opportunity to drop back to the simple *vedana* and unwind the reactive process.

And, of course, one can also examine unpleasant feelings and realise their nature – that they are not a 'thing' but rather just a mass of changing feelings constantly coming into being and passing away.

Neutral feeling
Neutral feelings can stimulate the latent tendency to ignorance. Ignorance in regard to neutral feelings is to be unaware of the arising and disappearance of neutral feelings. Awareness of neutral feelings is not an easy task and should best be approached by way of inference, by noting the absence of both pleasant and unpleasant feelings. And, once again, awareness of their impermanent nature is important as they can appear surprisingly stable in their dullness. By reflecting on their impermanence one overcomes ignorance and gains wisdom.

Unworldly neutral *vedana* has a high quality of equanimity. There is balance and poise without any sense of tipping either away from or towards experience, as awareness has transcended the subject-object dichotomy.

Citta

Contemplation of mind
Citta can be seen as the 'shape of the mind' or mood. It is karmic and therefore will lead to future consequences so it is very important to 'know your mind' and to take responsibility for it. *Awareness* of *citta* is in and of itself transformative when you use your ability to be aware of your own mind, and to step back a little to gain perspective.

In the previous *satipatthana*, contemplation of *vedana*, an ethical distinction was made between worldly and unworldly feelings. In the contemplation of mind *satipatthana*, the same distinction is made in that we are asked to observe the presence or absence of greed, hatred and delusion: the three root poisons that are central to the Buddha's teachings. These are at the hub of the wheel of life and they keep us going round and round in reactive, cyclical existence. In addition we are asked to observe if our minds are distracted or contracted to complete the list of 'ordinary' states of mind.

As you can see in the chart below, the Contemplation of the mind section of the *Satipatthana Sutta* makes use of eight categories. In each case, the task of mindfulness is to know a particular mental quality or its opposite, so that contemplation of the mind actually covers 16 states of mind. We can use these in assessing our own minds and also the mind of others insofar as we can get a sense of their mental states through their behaviour, body language etc.

'Ordinary' states of mind	**'Higher' states of mind**
Lustful (*saraga*)	Great (*mahaggata*)
Angry (*sadosa*)	Unsurpassable (*anuttara*)
Deluded (*samoha*)	Concentrated (*samahita*)
Distracted (*vikkhitta*)	Liberated (*vinutta*)

For our purposes as practitioners, essentially we are trying to see when greed is present, when greed is absent, when hatred at present, when hatred is absent etc. We are also being asked to note when the mind is concentrated and the mind is unconcentrated and so on.
Underlying this *satipatthana* is an implicit shift in emphasis from the ordinary way of experiencing mind as an individual entity to considering mental events as mere objects, analysed in terms of their qualitative characteristics

Of course we also have the refrain happening after the set of instructions, which brings impermanence to the fore. We can see the *impermanent nature* of thoughts, which can help us be less identified with their content.

> In this way, in regard to the mind he abides contemplating the mind internally ... externally ... internally and externally.
>
> He abides contemplating the nature of arising ... of passing away ... of both arising and passing away in regard to the mind.
>
> Mindfulness that 'there is a mind' is established in him to the extent necessary for bare knowledge and continuous mindfulness.
>
> And he abides independent, not clinging to anything in the world.

At this stage in the *sutta* we are not trying to change our mental states through any active measures, we are just trying to note what we are actually experiencing. This non-reactive awareness can help us interrupt our habits of reaction, suppression and so on. Watching an unwholesome state of mind without involvement in its content will deprive it of its fuel so that it will gradually lose its power. This is the point of this particular way of practising. An analogy used by the Buddha is comparing awareness of one's state of mind to the use of a mirror to see one's reflection. Just as a mirror simply reflects whatever is presented to it, meditators should try to maintain bare awareness of the present condition of the mind without allowing reactions to arise.

Four 'ordinary' states of mind
One of the main things we are trying to identify in this *satipatthana* is a distinction between the wholesome and the unwholesome. The ability to make this distinction helps us to learn how to behave skilfully in daily life. The *sutta* presents each of the poisons with their opposite i.e. their absence. This is a common way of describing things in the Pali Canon and it includes more than simply the opposite. To be without anger, for example, includes a mind free from irritation, but also a mind given over to loving kindness. So we can see that a wide range of mental content is covered by these instructions.

Four 'higher' states of mind
These are all mental states that one will experience in deep meditation. The theme underlying the contemplation of these four higher states of mind is the ability to monitor the more advanced stages of one's meditative development.

In this way, within the scope of contemplation of the mind, *sati*, or mindfulness, can range from recognition of the presence of lust or anger to awareness of the most lofty and sublime types of mental experience, each time with the same basic task of calmly noticing what is taking place.

The Dvedhavitakka Sutta
Of course all Buddhist awareness practice takes place within the context of *Right View*. So, in the light of awareness, there will be a natural desire to let go of the unskilful and a natural desire to dwell upon the skilful as our awareness practice is in the service of gaining ever-greater wisdom and compassion.

Gradually the inclination of the mind will default to increasingly skilful states as our deepest mental and emotional habits are purified by awareness.

In the *sutta* on the two kinds of thinking, *the Dvedhavitakka Sutta,*[7] it is said:

> Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking and pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with sensuality, abandoning thinking imbued with renunciation, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with sensuality. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with non-ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmfulness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmlessness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmfulness ...
>
> Whatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking and pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with renunciation, abandoning thinking imbued with sensuality, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with renunciation. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with non-ill will, abandoning thinking imbued with ill will, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with non-ill will. If a monk keeps pursuing thinking imbued with harmlessness, abandoning thinking imbued with harmfulness, his mind is bent by that thinking imbued with harmlessness.

The key aspect here is: w*hatever a monk keeps pursuing with his thinking and pondering, that becomes the inclination of his awareness.* This is central to all Buddhist practice and can be seen very clearly in the *Satipatthana Sutta*. You could also see this as 'what you dwell on, you become'.

To get a 'map' of the *citta* contemplations we can divide them into four sections:

1. The ethical status of mind/heart

Is greed present or not? The fever of lust is like being on fire from within. The *Dhammapada* says: "there is no fire like lust". It is a pulling-in tendency.

Is hatred present or not? The physical tension of anger is like being overpowered and controlled by forceful opponent. The *Dhammapada* says: "There is no grip like anger". It is a pushing-away tendency.

Is delusion present or not? The confusion of delusion is like being hopelessly entangled in net. The *Dhammapada* says: "There is no net like delusion". It is a 'running round in circles' tendency.

2. The condition of mind/heart

Contracted? Rigid and narrow – inwardly contracting – sloth and torpor.

Distracted? Outcome of pursuing sensuous pleasure as end in itself – restlessness and worry.

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7 MN 19 PTS: M i 114.

3. The quality of mind/heart

Great and vast?

Further to go?

Concentrated?

4. Is the mind/heart free?

Some tools and tips for working with thoughts and emotions
Remember that an important aspect of *satipatthana* contemplation is bare and equanimous receptivity, combined with an alert, broad and open state of mind.

It enables us to cultivate an accurate awareness of the initial stages of the perceptual process *before* automatic reactions kick in. It enables us to see things *as they actually are* – rather like a mirror.

A useful way to understand it is as the middle way between:

- *Suppression and blocking* on the one hand and
- *Indulgence/reactivity/drowning/over-identification* with the content of moment by moment experience on the other.

You can ask yourself the following questions to work with common thinking habits:

- Can I look 'at' my thoughts/emotions rather than 'from' them?[8]
- Am I catastrophising? How can I recognise this and stay present, with my awareness grounded in the body?
- Am I blocking and suppressing my thoughts and the associated emotions? Or am I over-identifying with the content of my thoughts and caught up in reactions? Can I acknowledge my thoughts and let them go? ("Hello thought, thank you thought, goodbye thought")
- Am I 'buying into' my thoughts and believing that all my thoughts are true? (Remember thoughts are not facts, even those that say they are!)[9]
- Am I re-thinking the same thoughts? Can I let them go a little?

Some useful images and metaphors

The thought train
Can you let the carriages pass down the line as an observer without jumping in and getting hurtled down the line in the thought train?[10]

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8 *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life*, Spencer Smith & Steven Hayes, New Harbinger Publications (2005), page 66.

9 *Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy for Depression: A New Approach for Preventing Relapse*, Zinden Segal, Mark Williams & John Teasdale, Guildford Press (2002), page 244.
10 *Get Out of Your Mind and Into Your Life*, Spencer Smith & Steven Hayes, New Harbinger Publications (2005), page 66.

Clouds in the sky
Thoughts are like clouds passing across the blue sky of the mind. Can you let them come and go without either pushing them away or grasping onto them?[11]

The theatre
Can you let your thoughts/emotions be like characters on the stage of a theatre and you are watching them enter and exit the stage as a member of the audience?

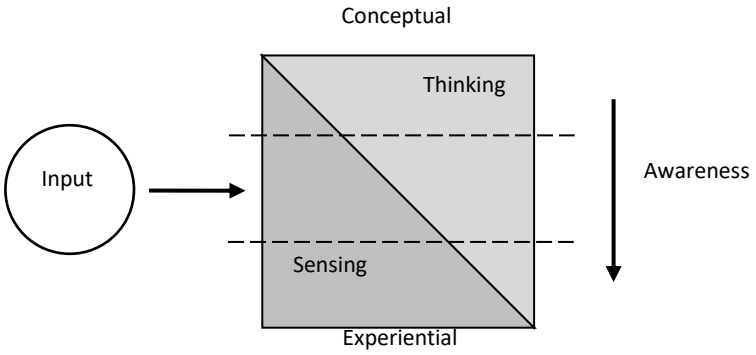
Leaves on a stream
Can you let your thoughts float past you like leaves on a stream?

Bubbles in a lake
Can you let your mind be like a clear lake? Can you let your thoughts - and the emotions behind them - be like passing bubbles in the lake that 'pop' and disappear in the light of awareness?

Other methods

Locating thoughts in the body
Can you find sensations and feelings in the body associated with your thoughts? This might help you become less 'heady' if you are dominated by thinking. If you find tension in the body related to a thought/emotion then relaxing around that physically might also reduce mental and emotional tension.[12] Investigate whether it's possible to have a strong emotionally charged thought at the exact same moment as body awareness. You'll probably find that you can't, so coming back to the body can interrupt the momentum of a thought process by calling you back to the present moment.

This points to what is sometimes called the 'two modes of mind': Thinking and sensing. Many of us need to move from being dominated by the conceptual to being more in touch with the sensing mind. We cannot 'inhabit' both modes at once.[13] You could say this chart describes 'Coming to our Senses!'



11 Segal, Williams and Teasdale (2002), p. 250, for this and the two following images.
12 *Living Well with Pain and Illness,* Burch V., London: Piatkus; 2008, chapter 16 for more on working with thoughts and emotions.
13 Mark Williams in a lecture at a mindfulness conference in Bangor University, 2011.

Labelling
Drop in a label for the type of thoughts and emotions you are experiencing to cut through a train of thought, e.g. catastrophising, remembering, worrying, planning, rehearsing etc. You need to be careful with this method as it can make you a bit alienated if you drop the label in too soon and don't acknowledge the associated emotions. You need to acknowledge these emotions with a kindly and gentle awareness and then drop in the label to help cut through the hold the thought/emotional process has over you.

Give your mind a big field
If your thoughts and emotions are very strong and it is impossible to come back to your object of meditation, then you can try taking your object of meditation *to* your thoughts/emotions, e.g. if you are fantasising then try breathing *with* the fantasy and you may find your mind becomes bored with the fantasy now that you are no longer fighting it. Gradually you can shift your awareness from the fantasy to the breath in a more integrated way rather than wrenching it back. The mind will just react if you do this.

Be a mind whisperer
A similar method is to be like a horse whisperer. This is a method for training a horse where you let it run free until it settles and comes to rest of its own accord. You then engage the horse's attention and gently earn its trust. This is a more effective method than the traditional one of 'breaking in' a horse with force. You can use this method if your mind is very active, like a wild horse. Rather than trying to forcefully dominate it and rein it in, you can let it roam, but with awareness of what you are doing. Very gradually your mind may well settle because you are not opposing it and you can then guide it gently back to the structure of the meditation practice in line with your overall intention.

Nurture skilful thoughts
As you become more sensitive in meditation you can choose to direct your thoughts in a skilful direction. You may decide to reflect in your practice to lead to personal growth and insight. You'll have thoughts about your deepening experience in meditation and you can choose to rest your awareness with these thoughts and associated positive emotions, which will build positive momentum and karma.

Summary
There are two main approaches to working with thoughts/emotions.

1. Acknowledging and letting go
When working with discursive thoughts this is the first strategy to try. A lot of our thinking is inconsequential repetitive chatter, which is not particularly emotionally charged. This strategy works with these kinds of mental events by adopting a mindful stance (sati) of:

- Looking 'at' thoughts, not 'from' them and gaining perspective.
- Acknowledging thoughts and letting them go. "Hello thought, thank you thought, goodbye thought"
- Seeing thoughts as:
    - The thought train.
    - Clouds in the sky
    - The theatre
    - Leaves on a stream
    - Bubbles in a lake
- Asking if you're blocking and suppressing thoughts and the associated emotions, or over-identifying with the content of thoughts and caught up in reactions?
- Noticing if you are re-thinking the same thoughts? Can you let them go a little?
- Noticing where the thoughts are expressing themselves in the body? Move from 'conceptual mode' to 'sensing mode'.
- Labelling thoughts e.g. worry, rehearsing etc.
- Just saying "stop it" (with kindness of course!) when you realise you are caught up in a minor distraction, and come back to the object of awareness.

2. Breathing with the thoughts and emotions and giving them space so they can naturally subside
This is the method to apply when working with emotionally charged thinking that keeps on recurring no matter how much you try to 'let it go'. It is the method of 'turning towards' experience and giving the mind/heart a big field as you *breathe with* whatever is occurring. Gradually this will help ground whatever is happening in the body but in a broad and gentle, non-oppositional way. 'What we resist persists' is a common saying. By resisting charged thoughts, we in fact end up feeding them. By giving them some mental and emotional space they often calm down.

- Giving your mind a big field and being like a mind whisperer
- Recognising strong emotions, 'turning towards them', breathing with them and gradually guiding awareness back to rest low in the body.
- Noticing where the thoughts are expressing themselves in the body.
- Spending time developing *metta* towards yourself and whatever distress/emotion you are feeling/distracted by.

Nurture skilful thoughts and allow your mind to stay with these (including outside meditation). Use directed thinking to take your meditation and insights deeper.

Contemplation of *Dhammas*

The Pali term *dhammas* can assume a variety of meanings, depending on the context in which it occurs. Most translators take the term in the *Satipatthana Sutta* to mean 'mental object', in the sense of whatever can become an object of mind, in contradistinction to the object of the other five senses. However, Anālayo suggests that this rendering is a little strange as the other three *satipatthana*s can also become objects of the mind. What this *satipatthana* is actually concerned with are specific mental qualities (such as the five hindrances and the seven awakening factors), and analyses of experience into specific categories (such as the five aggregates, the six sense-spheres, and the four noble truths). These mental factors and categories constitute central aspects of the Buddha's teaching – the Dhamma - and are not in themselves the objects of meditation, but constitute frameworks or points of reference to be applied during contemplation.

In the fourth *satipatthana* there is clearly a temporal progression towards realisation involved: from the hindrances through to the noble truths. Based on a sufficient degree of mental stability through overcoming hindrances, contemplation of *dhammas* proceeds to an analysis of subjective personality, in terms of the five aggregates, and to an analysis of the relation between subjective personality and the outer world, in terms of the six senses. These two analyses form a convenient basis for developing the awakening factors, whose successful establishment constitutes a necessary condition for awakening. To awaken is to fully understand the four noble truths 'as they really are', this being the final exercise among the contemplations of *dhammas* and the successful culmination of *satipatthana* practice.

Five hindrances → five aggregates → six sense-spheres → seven awakening factors → four noble truths

In contrast to the previous *satipatthana*s, contemplation of *dhammas* is particularly concerned with recognising the conditioned nature of the phenomena under observation. In fact, the main instruction for most of the contemplations of *dhammas* directly mentions conditionality, while in the previous *satipatthana*s this happens only in the refrain i.e. the other sections of the *sutta* simply cultivate awareness of the presence of absence of experience of body/*vedana*/*citta* so this is a very interesting development in this section.

Why do we particularly look at hindrances/awakening factors in this study course

In some of the versions of the *Satipatthana Sutta*, the hindrances and the awakening factors are all that are listed under the contemplation of *dhammas*. Therefore this is the unanimously accepted core of the contemplation of *dhammas*, i.e. the five hindrances and seven awakening factors. The meditation for this week is about developing awareness of how these two sets of experiences play out in life, as they are so practically useful on the path to ever-greater

wisdom and compassion. As in other sections of the *dhammas* contemplation, *the conditioned nature* of the hindrances/awakening factors is also of crucial importance.

The sections in more detail

The five hindrances
The hindrances literally 'hinder' the proper functioning of the mind. One is unable to understand one's own good or that of others, or to gain concentration or insight. Therefore learning to withstand the impact of the hindrances, with awareness, is a crucial skill for one's progress on the path.

We can see how contemplation of the hindrances is a more specific version of contemplation of states of mind from the previous *satipatthana*, since it develops awareness of the three unwholesome roots (greed, hatred and delusion) into awareness of the five hindrances. However in contrast to the preceding *satipatthana*, contemplation of hindrances covers not only the presence or absence of a hindrance but also the conditions underlying the presence or absence of it.

We can use the similes to help us see whether we are under the sway of hindrance or not:

Hindrance	Simile for presence	Simile for absence
Sensual desire	Water mixed with dye	Freedom from debt
Aversion	Boiling water	Freedom from disease
Sloth and torpor	Water thick with algae	Freedom from imprisonment
Restlessness and anxiety	Water stirred by the wind	Freedom from slavery
Doubt	Dark and muddy water	Freedom from danger

The importance of recognising the hindrances
If one recognises the presence of a hindrance and contemplates it as a *satipatthana* meditation, one's practice will lead to purification of the mind. This technique of simple recognition constitutes an ingenious way of turning obstacles to meditation into meditation objects. *Practised in this way, bare awareness of the hindrance becomes a middle path between suppression and indulgence.* Once the hindrances are at least temporarily removed, we can then contemplate the awareness of their absence. Absence of the hindrances forms a starting point for the spiral path i.e. a causal sequence that leads from delight, joy, tranquillity, and happiness, to concentration and the attainment of absorption and Insight.

Conditions for the presence or absence of a hindrance
After the first stage of recognising the presence or absence of a hindrance, the second stage of the same contemplation asks us to be aware of the conditions

- that have led to the arising of the hindrance (diagnosis).
- that assist in removing an arisen hindrance (cure).
- that prevent future arising of the hindrance (prevention).

If we find that awareness of the hindrance is not enough to dispel it, then more specific antidotes may be required such as

- contemplating the consequences of indulging the hindrance and
- cultivating the opposite, e.g. developing loving kindness to counteract aversion.

Although we may need to apply more active antidotes, in the context of the *Satipatthana Sutta* the emphasis is not on actively opposing a hindrance, but on *clearly recognising the hindrance together with the conditions related to its presence or absence*.

Overcoming the five hindrances is a matter of crucial importance for all types of meditative practices. With increasing meditative skill it will become possible to dispel any hindrance as soon as it is recognised, as quickly as a drop of water evaporates when dropped on a hot frying pan! (This is a simile used in other texts). The centrally important factor for removing a hindrance, whether slowly or quickly, is *sati*, or mindfulness, since without awareness of the presence or arising of a hindrance, little can be done in terms of prevention or removal. This task of *mindful recognition* is the central theme of contemplation of the hindrances.

The five aggregates
This is an analysis of the subjective personality into what is also called the five *skandhas* or heaps:

- Material Form (*rupa*)
- Feelings (*vedana*)
- Cognition (*sanna*)
- Volitions (*sankhara*)
- Consciousness (*vinnana*)

In the sutta there are two stages to the contemplation:

- Clear recognition of the nature of each aggregate
- Awareness of its arising and passing away (its impermanent nature)

This particular *satipatthana* contemplation has outstanding potential to help us gain realisation. It enables us to understand and develop some degree of detachment from the various aspects of what we experience as 'self'. Believing ourselves to have a fixed and unchanging self is of course one of our fundamental delusions that leads to suffering, so an ability to break down one's sense of self to these different aspects and see its impermanence is of course a profound meditation practice. The sequence of the five aggregates lead from the gross physical body to increasingly subtle mental aspects.

To provide a practical illustration of the five aggregates: during the present act of reading, consciousness is aware of each word through the physical sense door of the eye. Cognition understands the meaning of each word, while feelings are responsible for the affective mood: whether one feels positive, negative, or neutral about this particular piece of information. Because of volition one either reads on, or stops to consider a passage in more depth, or even stops reading all together.

We can use similes from the discourses to describe the five aggregates.

Aggregate	Simile to describe it
Form	Insubstantial nature of a lump of foam carried away by river
Feelings	Impermanent bubbles that form on the surface of water during rain.
Cognition	The illusory nature of a mirage
Volitions	The essenceless nature of a plantain tree (because it has no heartwood).
Consciousness	The deceptive performance of the magician

Owing to the influence of ignorance, these five aggregates are experienced as the embodiment of the notion, or concept, "I am". From the unawakened point of view, the material body is "where I am", feelings are "how I am", cognitions are "what I am" (perceiving), volitions are "why I am" (acting), and consciousness is "whereby I am" (experiencing). In this way, each aggregate offers its own contribution to the reassuring illusion that "I am".

It is important to understand the distinction between the Buddha's teaching on the emptiness of a fixed and unchanging Self and mere nothingness, in the sense of annihilation. (This was a position the Buddha was always careful to avoid.) It might be helpful to distinguish between "Self" (permanent, substantial, etc) and "self" (empirical and changing). Nanananda sums it up by saying "accept yourself – and reject yourself."

A well-known simile of relevance in this context is that of a chariot which does not exist as a substantial thing apart from, or in addition to, its various parts. Just as the term "chariot" is simply a convention, so the superimposition of "I"-dentifications on experience are nothing but conventions. On the other hand, to reject the existence of an independent, substantial chariot does not mean that it is impossible to ride in the conditioned and impermanent functional assemblage of parts to which the concept "chariot" refers. Similarly, to deny the existence of a self does not imply a denial of the conditioned and impermanent interaction of the five aggregates. This is the middle way between eternalism and nihilism that the Buddha discovered when he came to Enlightenment.

The key aspect for understanding the true nature of the aggregates, and thereby of oneself, is awareness of their impermanent and conditioned nature. (In the discourses, contemplation of the impermanent nature of the aggregates, and thereby of oneself, stands out as a particularly prominent cause of gaining realisation). The Buddha spoke of this particular contemplation as his "lion's roar". In practical terms, contemplating the arising and passing away of each aggregate can be undertaken by observing change taking place in every aspect of one's personal experience, be these, for example, the cycle of breaths or circulation of the blood, the change of feelings from pleasant to unpleasant, the variety of cognitions and volitional reactions arising in the mind, or the changing nature of consciousness, arising in this or that sense door.

The six sense spheres and the fetters

When we contemplate the sense-spheres, we direct awareness to the six "internal" and "external" sense-spheres and to the fetter arising in dependence on them. Again this contemplation helps us undermine the misleading sense of a substantial "I" as the independent experiencer of sense objects. Awareness directed to each of these sense-spheres will reveal that subjective experience is not a compact unit, but rather a compound made up of six distinct "spheres", each of which is dependently arisen.

Each of these sense-spheres includes both the sense organ and the sense object. Besides the five physical senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body) and their respective object (sight, sound, smell, flavour, and touch), the mind is included as the sixth sense, together with its mental objects. In the present context, mind represents mainly the activity of thought.
The fact that the *satipatthana* instruction directs awareness to each sense organ points to the need to recognise the subjective bias inherent in each process of perception. The influence of this bias has a decisive effect on the first stages of perception and can lead to the arising of a fetter. Such subsequent reactions are often based on qualities and attributes assumed to belong to the perceived object. In actual fact, these qualities and attributes are often projected onto the object by the perceiver. *Satipatthana* contemplation in this way can lead to recognising the influence of personal biases and tendencies on the process of perception. Contemplating in this way will uncover the root cause for the arising of unwholesome mental reactions. The task of *sati* is to observe the fetter that can arise in dependence on sense and object.

The discourses illustrates what happens between the sense and the object with the image of two bulls, bound together by a yoke. Just as their bondage is not caused by either of the bulls, but by the yoke, so too the fetter should not be imputed to either its inner or outer conditions (for example eye and forms), but to the binding force of desire.

In this context fetter can be taken to mean causing bondage. Often there is a particular list which is given for the fetters, but in this context it is described as referring to the force of desire and aversion in regard to whatever is experienced.

Analysis into:

- Eye + visible forms → fetter
- Ear + sounds → fetter
- Nose + odours → fetter
- Tongue + flavours → fetter
- Body + tangible objects → fetter
- Mind + mental objects → fetter

A mindful observation of the conditions that lead to the arising of a fetter constitutes the second stage of contemplation of the sense-spheres. The task of awareness in this case, as with the hindrances, is non-reactive observation. Such a non-reactive observation is directed towards individual instances in which perception causes desire and bondage, and also towards discovering the general pattern of one's mental inclinations, in order to be able to prevent the future arising of a fetter. As with the contemplation of hindrances, the second stage of contemplation of the sense-spheres follows a progressive pattern from diagnosis, via cure, to prevention: we become aware of the conditions:

- That have led to be arising of the fetter (diagnosis)
- That assist in removing an arisen fetter (cure)
- That prevent future arising in the fetter (prevention)

Contemplation of the sense-spheres is more refined than contemplation of the hindrances, as attention is here directed to the first stage in a perpetual process, which, if left unattended, can lead to the arising of unwholesome mental reactions. By directing sati to the early stages of the perceptual process, one can directly counteract automatic and unconscious ways of reacting that are so typical of habits.

The seven awakening factors
Contemplation of the awakening factors proceeds similarly to the contemplation of the hindrances: first awareness turns to the presence or absence of the mental quality in question, and then to the conditions that led to its presence or absence. However, while in the case of contemplation of the hindrances awareness is concerned with the conditions for the future non-arising, with the awakening factors the task is to know how to develop and firmly establish these beneficial mental qualities.

Knowing the presence or absence of the awakening factors
The awakening factors are:

- Mindfulness (*sati*)
- Investigation-of-*dhammas* (*dhamma-vicaya*) (investigation of subjective experience based on *dhamma*, i.e. is it wholesome or unwholesome)
- Energy (*viriya*)
- Joy (*piti*)
- Tranquillity (*passaddhi*)
- Concentration (*samadhi*)
- Equanimity (*uppekkha*)

After the first stage of recognising the presence or absence of each awakening factor, the second stage of the same contemplation asks us to be aware of the conditions that led to its presence or absence:

- If present – knowing the conditions that lead to further development and perfection.
- If absent – knowing the conditions that lead to arising.

Like the contemplation of the hindrances, *the instructions for contemplating the awakening factors do not mention any active endeavour to set up or maintain a particular awakening factor, apart from the task of setting up awareness. However, just as the mere presence of sati can counter a hindrance, so the presence of sati can promote the arising of the other awakening factors.* Besides providing the foundation for the other factors, *sati* is moreover the one awakening factor whose development is beneficial at any time and on all occasions.

The remaining six factors can be split into two groups of three:

Investigation of *dhammas* Energy Joy	For when the mind is sluggish and deficient in energy
Tranquillity Concentration Equanimity	For when the mind is excited and over-energetic

The awakening factors are a sequence where one quality develops out of the preceding one. The whole set of the seven factors can be understood to describe progress of *Satipatthana* practice to culminate in a level of deep equanimity:

On the basis of well-established mindfulness, one investigates the nature of subjective reality (investigation of *dhammas*). Once sustained investigation gains momentum (energy), with

growing insight the object of contemplation becomes clearer and a meditator feels inspired (joy) to continue with practice. If at this point the danger of getting carried away by elation and agitation can be avoided, continued contemplation leads to a state of calmness (tranquillity), when the mind stays effortlessly with its meditation object without succumbing to distraction (concentration). With maturing insight, the process culminates in a state of firm equanimity and detachment (equanimity). At this level of practice, a deep sense of completely "letting go" prevails. Equanimity and mental balance is the consummation of the other six awakening factors and is the suitable mental condition for the event of realisation.

Awakening factors and the hindrances
The beneficial effect of the awakening factors stands in direct opposition to the detrimental effect of the hindrances, a contrast frequently mentioned in discourses. Both the sets form aspects of *satipatthana* contemplation and are of central importance in cultivating mental conditions conducive to realisation.

We can see how the awakening factors directly act as antidote to the hindrances.

Investigation of dhammas	Overcomes doubt
Energy (which can manifest either mentally or physically)	Overcomes sloth and torpor
Tranquillity (mental and physical calmness)	Overcomes restlessness and worry

There is not an explicit relationship between desire and hatred and the awakening factors but we can see the spirit with which cultivation of the awakening factors can help us diminish the hindrances.

Practical application of the awakening factors
Developing the awakening factors can be combined with a broad range of meditation exercises, including, contemplation of a decaying corpse, the divine abodes (*brahma viharas*), mindfulness of breathing, contemplation of the three characteristics etc. This indicates that to contemplate the awakening factors does not mean that one has to relinquish one's primary object of meditation. Rather, one is aware of these seven mental qualities as aspects of one's progress towards insight during actual practice, and one consciously develops and balances them so that the contemplation of one's primary object can give rise to awakening. There is a sense of mental mastery in this ability to oversee the development of insight during *satipatthana* practice and to supervise the harmonious interaction of the awakening factors. The discourses illustratively compare this sense of mental mastery to being able to choose any garment from a full wardrobe.

The four noble truths
The first noble truth is knowing there is *dukkha*. Often we translate *dukkha* as "suffering", but a more satisfactory translation is "unsatisfactoriness". The Buddha explained that "whatever is felt is included within *dukkha*" to refer to the impermanent nature of all conditioned phenomena. We know that all feelings are not "suffering", nor is their impermanence "suffering", but all feelings are "unsatisfactory", since none of them can provide lasting satisfaction.

The second noble truth suggests that some form of attachment is what leads us to experience phenomena in the world as unsatisfactory.

The third noble truth shows us that once all traces of attachment and craving have been eradicated, such suffering is also eradicated. So we can see that phenomena in the world are not inherently unsatisfactory, it is just the way the unawakened mind experiences them. This is indeed the underlying theme of the four noble truths as a whole: that the suffering caused by attachment and craving can be overcome by awakening. For an arahat, for example, the unsatisfactory nature of all conditioned phenomena is no longer capable of causing suffering.

The fourth noble truth treats the conditions of such overcoming in detail, by depicting a practical way to be followed, that is, the noble eightfold path.

The four noble truths express the essence of the Buddha's awakening and form the central theme of what is recorded as the first formal discourse. Therefore they are absolutely central to the Buddha's doctrine.

The underlying fourfold structure parallels the fourfold method of diagnosis and prescription used in ancient Indian medicine. This underlies the pragmatic orientation of the four noble truths as a practical investigation of reality

Disease	*Dukkha*
Virus	Craving
Health	Nibbana
Cure	Path

Each of the four noble truths makes its own demand on the practitioner:

Dukkha has to be "understood"	Aggregates
Origination of *dukkha* has to be "abandoned"	Ignorance and craving
Cessation of *dukkha* has to be "realised"	Knowledge and freedom
Practical path to this realisation has to be "developed"	Calm and Insight

Not only do the four noble truths, listed as the final meditation practice in this *satipatthana*, constitute the conclusion of a series of contemplations, they can also be related to each of the other contemplations of *dhammas*.

The commentaries go further by relating each of the meditation practices described throughout the *Satipatthana Sutta* to the scheme of the four noble truths. In the *Satipatthana* itself the contemplations of the hindrances and of the awakening factors are structured according to an underlying pattern that parallels the diagnostic scheme of the four noble truths, since each observation turns to the presence of the respective mental quality, its absence, and the causes of its presence or absence.

Hindrances and Awakening Factors for use during Meditation
Place this page on the floor in front of you in meditation, if you find it useful.

Are you experiencing a hindrance?

- Sensual desire.
- Aversion.
- Sloth and torpor.
- Restlessness and anxiety.
- Doubt.

If so:

- Have you clearly recognised it?
- Does recognising it with clarity and *sati* weaken its hold over your heart/mind?
- Can you see what conditions caused this hindrance to arise?
- Do you have a sense of what conditions to put in place to try to prevent the future arising of this hindrance?

Are you experiencing an awakening factor (*bojjhanga*)?
(Note that these are progressive and one may grow out of the preceding one if you nurture your experience with sati/gentle kindly awareness.)

- Mindfulness.
- Investigation-of-*dhammas (investigation of subjective experience based on the dhamma, i.e. is experience wholesome/skilful or unwholesome/unskilful?)*
- Energy.
- Joy.
- Tranquillity.
- Concentration.
- Equanimity.

If so:

- Have you clearly recognised it?
- Does recognising it with clarity and *sati* naturally strengthen its presence in your heart/mind so that it can blossom and grow?
- Can you see what conditions to put in place to cause this awakening factor to arise in the future?

2.6

What is the Sangha? Exploring Spiritual Community

Contents

Front Image: Thangka of Buddha's life, used with permission of Clear-Vision, detail.

Module Compiled by Saccanama, questions updated by Padmavajri and Vajrashura

This module aims to explore, in greater depth than in *Year One*, the nature of the Sangha and how we can go for refuge to it. As is often the case, Sangharakshita has something distinctive to say about this fundamental aspect of Buddhism. His approach combines both an understanding of what the Buddhist tradition has to say about Sangha and an insight into what that might mean for Westerners in the modern day-and-age. After exploring the traditional forms of the Sangha, he considers what a group is, what a positive group is and what a 'true individual' might be. He also suggests a third order of consciousness above and beyond group and individual consciousness which arises when mature individuals operate in deep harmony with one another.

The module also explores the range of human relationships and gives much practical advice on how to deepen our experience of Sangha. There are chapters on the role of a guru; the importance of friendship; and qualities such as fidelity and gratitude.

Primary study material
The primary study material for this term is the book *What is the Sangha?*, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579311.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/what-is-the-sangha-ebook/

You will need to have a copy of this to use throughout the module and it will feature again in other parts of the course. The individual sections to be read are outlined for each unit below. Whilst there is not enough time in this module to study the whole book, I hope that you will find time to read it all as there are many other interesting topics contained within it.

***Gratitude and Giving Workshop* as optional Week 9**
At the end of the module there is an optional week to help fund the spreading of the Dharma. A *Gratitude and Giving Evening* is a workshop based on ideas presented in this module. It will stimulate discussion and personal reflection on what you have been given through your involvement in Sangha, how others benefit from this involvement, and how you can pass these benefits on.

The evening is presented by either one or two members of the study group and will require **approximately 3 hours preparation time**, so it's best to decide **at least 2-3 weeks in advance** who'll run this evening so that there is plenty of time to prepare. For more details on how to run this evening, see section 2.6.**9**.

2.6.**1**

Going for Refuge to the Sangha

Please read the *Introduction* and chapter 1, *The Sangha Jewel*, i.e. pages 9-22. This is a short chapter introducing the topic and placing the Sangha in its traditional context of 'Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels'.

1. On pages 15-16, Sangharakshita says that the Three Jewels come into being in a particular order and suggests that this is also how they have been adopted in the West. In what order did you become aware of the Three Jewels in your own life?

2. Why is the Sangha to be held as an ideal on the same level as the Buddha and Dharma?

3. The Buddha told the Vajjians "they would prosper as long as they continued to meet regularly, in full and frequent assemblies, conducting their business in harmony and dispersing in harmony". What relevance does the Buddha's advice to the Vajjians (pp. 18-19) have for your own participation in the Sangha?

4. *"The real significance of the deep individual-to-individual contact that Going for Refuge to the Sangha involves lies in a simple psychological fact: we get to know ourselves best in relation to other people" (p.20).*
   To what extent is this your experience?

5. How do you develop and maintain your individuality, whilst living in community and connection with others?

6. *"The heart of the Sangha is kalyāṇa mitratā .... Kalyāṇa mitratā is not half the spiritual life; it's the whole of it" (p. 19).*
   How do you respond to these statements?

7. *"There is no future for Buddhism without a truly united and committed spiritual community, dedicated to practising together" (p.22).*
   Do you agree with this statement? Why might it be true?

8. In practical terms, how do you go for refuge to the Sangha?

9. What was the effect of your early experience of Buddhism in terms of relationship to Sangha?

Please read chapters 2 and 4 of *Part 1*, i.e. pp. 23-34 and 41-50. These chapters paint a broad picture of the development of the Buddhist Sangha and of other spiritual communities through history.

1. The principle Buddhist festival dates that we celebrate within the Triratna Buddhist Community are Buddha Day (the full moon in May), Dharma Day (the full moon in July), Sangha Day (the full moon in November), Parinirvāṇa Day (15th February) and Padmasambhava Day (usually in September or October).

   Have you made a connection with celebrating these Buddhist festivals? If you wanted to celebrate these festivals, how could you contribute to them?

2. *"It is very much a feature of modern Buddhist life that one tries to find ways of being a full-time practitioner whatever one's lifestyle. But lifestyle does make a difference" (p.24).*
   Do you think being a full-time Buddhist practitioner living "in the world" can be as effective as a full-time monastic life? How does your lifestyle "make a difference"?

3. *"Buddhism is essentially a spiritual community" (p.47).*
   What would Buddhism be like without a Sangha?

4. *"It has to be said that the seeds of this degeneration were in Christianity from the beginning – as they are, perhaps, in all forms of monotheism" (p.48).*
   What might this statement mean?

5. What lessons can be learnt from Sangharakshita's brief sketch of the history of spiritual communities?

2.6.**3**
Individuality: the Essence of the Sangha

Please read chapter 3 of *Part 1*, i.e. pp. 35-40, and the *Introduction* to *Part 2*, i.e. 87-93. (Chapter 9 of *Part 2* will be studied in the *Year Four* module on *Evolutionary Buddhism*). Sangharakshita here introduces his key term of the 'True Individual'.

1. *"I have presented this idea that some people are radically more developed than others in rather stark terms, but it is absolutely fundamental to Buddhist thinking. It is vital that we appreciate how significant this distinction between the individual and the non-individual is" (p.35).*
   Why is it so vital to appreciate this distinction?

2. *"Where non-individual organise themselves together, there can never be a spiritual community, but only a group" (p.35).*
   Is this your experience? How can you tell that it is a group you are in, and not a spiritual community?

3. *"An individual happily accepts this [spiritual] death as a necessary condition of growth" (p37).*
   Have you experienced resistance to this spiritual death in your Dharma life? In what kinds of conditions are you able to be open to this letting go? How might you encourage these conditions more?

4. Do you have a sense of what the first three fetters mean in your own life? How do you work to overcome them?

5. *"If we try to imagine ourselves radically changed and then look carefully at this imagined self, we will find that it bears a striking, fundamental, and detailed resemblance to the way we are now" (p37).*
   How might we more imaginatively connect with a radically different sense of ourselves fully transformed by the Dharma?

6. *"Only an individual, one who is integrated, a unified personality, can commit himself or herself in such a way as actually to make spiritual progress" (p38).*
   Do you find our lack of integration prevents us from making progress? How? How might we work more consciously on this?

7. The third fetter "is to do with the fact that we tend to want to get something from our spiritual practice that has nothing to do with its true purpose" (p38). What might you be wanting to get from our practice that has nothing do with its true purpose?

8. Which of the primary characteristics of the individual strikes you most and why? Which one do you need most to work on? Which one hinders you the most in your Dharma life?

2.6.**4**

The Group, the Positive Group, and the Spiritual Community

Please read chapters 5, 6 and 7 of *Part 1*, i.e. pp.51-77. Following on from his exploration of individuality, Sangharakshita now explores the collective aspects of our life.

1. What are the primary characteristics of the group?

2. Which groups do you belong to?

3. What is the purpose of the spiritual community and how does it differ from the purpose of the group?

4. *"The spiritual community consists of individuals who are in deep personal contact with one another" (p.56).*
   To what extent do you feel that you have such deep personal contact in your own life?

5. What are your own associations with the term 'authority'? Where do they come from?

6. What is your experience of behaving as a group member? Do you project onto others? What is your experience of group behaviour in the Sangha?

7. What is the difference between power and love/mettā?

8. What role does the positive group have in our spiritual development and how does it differ from the spiritual community?

9. Why do we need a new society and what is its role?

10. What would your pure land be like? What would be around you? Are there boundaries? People? Archetypal beings? What qualities?

11. What is it that you really want from your association with the Triratna Buddhist Community?

2.6.**5**
Effective Going for Refuge and the Third Order of Consciousness

This unit explores the role of ordination in our Sangha as well as Sangharakshita's teaching on the 'third order of consciousness', which is not otherwise included in *What is the Sangha?*

Please read the following extract from Subhuti's book *Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition* (pp.116-128). Note that it has been slightly edited following our change of name to Triratna.

Ordination As the Expression of Effective Going for Refuge
For Sangharakshita, 'ordination' is the formal expression of Effective Going for Refuge. Until Going for Refuge has become effective, there can be no ordination because there is, as yet, no effective commitment. One is not yet able to dedicate one's life to the Three Jewels. There is no need for further ordinations after Effective Going for Refuge because the act of Going for Refuge contains within it all aspects of the spiritual path. There is no need for the Bodhisattva ordination because Going for Refuge has an altruistic dimension implicit within it. If one is actually Going for Refuge there must be a deepening element of concern for others. There is no need for Tantric initiation because Effective Going for Refuge is the activation of one's spiritual energies. If one puts one's Going for Refuge into effect, then, in time, all its different aspects and levels will be revealed.

In deepening one's Going for Refuge, one may wish to study and practise particular aspects of the path, take up new meditation practices, or observe a particular life-style, such as a monastic one. However, these do not require new ordinations. In effectively Going for Refuge one has already made the effective commitment to spiritual life that is now being worked out in detail. To undertake the visualisation of a particular Buddha or Bodhisattva does not need a new initiation. One has already made the crucial connection with all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas in effectively Going for Refuge. A ceremony might mark becoming a monk but that ceremony would consist in taking certain vows, not a new ordination.

Ordination has two principal aspects: expression of Going for Refuge and acceptance into the spiritual community of those already Effectively Going for Refuge. The explicit expression of Going for Refuge is integral to spiritual growth. One needs to bring it into the public arena, to make it known, so that it can become part of one's own identity. It is not enough to 'know it in one's heart', it must be expressed to become effective. Ordination provides the opportunity for this expression. Sangharakshita is very critical of modern attitudes that devalue formal expression, since they reinforce an idea of the individual as isolated from all context. He upholds the basic psychological truth that, for the most part, until an inner change has been expressed it has not really taken place.

Ordination also marks one's acceptance into the effective spiritual community. One expresses one's commitment before a senior member of the sangha. He or she witnesses one's Going for Refuge and confirms that it coincides with his or her own Going for Refuge. In publicly witnessing one's Effective Going for Refuge, that senior member of the sangha acknowledges that one is now a member of the sangha too. Because he or she accepts that one is Going for Refuge effectively and sincerely, the sangha as a whole can do so too. From that point on, one enters into an entirely new relationship with all other members of the spiritual community.

According to Sangharakshita, entry into the spiritual community involves participation in a new mode of awareness, a special kind of consciousness common to, in a sense even shared by, a number of truly human individuals who follow the same spiritual disciplines and the same spiritual ideals, or who are engaged in the same creative activities. (*The Priceless Jewel*, p.155).

This 'collective' consciousness is very difficult to define, there being no suitable term in the English language, or indeed in any other European language, unless the Russian 'sobornost' comes near it to some extent. (*The Priceless Jewel*, p.155).

It is, however, very different from the collective consciousness of the group and from individual consciousness, being a 'third order' of consciousness above and beyond them both. Since this is one of Sangharakshita's most important teachings that has considerable practical consequence, we must explore it in more detail.

The Individual and the Group

We have already seen that Sangharakshita sees the total evolutionary process as consisting of two great phases: a Higher and a Lower. The fulcrum of evolution is the self-aware individual who stands at the summit of the Lower Evolution, as its final product, and at the threshold of the Higher, as its future subject. The subject of the Lower Evolution is the species, for individual organisms do not themselves evolve but simply participate in the evolution of the species to which they belong. The individual however 'is a whole species in himself' (*Peace is a Fire*, p.105) and may traverse the entire Higher Evolution by his own efforts. The human race as a whole straddles the Lower and Higher Evolutions. The great majority of its members are most of the time preoccupied with the concerns of the Lower Evolution; only a few seriously dedicate themselves to the task of further development as individuals. Although all human beings are capable of self-consciousness, most never develop it to any extent. Those who do not develop greater self-consciousness remain immersed in the human equivalent of the Lower Evolutionary species: the group. Sangharakshita has coined the terms 'statistical individuals' or 'social units' for individual human beings still immersed in the group, to distinguish them from the individual, in his special use of the term. (*The True Individual*, *Mitrata 17*, p.6).

In Sangharakshita's usage, the term 'group' acquires the specific meaning of the human Lower Evolutionary collectivity, bonded by ties that are 'usually more or less material'. (*The True Individual*, *Mitrata 17*, p.7). The group in the widest sense is made up of numerous greater or smaller groups, sometimes overlapping and sometimes antagonistic. Each of these groups is bound together by the ties of blood and kinship, of soil and culture, or of economic and political interest. They are united by mutual need, the need for security being an especially powerful and basic bonding agent.

> We can define the group as a collectivity organized for its own survival, in which the interests of the individual are subordinated to those of the collectivity. The group, or collectivity, is also a power-structure in which the ultimate sanction is force. The group did not just make survival possible for its members; in the case of humans, it

made it possible for them to enjoy higher and higher levels of material prosperity and culture. It made possible the emergence of folk art and ethnic religion; it made possible the emergence of civilization. But there was a price to be paid by the proto-individual, and that price was conformity with the group. The individual was regarded as being essentially a member of the group. The individual had no existence separate from the group, or apart from the group.

- *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, pp.21-22.

Groups tend to be conservative and conformist, granting their members little latitude for deviation from their norms, since deviation threatens their survival. The 'statistical individuals' who make up a group do not, even dare not, think for themselves. They derive their values and their outlook on life from the groups to which they belong. If one is to evolve as an individual one must separate oneself from the group. One must learn to think and feel for oneself, accepting full responsibility for one's own life and future.

The Higher Evolution commences when the individual emerges from the group. The primary characteristic of the individual is self-awareness.

When one is aware of being aware, one is conscious of oneself as an individual, conscious of oneself as separate from the group. One is conscious of one's ability to think and feel and act differently from the group, even against the group. An individual of this type is a true individual. Such a person is not only self-aware but is emotionally positive, full of good will towards all living beings. He is also spontaneous and creative because he is not determined in his thinking, feeling, or acting, by previously existing mental, emotional, and psychological patterns – whether his own or those of other people. The true individual is also responsible, aware of his own needs, aware of others' needs, and prepared and willing to act accordingly.

- *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, p.24.

Elsewhere Sangharakshita speaks of the individual as characterised by:

... emotional positivity, responsibility, intelligence, creativity, spontaneity, imagination, and insight.

- *The Priceless Jewel*, p.155

Sangharakshita's use of the expression 'individual' has sometimes been misunderstood. One critic accused Sangharakshita and his new Buddhist movement of using 'modernist narratives' and of appearing to 'embrace enthusiastically the personalist understanding of religious significance which developed in liberal Protestantism'. (P. A. Mellor, *'Protestant Buddhism', in Religion*, Lancaster University, January 1991, p.80.) Sangharakshita deals extensively with the assumptions underlying this interpretation in his *The FWBO and 'Protestant Buddhism': An Affirmation and a Protest*. He makes it quite clear that he does not agree with 'modernist narratives of the self' or with 'the personalist understanding of religious significance':

To me the idea that there exists a self which is pure, that this self is enslaved by socially imposed beliefs and customs, and that all one has to do in order to 'be oneself' and realize one's potentiality is to break free of them, is simply false.

- *The FWBO and Protestant Buddhism*, p.34.

The notion of 'the individual' must be seen within the overall context of his teaching and not interpreted in terms of modern individualism.

To make this point clear, Sangharakshita carefully distinguishes the individual from the individualist.

> The individualist still 'shares' the consciousness of the group.... The individualist has, we could say, a larger 'share' of this group consciousness than other members of the group, and therefore asserts his or her own interests at the expense of others in the group. The individual is therefore alienated from the group in what we may call a vertical direction, while the individualist is alienated from the group horizontally. The individualist is a sort of broken-off fragment of the group, reacting, even rebelling, against the group; he is the group writ small, a sort of one-man group – which is really a contradiction in terms, like a one-man band. The individual, on the other hand, has passed, or begun to pass, beyond the group, beyond group consciousness; he is no longer limited by group consciousness.
>
> - *New Currents in Western Buddhism*, pp.40-41.

To be an individual does not simply mean being free of the group: it involves the attainment of definite qualities, among which are friendliness and goodwill towards others. Indeed, growth in individuality is far from growth in individualism – it is growth in selflessness. Moreover, the individual recognises the evolutionary necessity of the group. Without it, human beings would not survive to become individuals. Indeed, so long as the group allows those of its members who wish to become individuals to do so, the individual supports the group. Sangharakshita terms a group that does encourage transition to individuality, a 'positive group'.

In using this language of the group and the individual, Sangharakshita is once again employing terms without precise equivalents in the canonical texts to communicate the essential meaning of terms that are certainly found in them. For instance, the basic teachings distinguish two kinds of self-conscious being.

> Intelligent sentient beings are either āryas or anāryas. In the Scriptures the latter are generally referred to as pṛithagjanas (Pali, puthujjanas) or average men. As they outnumber the āryas by many millions to one the term bahujana or 'many-folk' may also be applied to them. An average man is one who, dominated by the delusion of 'I' and 'mine' identifies himself with, or imagines he possesses, form, feeling, conception, volition, and consciousness. He is the fool (bāla) described in the Dhammapada verse 62: '"Sons are mine, wealth is mine", thus the fool torments [himself]. Indeed he does not belong to himself. Whence sons? Whence wealth?' Not knowing the true Dharma, he develops attachments to things which should be avoided.
>
> - *The Three Jewels*, p.151.

Clearly the pṛithagjana is the group member and the ārya corresponds to the true individual of Sangharakshita's terminology. The term 'individual' itself in particular suggests a taking of personal responsibility for one's own life, and especially for one's own further development. The Buddha repeatedly stressed this quality and particularly refused to be seen as a personal saviour. He insisted that he 'only showed the way' and that the path could be followed by individual effort alone.

The Third Order of Consciousness

To become conscious of oneself as independent of the group is to become an individual. In Sangharakshita's language, it is to move from the first to the second order of consciousness: from group consciousness to individual consciousness. However, that is not the end of the matter. The individual experiences himself in relation to other individuals, and this experience brings into being the third order of consciousness: the 'collective' consciousness of the spiritual community. In participating in this order of consciousness there is no loss of individuality: 'It has no collective identity in which you lose your own, or in which you become submerged.' (*Human Enlightenment*, p.74). Each member is fully and completely aware of himself and there is no giving up of individual thoughts and feelings to the collective. Rather individual thoughts and feelings coincide, freely and spontaneously. Sharing a common commitment to the Three Jewels, members of the spiritual community base their lives upon the same ideals and values. They look at the world from the same perspective – although some, so to speak, view that same perspective from a greater altitude. The third order of consciousness is only 'collective' in this sense. There is, as Sangharakshita has it, a 'coincidence of wills'.

In so far as there is a coincidence of wills within the spiritual community, there is very great harmony and fellowship between its members. Each member finds others who understand and share his or her own most cherished aspirations. This is obviously deeply satisfying and inspiring. The more fully each goes for Refuge, the more profoundly he or she will share in this 'collective' consciousness. Ultimately, participation in the consciousness of the sangha is identical with the experience of the transcendental path. So close can one member of the spiritual community come to others that the notion of a separate self, isolated from all others, is dissolved. This 'third' kind of consciousness is so unfamiliar to us that we all too easily misunderstand it as loss of individuality and renewed immersion in the group. Sangharakshita has suggested the analogy of the orchestra, which 'is a spiritual community – at least while it is playing'. (*Peace is a Fire*, p.76). Each instrument in an orchestra has its own part to play but all are harmonised in the music they are together creating.

On a yet more lofty and imaginative plane, Sangharakshita has invoked the image of the archetypal Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, in his thousand-armed form, as embodying this third kind of consciousness. Avalokiteśvara symbolises transcendental compassion, a state that completely transcends all egoism. To draw out the active dimension of compassion, he is sometimes depicted with a thousand arms reaching out from his body in a great halo of compassionate activity, and eleven heads seeking out suffering in all the directions of space.

> The Order, and especially the unity of the Order, is symbolised by the figure of the eleven-headed and thousand-armed Avalokiteśvara. Each Order member represents one of those thousand arms and hands, joined on to the body of Avalokiteśvara. Each hand holds a single implement: a flower, wheel, vase, bow and arrow, and so on. Each instrument represents the particular activity of each individual Order member. They represent the particular talent or gift that each individual Order member makes to the Order, to the movement, to the world, as a whole. But all those symbols, all those implements, all those hands, all those arms, all those heads, are integrated into this one figure, the body of Avalokiteśvara, which is the Order.
>
> - *Fifteen Points for New – and Old – Order Members.*

Each is separate and unique, yet each is joined to the one body of the Bodhisattva. Each is animated by the same Going for Refuge, of which the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara represents the altruistic dimension.

The 'collective consciousness' of the spiritual community naturally arises when individuals who go for Refuge are drawn together. It is a profound spiritual experience and therefore requires no practical justification. However, Sangharakshita points out that the sangha has important practical implications for the developing individual. In the first place, the spiritual community is likely to consist of individuals from many different backgrounds and of many different temperaments. Inevitably one will be thrust together with people with whom, in worldly terms, one might find it difficult to get on. Yet they are members of the same spiritual community: they too have Effectively Gone for Refuge. One cannot ignore them and one must learn to overcome the biases and prejudices of culture and character that divide one from them:

> In this way, members of the spiritual community ... help one another to overcome purely subjective, purely personal limitations and learn how to relate on the basis of what is higher.
>
> - *Human Enlightenment*, p.81.

The spiritual community also provides a network of support and guidance to those struggling to become individuals and to follow the path of the Higher Evolution. That support is, in most cases, decisive: without it, few could complete the path. To understand this more clearly, we must look a little more closely at some of Sangharakshita's ideas on the nature of the path. Until the point of Real Going for Refuge, spiritual life is always a struggle between the two fundamental tendencies of reality: the saṃsāric / cyclic / reactive and the nirvāṇic / spiral / creative. These tendencies are within one's own heart and mind and are constantly battling for supremacy. Sangharakshita has spoken of these two trends as two 'gravitational pulls' that play upon the emerging individual. ('The Meaning of Conversion in Buddhism', p.46) The gravitational pull of the Unconditioned draws us on to Enlightenment. It is that powerful attraction that leads us to go for Refuge. However, the Conditioned also exerts its gravitational pull.

Initially, one is almost entirely dominated by the very powerful attractions of the world and the group, which draw nascent individuality back into the undifferentiated darkness of the Lower Evolution. Though the Unconditioned does exert its influence at this stage, the pull of the Conditioned is much stronger. As one goes for Refuge more and more deeply, one gradually overcomes the pull of the Conditioned. At the point of Real Going for Refuge or Stream Entry, the pull of the Unconditioned, for the first time, outweighs the pull of the Conditioned. Attraction towards the Lower Evolution is still felt but the pull of the Higher is now dominant. In a sense, at this stage there is no longer any struggle between them – the struggle has been won.

The most difficult period of spiritual life, therefore, lies between Effective and Real Going for Refuge. Having effectively committed oneself, one must traverse the mundane path against the strong current sweeping one back towards the Conditioned. It is only a very rare few, the Buddha himself being the outstanding and perhaps only example, who can swim against that tide, alone and unaided. Not only is that pull within one's own breast: its presence there is reinforced by its omnipresence in the world around one. The world is dominated by the group and the group is dominated by the gravitational pull of the Conditioned. One needs the help and support of others on the path: one needs the sangha. Members of the spiritual community 'support one another, encourage one another, inspire one another' ('Human Enlightenment', p.81) in those times of crisis and despondency that inevitably come as they battle against the gravitational pull of the Conditioned. Since the spiritual community consists of individuals at different levels of development there is usually someone more developed than oneself, at least

to some extent, who can help one forward on the path. At the very least, there are individuals on one's own level who can give one the sympathy and support that one needs. The help that members of the spiritual community give to one another enables them to continue Going for Refuge against the pull of the Conditioned.

When Sangharakshita started the Western Buddhist Order, he had had little personal experience of sangha throughout his years as a Buddhist. Not that he had been isolated or lonely in an ordinary sense: he had many friends and was clearly well liked by most people who met him. However, though he was in friendly contact with bhikkhus from many schools, he found no spiritual fellowship with them. On occasions of real spiritual need, in his early days in Kalimpong, he was alone. Later, he did experience deeper communication with one or two of his Tibetan teachers and in Lama Govinda he found a 'kindred spirit'. (*Facing Mount Kanchenjunga*, p.269). However, he never participated in a broader spiritual community. Indeed, in 1978 he told a small group of disciples with whom he was on retreat that, for the first time, he felt himself to be a full participant in sangha. Before that, he had accepted that, though he might initiate a sangha for others, he would probably never experience himself, so to speak, as its beneficiary.

Although he had no real experience of sangha, Sangharakshita had plenty of experience of Buddhist organisations. Indeed, he had seen many problems and deficiencies in those organisations while he was in India – and he saw more when he came back to London. We have already explored his criticisms of the modern monastic sangha, but he found severe limitations in all the Buddhist groups with which he worked. A significant proportion of the governing body of the Maha Bodhi Society, the leading Buddhist organisation in India, was made up not of Buddhists but of Hindus, one member being notoriously anti-Buddhist. For this reason, Sangharakshita, while aiding the Society in its more constructive work, never became a member and made sure he was not identified with it. He found a similar situation in England, on his return in 1964.

The leading English Buddhist organisations were not run principally by Buddhists. They were societies, established on the model of learned societies, like the Pali Text Society, that had pioneered exploration of the wisdom of the East. Anyone could join who was prepared to pay a subscription, thereby acquiring the right to vote in the election of the governing body. Most members took little active interest in the organisation of these societies. However, some of those who did were people who enjoyed the modicum of power and prestige that went with being on the governing body. In India, in fact, the prestige could be quite considerable. Inevitably, under the control of such people, little could be achieved for Buddhism – although sometimes they managed to do some harm.

> One thing was clear to me: Buddhist organizations could not be run by non-Buddhists. They could not be run simply by people who were good at running organizations, however efficient those people might be. They certainly could not be run by people who were after mere power or influence. Neither could they be run by those who had only an intellectual interest in Buddhism. It was clear that a Buddhist spiritual movement could be run only by those who were committed to Buddhism: those who were committed to the Dharma and actually practised the Buddha's teachings. (Strange as it may seem, at the time this did not seem to be generally realized.
>
> - *A Guide to the Buddhist Path*, p.109.

It was with this experience very much in mind that, in April 1968, he founded the Western Buddhist Order. (In India the Order is known as the 'Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha' – the 'Buddhist Order of the Three Worlds', though both are now known simply as the Triratna Buddhist Order). Its purpose was, he declared in a lecture given on the day of the first ordinations, to enable people to commit themselves more fully to the Buddhist way of life, to provide opportunities for spiritual fellowship, and to provide an 'organizational' base for the propagation of Buddhism. (*The History of My Going for Refuge*, p.88).

In many respects it represented a radical departure from Eastern Buddhism, although it was based firmly upon principles established by the Buddha himself. It was to be a genuine spiritual community, and not a society. One entered it by effectively Going for Refuge. Initially Sangharakshita had planned that there should be four grades of ordination: the upāsaka / upāsikā, mahā-upāsaka / upāsikā, Bodhisattva, and bhikkhu / bhikkhunī ordinations. However, as the Order unfolded, so did his thinking. He saw that further ordinations were neither necessary nor appropriate. There was really only one ordination in Buddhism and that consisted in the formal act of Going for Refuge to the Three Jewels and thereby acceptance into the spiritual community. The spiritual community comprised all those who Effectively went for Refuge, whatever their life-style and whatever the level of Going for Refuge they had attained beyond the Effective.

The first members of the Order were ordained as upāsakas (m.) and upāsikās (f.), the terms used in traditional Buddhism for lay Buddhists. However, Sangharakshita saw more and more clearly that Order members could not properly be classified as either lay or monastic, though some members of the Order lived at home with their families and some were leading what amounted to monastic lives. Before all else, members of the Order simply went for Refuge to the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. The categories of lay and monastic were entirely secondary to that essential spiritual act. In 1982, Sangharakshita therefore suggested that the style of the ordination should be changed to 'Dharmachari' (m.) and 'Dharmacharini' (f.), which means 'Dharma-farer' or 'practitioner of the Dharma'. (In India, because the Sanskrit word Dharma carries the connotation of Hindu caste duty, Order members are referred to by the Pali, Dhammacārī and Dhammacarini.) The term goes back to the Buddha himself, being found in the Dhammapada:

> The Dhammacārī lives happily, (both) in this world and in the world beyond.
> - *Dhammapada,* vv.168-169.

This title or 'style' thus emphasises both the Order's discontinuity with the categories of modern oriental Buddhism and its continuity with the essential Buddhist tradition. Transcending the distinction between monks and laity, a distinction having its roots in ancient Indian society, allows members of the Western Buddhist Order a much broader range of life-styles. The greater flexibility of modern Western society permits a complete spectrum of social arrangements. Every way of life is possible, between the extremes of complete immersion in family life and immurement in a monastery. Thus, for instance, some men or women, while fully completing their family responsibilities, might spend some time in 'semi-monastic' residential communities. Others, while living most of the time a monastic life-style, might remain sexually active outside their residential community – that sexual activity, of course, being subjected always to ethical considerations. Many different life-styles are, even at this early stage, now represented within the Western Buddhist Order.

Unlike most traditional orders, the Western Buddhist Order consists of both men and women equally – although, as we shall see, men and women in the Order carry out many activities separately. Men and women

> ... receive the same ordination, engage in the same spiritual practices, and undertake the same organizational responsibilities.
>
> - *Buddhism and the West*, p.19.

The Order also transcends the divisions of the modern Buddhist world and is not sectarian,

> ... in that it does not identify itself with any one form of Buddhism. Instead it rejoices in the riches of the whole Buddhist tradition and seeks to draw from those riches whatever is of value for its own practice of the Dharma.
>
> - *Buddhism and the West*, p.19.

It crosses many national and cultural barriers, already having members from twenty-five or more nationalities. There are members from all over the developed world, as well as from India – where, at the time of writing, one quarter of the Order is to be found. This transcendence of so many of the divisions prevailing in the world, as well as those afflicting the world of Buddhism, is made possible by Sangharakshita's insistence on the primacy of Going for Refuge.

> Let us do away with our divisions. Let us do away with the divisions between monastic and lay Buddhists, between men and women Buddhists, and between the followers of different sects and schools of Buddhism. Let us have an integrated Buddhism and an integrated Buddhist community. Let us base ourselves firmly and unmistakably upon our common Going for Refuge to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.
>
> - *Buddhism and the West*, p.20.

The Order founded by Sangharakshita does not fall in with the categories of oriental Buddhism, any more than it does with the religious categories of the West. It is therefore not easy to express what an Order member is. Order members are not bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs, no more are they upāsakas and upāsikās. Members of the Order are not priests and have no sacerdotal role as intermediaries between the transcendental and he world. They are not clergy in the sense of automatically having professional responsibility for the running of a Buddhist movement. They are simply individuals who are united in their common effective Going for Refuge. Indeed, the Order has no official organisational existence, being a purely spiritual body. Nonetheless, many, if not most, Order members do help with the running of the Triratna Buddhist Community)

The Triratna Buddhist Community is the organisational framework through which Order members teach the Dharma and provide the conditions for themselves and others to practise it. It is the bridge between the world and the Order, by means of which those who wish to may go for Refuge themselves. Groups of Order members in different locations establish various institutions, like public centres for the teaching of Buddhism, residential communities, and co-operative business ventures. These together form the basic matrix of the movement. Though most Order members choose to engage in this work, and many do so full-time, some have no formal or regular links with the institutions of Triratna. They might, for instance, be engaging in scholarly research or in artistic activities. There is no obligation on Order members to work for the Buddhist movement in any direct way. However, Effective Going for Refuge has an

altruistic dimension integral to it. The activity of all Order members should, therefore, by definition be of benefit to others in some way.

Sangharakshita's vision of the Sangha as the expression of a third order of consciousness, arising out of the shared Going for Refuge of its members, is an important theme within the Triratna Buddhist Order. As we shall see, Sangharakshita has greatly stressed spiritual friendship and he has constantly emphasised the need for deeper and more effective communication between Order members. He has established the Order on very clear spiritual principles and has done what he can, through exhortation and example, to ensure they are expressed in practice. Sangharakshita has done everything he can to ensure that the Triratna Buddhist Order is not just an organisation but truly a Sangha, the embodiment of a new kind of consciousness. That new kind of consciousness, when it is fully realised, is transcendental. Indeed, Sangharakshita identifies it with the bodhicitta, that 'will to Enlightenment' that, in the Mahayana tradition, animates the Bodhisattva to work for the good of all beings.

> It seems that the bodhicitta is something more likely to arise within a community, within an order of people who are working to allow it to manifest.... It's much more like, in a way, the whole Order getting it – how, one just doesn't know at present, but it is certainly much more like that. It might be focused, as it were, in certain individuals, but it really concerns the Order, even the movement as a whole.... [The bodhicitta] is more likely to arise in the case of a number of people working hard together, and stimulating and sparking one another off, rather than in the solitary individual, in whose case it may tend to be more like an individual experience in the narrower sense. At the same time it's not a 'collective' thing in the sense of a product of mass psychology. We don't really have a word for it. It's more a matter of fellowship, or a manifestation of spiritual communion.
>
> - *The Endlessly Fascinating Cry*, p.27.

This is the aspiration that Sangharakshita has for the Order he has founded.

❧

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. *"Sangharakshita is very critical of modern attitudes that devalue formal expression, since they reinforce an idea of the individual as isolated from all context."*
   What exactly is meant by "the individual as isolated from all context"?

2. *"To me the idea that there exists a self which is pure, that this self is enslaved by socially imposed beliefs and customs, and that all one has to do in order to 'be oneself' and realize one's potentiality is to break free of them, is simply false."*
   Do you think such ideas have influenced you in any way? Do you agree with Sangharakshita's assertion that they are false?

3. What is the difference between an individual and an individualist? Can you see any individualistic behaviour in yourself?

4. The text refers to conformity in groups. Is it your experience that you do not say or act or think for yourself for fear of putting yourself outside the group or being different? What happens in these situations?

5. Do you agree that the need for security is especially powerful? How can this be overcome?

6. To what extent does a "coincidence of wills" describe your own experience of Sangha?

7. Can you relate to the third order of consciousness in any way? What has been your experience with others?

8. What do you make of the 1000-armed Avalokiteśvara as a symbol for the Order? With this symbol in mind, what is the real or deepest gift you can give?

Note on units 6 to 8

These units are from *Part 3* of the book and look at human relationships from the perspective of an important teaching of the Buddha's called the *Sigālaka Sutta*. If you have time, you may want to read the *Introduction* to *Part 3* of the book (pages 143-151) to get the background on this.

2.6.**6**
Is a Guru Necessary?

This unit explores the vertical dimension of the Sangha. It is based on a lecture that Sangharakshita gave in 1970 as part of a series entitled *Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual*. Please read chapter 14 of *Part 3*, i.e. pp.167-183.

1. Do you think a teacher is necessary? If so, what for?

2. *"Above all, the guru is one who stands on a higher level of being and consciousness than ourselves, who is more evolved, more developed, more – in a word – aware" (p.176).*
   Have you had any experience of a person like this?

3. What exactly does Sangharakshita mean when he says that "contact between the guru and the disciple should be 'existential'"?

4. What is the difference between horizontal and vertical communication?

5. What sort of guru do we need and what sort of guru don't we need?

2.6.**7**

The Meaning of Friendship

This unit explores the principles behind friendship as a spiritual practice. It builds on the material we explored in *Part 1*, *Week 10* of *Year One*. Please read chapter 16 of *Part 3*, i.e. pp.197-204.

1. *"In the modern world, friendship is arguably the most neglected of all the primary human relationships" (p. 197).*
   Do you agree with this statement? Why (or why not)?

2. Which of the five duties we have to our friends seems most relevant to you and why?

3. *"If you are practising friendliness you are not only practising the Dharma but communicating it" (p.199).*
   How can you relate this to your life?

4. In what ways do you try to get what you want in situations involving others?

5. In what way is spiritual friendship a training in unselfishness and egolessness?

6. How can you strengthen your practice of spiritual friendship?

2.6.**8**
Fidelity and Gratitude

This unit explores two very important qualities in the development of the Sangha. Please read chapters 15 and 19 of *Part 3*, i.e. pp. 185-196 and 219-232.

1. How can you practise fidelity to yourself? Your ideals? Other people?

2. In what way is fidelity different from attachment?

3. What would be a neurotic form of sexual lifestyle and what would be a psychologically healthy form of sexual lifestyle?

4. Can you think of any other stories that illustrate the importance of fidelity?

5. *"To the extent that one limits the continuity of one's relationships, to that extent one will not continue to grow as an individual" (p.190).*
   Why is it important to have continuity in our relationships for the development of our individuality?

6. Are you affected by any of the four main reasons for ingratitude? What could you do to change this?

7. Do you feel grateful when you know something has been pointed out or suggested for your benefit but you don't like it?

8. *"So kataññutā means knowing and recognizing what has been done to one for one's benefit" (p.222).*
   Use the following to make a list of at least some of the things which have been done for you for your benefit by your parents, your teachers and your spiritual friends.

   Benefits received from your parents:

Benefits received from your teachers:

Benefits received from your spiritual friends:

2.6.**9**

Gratitude and Giving Evening

An optional event to help fund the spreading of the Dharma

This unit will stimulate discussion and personal reflection on what you have been given through your involvement in Sangha, how others benefit from this involvement, and how you can help pass these benefits on.

Gratitude is a central emotion in Buddhism, and one way of generating it is to reflect upon what it is you have been given. In this evening, we can reflect upon all that has been given to us during our involvement with the Triratna Sangha, including all the Mitra study materials you're studying, many of which are produced by Triratna projects funded by FutureDharma donors.

This evening also offers inspiring examples of how people in Triratna are giving their time, energy and resources to build Sangha and pass on the Dharma and invites us to financially support their efforts.

Preparation

The evening is presented by either one or two members of the study group and will require **approximately 3 hours preparation time**, so it's best to decide **at least 2-3 weeks in advance** who'll run this evening so that there is plenty of time to prepare.

Access to all the support material is here:
https://sikkha.online/fundraising-training-registration/

There is also one-to-one support at hand from FutureDharma Fund during the preparation, and any questions / queries can be directed to maitrinara@futuredharma.org

As usual, this module finishes with the opportunity for you to present a project on a theme arising out of the material you have been studying for the last 8 weeks. The purpose of the project is to give you a chance to reflect on a particular aspect of the material in more depth than is possible in the weekly groups, thus giving you more opportunity to develop the second level of wisdom – cintā-mayī-prajñā. Usually, you present a 20-minute project to your group. If you have any questions about this, please speak to your group leader.

Taking it Further

If you have felt inspired or moved to explore any of the themes in this series further, you may find the following resources helpful. They may also be helpful for your project.

Unit 1

The Meaning of Spiritual Community in *Human Enlightenment*, Sangharakshita, is a very good exploration of Sangha, and is available in PDF or in an audio series
http://www.sangharakshita.org/bookshelf/human-enlightenment.pdf
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X14

The Three Jewels, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579060. Part 3 is a much fuller exploration of the role of Sangha in the Buddhist tradition.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-three-jewels/

Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, *Dīgha Nikāya 16*, has the story about the Vajjian.
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html

Sangharakshita gave a talk on the first FWBO International Retreat entitled *Growing the Spiritual Community* (also known as *The Growth and Prosperity of the Sangha*). It explores the advice that the Buddha gave in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta* on the factors for the stability of the Order, and is available in audio and video.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=LOC44
https://vimeo.com/173553135

Unit 2

The Bodhisattva Ideal, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579206. Chapter 7 is on *The Bodhisattva Hierarchy*. You can also listen to this as an audio lecture.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-bodhisattva-ideal-wisdom-and-compassion-in-buddhism/
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=71

The Axial Age will be further explored in the module *Evolutionary Buddhism* in *Year 4* of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras. It has recently received attention from Karen Armstrong in

her book *The Great Transformation*, Knopf, ISBN 0375413170, in which she extends the Axial Age to include the rise of Christianity.
https://books.google.ie/books?id=JCWDTTudNEgC

For more on the nature of early Greek philosophy and spiritual communities, see Pierre Hadot's book *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Wiley-Blackwell, 0631180338.
http://www.goodreads.com/book/show/305860.Philosophy_As_a_Way_of_Life

For a different view on the traditional Sangha, Reginald Ray's book *Buddhist Saints in India*, Oxford University Press USA, 0195134834, is excellent. He argues for a three-tier model of traditional Buddhism, adding what he calls forest renunciants to the better-known categories of monk and lay people. For a short background to his thinking, there is an interview with him in issue 16 of *Dharma Life* called *Yogi Spirit*.
https://books.google.ie/books/about/Buddhist_Saints_in_India.html?id=0TMsdV8lS8wC
http://www.dharmalife.com/issue16/reginaldray.html

Unit 3
The three fetters are explored in more depth in the lecture on *The Taste of Freedom* where Sangharakshita calls them 'habit, vagueness and superficiality'.
http://www.sangharakshita.org/bookshelf/taste-freedom.pdf
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=139

The four dimensions of awareness that Sangharakshita mentions in regard to self-consciousness are treated in more depth in his seventh lecture on the *Noble Eightfold Path* series in the lecture *Levels of Awareness: Right Mindfulness*. This is also studied in *Year Two, Module 1* of the Dharma Training Course for Mitras.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=53

For material on the lower and higher evolution, Ratnaprabha's out-of-print book *The Evolving* Mind, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766748, is probably the best introduction. It can be found at internet book stores.
https://books.google.ie/books/about/The_Evolving_Mind.html?id=A49mAAAACAAJ

The *Year Four* module in the Dharma Training Course called *Evolutionary Buddhism* will explore the idea of lower and higher evolution in more depth.

Unit 4
Buddhism for Today and Tomorrow, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766837.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/series/details?ser=X16

Chapter 9 of Subhuti's book *Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist* Tradition, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766683, explores the thinking behind a 'New Society' in depth.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/subhutis-sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

Unit 5
The FWBO and Protestant Buddhism, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766608. The section on *The Burden of Self*, pages 29-44, is good on the individuals' relation to society and the notion of a pure self.
http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/protestant%20buddhism.pdf

If you are interested in the term 'sobornost', Vladimir Lossky has written much about it from the perspective of Russian Orthodox Christianity. He defines it as 'the combination of freedom and unity of many persons on the basis of their common love for the same absolute values': http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sobornost

Unit 6
The *Sigālaka Sutta* (or sometimes the *Sigalovada Sutta*) is the text from which the Buddha's teaching on the 6 different kinds of relationship is drawn.
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.31.0.nara.html

Sangharakshita describes his own relationship with his teachers in his book *Precious Teachers*, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579788.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/precious-teachers/

He also explores this area in a talk called *My Eight Main Teachers*.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=176

My Relation to the Order, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 0904766470. Here Sangharakshita gives his more up-to-date thinking about his role as a teacher and friend to the Order he has founded.
http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/relation-to-the-order.pdf
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=172

Unit 7
Buddhism and Friendship, Subhuti with Subhamati, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579621. This explores the whole area of friendship in much more depth.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/buddhism-and-friendship/

Unit 8
Who is the Buddha?, Sangharakshita, Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579516. Chapter 5 explores in more detail the incident in the Buddha's life when he looked around for something to worship.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/who-is-the-buddha/

2.7

A Living Tradition: Sangharakshita and the Story of Triratna

Contents

Front Image: *Sangharakshita*, painted by Misha del Val. Used with permission of artist, detail.

Compiled by Lokabandhu and Saccanama, and updated by Vajrashura.

This module is different in nature to the other modules in that its aim is just to give you the opportunity to explore the history of the FWBO/Triratna, i.e. the spiritual community that you are involved with. There are no particular learning outcomes from this module but hopefully it will give you a richer appreciation of Triratna and its founder, Sangharakshita.

Every spiritual community arises in particular historical circumstances and is conditioned by them. Triratna is no different in this way. So using Suryaprabha's four DVD films of the early history of the Movement (covering the mid-1960s to 1980), you will have a chance to explore the particular conditions out of which Triratna has arisen.

Alongside Suryaprabha's DVDs, the other key text is *The Triratna Story* by Vajragupta exploring our own history and telling some of the stories that constitute it. Published by Windhorse, it brings the story more up to date and should help you contextualise what you see around you as you get involved in the unfolding story of the FWBO/Triratna Buddhist Community. It is after all your (or rather, our) Sangha!

There is also the opportunity to follow up material illustrating other aspects of Sangharakshita and the history of Triratna e.g. Sangharakshita's photo archives; other video footage of the FWBO/Triratna, particularly the Newsreels; various DVDs of Sangharakshita in question-and-answer sessions or giving lectures; and Sangharakshita's personal memoirs and poetry which give an insight into different sides of the founder of Triratna. References are also provided for people who might want to explore some of the controversies Sangharakshita and the FWBO/Triratna have faced in its life so far.

Finally, there will be an opportunity to focus on the history of your own local Sangha which will have its own story to tell as well as its own heroes and heroines to rejoice in.

Planning your group's approach

Because this module is intended to give participants the opportunity to explore freely, and because Triratna's history is rich and multi-facetted, the suggestion is that before the module actually starts each group gives some time to thinking through what areas it would like to look at. Different groups could choose to use their time in very different ways, ranging from an almost entirely project-based approach to enjoying a series of six movie nights (followed by discussion, of course!).

A suggested scheme for the module follows, listing topics that could be looked at over 6 evenings - but it's emphasised a group could choose to arrange their time completely differently.

This suggested format adopts the following pattern:

1. Sangharakshita: A Life for the Dharma.
2. The Movement: Early Days.
3. Sangharakshita: Other aspects – Poetry, Character, Controversy.
4. The Movement: Creating a New Society.
5. The Movement: India.
6. Your Local Sangha.

In general, for the projects, it would be great if participants followed up a particular aspect of FWBO/Triratna history of their choice, whether local or otherwise.

We would strongly recommend the following as essential reading on the Triratna Buddhist Community and the Triratna Buddhist Order. You might like to read them as you do this module:

The Triratna Story, Vajragupta, available from Windhorse Publications and on PDF.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-triratna-story-behind-the-scenes-of-a-new-buddhist-movement/
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/timeline/the-triratna-story-by-vajragupta.pdf

A Buddhist Manifesto, Subhuti, available on PDF and Lulu books.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/item/buddhist-manifesto
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/triratna/buddhist-manifesto-interview-subhuti

2.7.**1**
Sangharakshita: A life for the Dharma

The main purpose of this week is to introduce Sangharakshita and gain an overview of his life. You may want to spend some time developing a sense of the key elements in his life, even coming up with a chronology of the most important events. There should also be plenty of time to discuss your responses to him.

Resources

Video
VideoSangha have a selection of clips where people describe their first meeting with Sangharakshita.
www.videosangha.net/search/?search=Bhante

Audio
Sangharakshita speaks about his early life in a talk delivered at the Sheffield Buddhist Centre. It includes some interesting reflections on the topic of rebirth. A transcript of this talk is also available.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=LOC110
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/read?num=LOC110&at=text

Sangharakshita's *An Autobiographical Sequence of Poems.*
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=P03

Sangharakshita's informal talk *My Eight Main Teachers* where he introduces (at rather variable length) his eight main teachers.
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=176

If there is someone in your local Sangha who has a strong personal connection with Bhante, they could be invited to your group to talk about that.

Written
Sangharakshita's memoirs, in chronological order, are:

1. *The Rainbow Road* (also published in two separate volumes entitled *Learning to Walk* and *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*).
2. *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga.*
3. *In the Sign of the Golden Wheel.*
4. *Moving Against the Stream.*

He has also written three thematic memoirs as follows:

1. *From Genesis to the Diamond Sutra* details his encounters with Christianity.
2. *Precious Teachers* deals with his meetings with his Tibetan teachers in Kalimpong.
3. *A Moseley Miscellany* is a collection of his thoughts, memoirs and poems while based in Madhyamaloka, in Moseley, Birmingham.

Many of them are available on his website.
http://www.sangharakshita.org/online_books.html

This included *The Rainbow Road*.
www.sangharakshita.org/_books/rainbow-road.pdf

They can also be purchased from Windhorse Publications:
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/

Some of the key moments from the memoirs are included in the Appendix near the end of this document. These are short extracts that give a flavour of the memoirs as a whole.

- His reading of the *Diamond Sutra* aged 16.
- His Going Forth; his vision of Amitābha in the cave.
- His ordination in Kusinagar; the conflict (and eventual resolution) between Sangharakshita I and II and III.
- His working for the good of the Dharma in Kalimpong.
- His decision to found the FWBO.

Chapter 1 of Subhuti's *Sangharakshita: A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition* is a short summary of Sangharakshita's life and is included in the Appendix below. The rest of the book is an authoritative account of his main teachings (and is one of the recommended books for the *Dharma Training Course* as a whole).
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

Subhuti's *Bringing Buddhism to the West* is no longer available on Windhorse Publications but may be in your Centre library. It is a more detailed one-volume account of Sangharakshita's life up to the early 1990's
https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/Bringing_Buddhism_to_the_West.html?id=hNwGAAAAYAAJ

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What particular aspects of Sangharakshita's life strike you most strongly? Is there anything from his life that has particular resonance for you?

2. What do you think have been the formative influences upon Sangharakshita?

3. What were your initial impressions of Sangharakshita? Have they changed as your involvement with the Sangha has grown? Have you met him yourself?

Probably the best resource we have for the early days of the FWBO are a series of four films made by Suryaprabha. The films give a good sense of the times in which the FWBO came into being. They also introduce you to many of what might be called the founding generation of the FWBO, i.e. those people ordained in the late 1960s and 1970s who helped turn Sangharakshita's nascent vision of a new spiritual movement into some kind of reality. These particular people are now what you might call our elders (not just in the biological sense!). A key aspect of this history is that the FWBO might not have survived those early days and it is only through the dedicated efforts of this relatively small group of people that we have a Movement to be involved in at all.

Resources

Video
Suryaprabha's *History* DVDs:

1. An Opening of the Heart.
2. Kindling the Flame.

Hopefully these are in your Centre library. They can also be ordered from *Lights in the Sky*. They are a much-loved and very evocative series of DVDs exploring the early history of the FWBO.
http://lightsinthesky.org

Photos
Lots of beautiful Triratna images are available on thebuddhistcentre.com
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/images

Clear Vision has an extensive photo archive of the early days of the F/WBO and TBMSG on the web. Check those flares!
www.clear-vision.org/Pictures/Default.aspx

Several thousand more current photos are on Triratna Photos site at:
www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets

Written
A new 'history' of the Triratna Buddhist Community, *The Triratna Story,* by Vajragupta, was published by Windhorse Publications in early 2010. It evokes very well the idealism, magic, naivety, determination and difficulties of the Movement over its first 40 years. It is also available on PDF.

http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-triratna-story-behind-the-scenes-of-a-new-buddhist-movement/
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/timeline/the-triratna-story-by-vajragupta.pdf

Subhuti's *Buddhism for Today: A Portrait of a New Buddhist Movement* (Element, 1983) is long out of print but well worth exploring as a confident exposition of the 'architecture' of the F/WBO. It may be in your centre library.

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. What have you learnt about the Movement from watching the first two of Suryaprabha's DVD's?

2. What do you think should be our relationship to our 'elders' – the founding generation of our own Movement?

3. What are your own memories or impressions of the late 1960's and early 1970's – the time when the Movement was born?

Having been introduced to Sangharakshita in *Week 1*, we now have an opportunity to explore some other aspects of his life and work. This is where you will need to sort out the particular interests of your group so as to choose what to focus on.

You could explore his poetry through some of the resources listed below. Sangharakshita considers his poetry a very important aspect of his work and whether or not you like the particular style of his poetry, it certainly conveys a different side of the man and can help us to avoid a too literal or rational approach to his teachings.

Alternatively, you could watch some video footage of Sangharakshita. There are numerous of his talks captured on video but *The Taste of Freedom* is particularly interesting for being the earliest video footage of him teaching (when he was still in his full vigour). It is also one of his great talks.

When you became a mitra, you should have had a chat with the Mitra Convenor or another Order Member about the controversies around Sangharakshita and the FWBO.
If there is anything outstanding that needs to be discussed in this group, reading chapters 6 and 10 in particular of Vajragupta's book *The Triratna Story* are good places to start a discussion in the group.

Resources

Video
YouTube has a vast range of clips from interviews with Sangharakshita. So lots of choice here.
www.youtube.com/results?search_query=fwbo
www.youtube.com/user/clearvisiontrust
www.youtube.com/watch?v=NTS63qmyYow&list=PL43C9981087BFC21E

The earliest talk of Bhante's on video is *The Taste of Freedom* which is not otherwise studied in the course; that would be good to watch just to get a stronger sense of him actually teaching. It's available to purchase at Clear Vision.
www.clear-vision.org/videos/publicbh.aspx

Clear Vision has a number of 'double acts' by Padmavajra and Bhante reading poetry.

1. *Message of the Bowl*
   https://vimeo.com/18808444
2. *Entering the Greater Mandala*
   https://vimeo.com/27061275

3. *Four Gifts*
   https://vimeo.com/18829914

Audio
Bhante reads an autobiographical sequence of poems at:
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=P03

The wonderful *Nine Decades* is a virtual version of an audio-visual exhibition in Adhisthana of Sangharakshita's life. This was done to mark his 90th birthday in 2015.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/stories/decades/

Glimpses of the Mythic Life of Sangharakshita is a talk by Padmavajra from the Sheffield Buddhist Centre.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=LOC183

Bhante lays out the main ingredients of his relationship to the Order in his classic 1990 talk *My Relation to the Order.*
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=172

In Retrospect: A Conversation with Sangharakshita is a relatively recent video of Sangharakshita in interview with Nagabodhi where they speak about many sensitive subjects: sex, mistakes, regrets.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=IV02

These are four classic talks by Bhante on Audio:

The Taste of Freedom
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=139

Enlightenment as Experience and Non-Experience
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=119

Breaking Through to Buddhahood
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=63

Mind: Reactive and Creative
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=31

Written
My Relation to the Order was updated and in part superseded by his recent 'Message' to the Order.
www.sangharakshita.org/What_is_the_Western_Buddhist_Order.pdf

Peace is a Fire, a collection of Aphorisms from the 1960s and 1970s.
www.sangharakshita.org/_books/peace-fire.pdf

Complete Poems. Some of the best known are included in the Appendix below. Especially recommended as a glimpse into the inner life of the young Sangharakshita in India is his long poem *The Veil of Stars.*
www.sangharakshita.org/_books/complete-poems.pdf

The little-known *1970: A Retrospective*. It's a very frank account of an extraordinary year in Bhante's life, very early on in the life of the Order.
www.sangharakshita.org/a-retrospect.html

Old Diary Leaves is at:
www.sangharakshita.org/a-olddiaryleaves.html

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Does the fact that Sangharakshita writes poetry and takes a strong interest in the arts have any particular significance for you?

2. What affect do you think Sangharakshita's character has had on the Order and Movement that he founded?

3. What do you think has been learned from the various controversies surrounding Sangharakshita and the FWBO? Do you think there are things that you personally and we collectively still need to learn from our past?

In the 1970s, as the Movement started to take root, there was much emphasis on creating supportive conditions for the deepening of spiritual practice within the Movement. This took the form of community living (which became single-sex as people learnt from their experience); of establishing new centres, especially Sukhāvatī in the east end of London but also in other cities and countries; and of setting up right livelihood businesses. During this period, Sangharakshita also started to talk of creating a New Society supportive of spiritual practice and aspirations. And he gave many of his key lecture series, often drawing inspiration from some of the great Mahāyāna sutras.

To explore this rich period in the Movement's history, you may well want to watch the concluding two parts of Suryaprabha's early history of the FWBO which go up to 1980. But you could use some of the other resources listed below and you may want to come more up-to-date with our history.

Resources

Video
Suryaprabha's *History* DVDs

3. A Time of Fire.
4. A Circle of Friends.

Hopefully these are in your Centre library. They can be ordered from 'Lights in the Sky' at: http://lightsinthesky.org

Many Triratna Centres will have archive copies of old FWBO Newsreels. These are videos and hence may not be easy to play; however they provide great glimpses into the past of the Movement during the 1980s and 90s.

Audio
Some of Sangharakshita's lectures in the very early days of the FWBO vividly evoke his vision for our Sangha: he was almost literally talking the Movement into existence. The following two, given during the time mentioned in Suryaprabha's DVDs, are particularly relevant. In them, Sangharakshita describes the events of his life that led him to found the WBO, and explains how an individual can join it. He then discusses its relation to the FWBO/Triratna.

A Blueprint for a New World (1976)
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=134

The Nucleus of a New Society (1976)
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=133

Ask your local Order Members! The Order is a network of friendships; many Order Members will have stories to tell of the Triratna Buddhist Community around the world, based either on their own adventures or their friends'.

Written
Much more about the development of the women's side the FWBO in the earlier days is available in *The Moon and the Flowers*, Kalyanavaca, eBook, Windhorse Publications. You can read an extract from this book.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/the-moon-and-flowers-ebook/
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/an-excerpt-from-the-moon-and-flowers-a-womans-path-to-enlightenment/

Likewise many Triratna Centres will have archive copies of old FWBO Newsletters, Golden Drums etc. These may be especially useful for projects if you want to explore something in more depth.

Many past issues of *Dharma Life* and *Madhyamavani* are available on-line.
http://www.dharmalife.com
http://madhyamavani.fwbo.org

Photos
Triratna Photos has a huge collection of photos from around the world of the Triratna Buddhist Community, including several sets of archive photos. More are welcome: please email news@thebuddhistcentre.comfor info.
http://www.flickr.com/photos/fwbo/sets

Suggestions for reflection, research, and discussion

1. What do you make of the relationship of the sexes (and the single-sex principle) as portrayed in Suryaprabha's DVDs?

2. What is your response to the idealism of the Movement in the 1970s? Do you think we could do with more or less of it nowadays? If more, how could that be expressed?

3. Do you think there is enough emphasis on the role of the 'New Society' (and the importance of creating supportive conditions for practice) in the Movement that you have become involved with? How can a spiritual community thrive amidst our heavily consumerist and materialist society?

It is important to realise that the particular Sangha you are involved with is an international one and that it has centres across the world and members that speak many different languages. Perhaps the most important branch of our Sangha is that found in India. Certainly more people are involved there than anywhere else and before too long, it will have the largest number of Order members in any one country. It also connects with our own roots as a Movement in that Sangharakshita spent much of his time in India on teaching tours in Maharashtra, doing all that he could to support the nascent movement of mass conversion to Buddhism initiated by Dr Ambedkar.

In particular you might like to read chapter 4 of *The Triratna Story* on the development of the movement in India for this week. To get a feel for the Indian wing of our Movement, you could also use any of the following resources.

Video
In this talk from the 2007 Order Convention, Subhuti speaks with passion about the urgency he feels for his work in India.
www.videosangha.net/video/Subhuti-about-his-work-in-Ind

There's also a short video of Subhuti in India (2016).
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights/subhuti-india-documentary-video-mokshapriya

Recurring Dream, from Suryaprabha's *Earth Rising, Heaven Descending* series, is a sympathetic look at some of India and TBMSG's quirks and contradictions.
http://lightsinthesky.org

For an up-to-the-minute checklist of India-related video try:
www.videosangha.net/search/?search=india

Audio
For some atmospheric background to Dr Ambedkar and the work of TBMSG in India, try Subhuti's 2005 talk *Dr Ambedkar and the Dhamma Revolution*.
www.freebuddhistaudio.com/talks/details?num=OM733

Padmavajra gives tribute to the life of Dr Ambedkar and celebrates his work for the Dharma.
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=OM543

Subhuti gave a series of talks called Dharma Revolution East and West in Padmaloka in 2010. He explores how Dr Ambedkar's revival of Buddhism in India has far reaching implications for us practicing Buddhism in the West.

https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC347
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/audio/details?num=LOC348

Written

The classic introduction to TBMSG and Dr. Ambedkar is *Jai Bhim* by Nagabodhi. It's out of print but available on Sangharakshita's website.
www.sangharakshita.org/bookshelf/jaibhim.pdf

Sangharakshita's *Ambedkar and Buddhism* gives a more thorough and detailed account of the links between Ambedkar and his own approach to the Dharma.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/ambedkar-and-buddhism/
http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/Ambedkar_and_Buddhism.pdf

There are two excellent articles by Lokamitra from the *Features* area of *Triratna News*, one describing his first experiences of India and one looking back after 30 years of work helping to create TBMSG. They are *The Day That Changed My Life* and *Thirty Years in India.*
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/othertexts/Lokamitra/FBA143_The_Day_That_Changed_My_Life.pdf
https://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/othertexts/Lokamitra/FBA144_Thirty_Years_in_India.pdf

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Why do you think it is important that Triratna is an international Sangha? What can we learn from Buddhists of other nationalities and cultures?

2. What are the implications of the Indian Dhammakranti (Dharma Revolution) for us in the West? Are there things you could do to support Dhammakranti work in India?

2.7.**6**
Your Local Sangha

In this last week, there is a chance to focus on the history of your local Sangha. Obviously, this will vary from one situation to another in terms of the length of history involved and the amount of resources that might be available to explore this area. Much of it might be what you would call oral history, i.e. it is only recorded in the memories of those involved. So you may wish to invite long-standing members of your own Sangha to the group to talk about their experience or you could interview them and record it in video or audio format for future reference. You could also gather photos of your Sangha together and make an online album or display at the Centre. The potential for your own initiative as an individual or as a group is large. We hope that over a number of years, if different mitra groups work on this module, a set of resources for your local Sangha may develop that will provide a sense of its history for others in the future. Obviously your projects could be linked in with this particular week.

Also, if you have time you can also check out the resources below for Adhisthana, the 'home' of the Triratna Buddhist Community and Order.

Resources

Video
This could be your chance to make something on your local Centre...! If you do, upload it to YouTube and tag it 'Triratna' – VideoSangha will then find it and it'll be there for the rest of the Movement to see.

Audio
We all have our stories. One way of doing this week would be to invite an experienced local Order Member to the group for this evening to share their reminiscences and or tell some stories of the local Sangha.

Written
There are various internet resources to help you connect with the latest developments around Triratna.

Triratna News has on-going news stories from around the world of the Triratna Buddhist Community, both the West and India.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news

Community Highlights shows the best of what people in our community around the world post to the web about their own situations and Buddhist practice.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/highlights

Features on thebuddhistcentre.com shows headline stories and original Buddhist media content, including live, in-depth web coverage of major Triratna events.
http://thebuddhistcentre.com/features

Many Triratna people are on *Facebook*, where you'll find a number of groups. For example. You can follow the main Triratna 'page', as well as a special one for *Young People in the Triratna Buddhist Community*.
https://www.facebook.com/triratnabuddhistcommunity
https://www.facebook.com/groups/TriratnaYoungBuddhists/

If you have time this week...
You can take a look at some resources about **Adhisthana**, the 'home' of the Triratna Buddhist Community, and residence of Sangharakshita:

The first part of Triratna Newsbyte 1 is dedicated to the opening of Adhisthana.
https://thebuddhistcentre.com/news/triratna-newsbyte-1-here

Dhammarati gave a talk on the opening weekend explaining the significance of Adhisthana, entitled *Introducing Adhisthana to the Movement*.
https://vimeo.com/72494803

Parami also introduced Adhisthana to the Order.
https://vimeo.com/72484237

You can view the Adhisthana website and see upcoming events at.
http://adhisthana.org/

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Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Who are the founders of your own particular Sangha? And who has helped it to grow and develop over the years?

2. What has been learned from the development of your own particular Sangha? What successes have there been and what mistakes have been made?

3. Do you think there is enough rejoicing, appreciation and gratitude within your own Sangha for all the efforts people have made to establish it?

4. What would you like to see develop in your own Sangha over the coming years? What could you contribute to that development?

Included here are the excerpts mentioned above from Subhuti's book and from Sangharakshita's memoirs. A selection of his poems follows the biographical material.

A Brief Biography of Sangharakshita
What follows is a brief biography of Sangharakshita taken from Subhuti's book *A New Voice*. It should give you a place to start in terms of reading about his life. It is followed by some short extracts of key episodes from Sangharakshita's own memoirs.

The following chapter is from *Sangharakshita – A New Voice in the Buddhist Tradition,* Subhuti, Windhorse Publications.
http://www.windhorsepublications.com/product/sangharakshita-a-new-voice-in-the-buddhist-tradition/

Chapter One – The Translator

'Hammer your thoughts into a unity.'
This line once read
The sound came clangingly
Of golden hammers in my head
Beating and beating sheet on sheet
To make the figured foil complete.

Religion, friendship, art
Were hammered there
On the cyclopean anvils of my heart
Into an image bright and fair.
Under the strain the forge-floor split;
Nerveless the arms that fashioned it.
- 'Stanzas' from 1967

Modern Buddhism is in crisis. The Buddhist tradition, like so many others, is being challenged by a world radically different from the one in which it has flourished for two-and-a-half millennia. Technological development is changing ever more drastically the way people live - even the way they think about their lives. In most of the lands where it has been established for centuries, Buddhism is in disarray and retreat, unable yet to adapt its old message to new circumstances. Curiously, it is in the West itself, the very heartland of technological development, that it is beginning to communicate itself most successfully to the modern world and is expanding most rapidly. But that too presents its problems. What should Buddhism in the West bring from Buddhism in the East? Which form of Buddhism is appropriate to the

West? How is modern Buddhism to relate to Western culture? How is one to live the Buddhist life in the modern world? What really is Buddhism? More properly, as Buddhists themselves would prefer to say, what is the Dharma? What is the 'Truth', the 'Path', or the 'Teaching'?

Sangharakshita is one of those who has confronted these issues most directly. In a favourite image, he is a translator. He is a translator between the East and the West, between the traditional world and the modern.

> One who is a translator metaphorically brings a discipline, or set of ideas, or a culture, from the obscurity and darkness of unfamiliar terms into the light of terms that are familiar. I myself am a translator because I elucidate, that is, elucidate the Dharma.
>
> - *My Relation to the Order*, p.22.

Above all, he is a translator between principles and practice. From his earliest contact with Buddhism, he has sought to discover its essential principles. It has been his life's work to give those principles expression, both in ideas and in institutions and practices.

For Sangharakshita, the essential insight of the Buddha is beyond words and finds expression in different forms in different circumstances. The many schools, formed in Buddhism's 2,500 years of history and its diffusion throughout Asia, have to a greater or lesser extent kept alive that original insight. Each has elaborated it further and explored its various aspects in diverse ways. Whether it is the rich exuberance of Tibetan Vajrayana or the austere simplicity of Japanese Zen, all schools carry the same intrinsic message. Sangharakshita has striven to discern the fundamental Buddhist experience behind these many forms and to communicate it to the modern world. He has embodied his understanding in the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order, the new Buddhist movement he has founded.

Since its initiation in 1967, Sangharakshita has devoted himself mainly to clarifying the many issues that have arisen during the establishment and growth of that movement. As his disciples have engaged more deeply with the Dharma, they have come up against innumerable problems and conflicts. What place does work have in spiritual life? Is homosexual activity a contravention of Buddhist ethics? How should Buddhists relate to the wider world? Do Western art and literature have anything to offer the Buddhist practitioner? How is one to work with the various feelings that arise in meditation? How should a residential community organise itself? As issues have arisen, Sangharakshita has elucidated the underlying principles on which a resolution depends. He has thus evolved a philosophy of active spiritual life, embracing every aspect of human affairs: community, work, sexuality, art and culture, social action, meditation, ceremony, personal relationships, and more. All have received his attention and, if he has not exhausted each topic, he has laid bare its essential principles so that his disciples can continue to live the Buddhist life in an ever-changing world.

Although Sangharakshita has devoted many years to the creation of an organised Buddhist movement, his ideas are relevant outside the circle of his own disciples. Buddhists everywhere, whether in the East or West, are moving into a new world, to which traditional forms are increasingly irrelevant. If they are not simply to become fossils, interesting relics of a bygone era, all Buddhists must look beyond the forms of their own schools. They must recognise the timeless core that each, perhaps, still conveys. They must let go of whatever in their own tradition is merely the unreflecting propagation of a culture long since dead or is simply of local significance. They must rely only on the essential Buddhist experience in their own spiritual lives. They must let the fundamental Buddhist message speak out to the men and women of the present. Since Sangharakshita has faced these issues in a particularly radical

way, all Buddhists will find that he has something important to say to them. They will discover much in his teaching that will help them in their own task of spiritual renewal.

Sangharakshita's teaching has wider relevance yet. A great many people today sense that humanity has a higher purpose than mere material advancement. They are seeking some new vision to give their lives greater meaning and purpose. Many are strongly drawn to Buddhism's non-theism and to its teachings of nonviolence and of universal fellowship. However, they are not attracted to its present cultural forms. If they are to respond at all it will be to a presentation like Sangharakshita's: clear and intelligent, taking into account modern concerns and susceptibilities, and free from cultural anachronism. Sangharakshita's appeal is broad, for he points to something beyond type to be found in all human beings. His disciples already include people of very diverse backgrounds and temperaments: illiterate peasants and sophisticated professionals, ex-Christians and ex-communists, Indians and Americans, intellectuals and devotees, hermits and activists. Sangharakshita's ideas can surely help more people understand the real significance of their lives.

It is Sangharakshita's ideas that we will now set out to explore. While we are contemplating Sangharakshita's thought, we should not forget the perspective within which he himself functions. He is a bold and original thinker and, at the same time, a faithful follower of the Buddha. To some this has seemed paradoxical: I remember the poet Allen Ginsberg pondering, after a visit to Sangharakshita, why one so unconventional and revolutionary in his outlook should write poetry so traditional in form. When I reported this to Sangharakshita, he laughed and reflected that he is but a reluctant revolutionary. Really he is a complete traditionalist, forced by circumstances to take to revolution. His tastes are thoroughly traditional, and he says that, if circumstances had allowed it, he would have found fulfilment living in a very traditional Buddhist monastery in a very traditional Buddhist culture: studying, meditating, writing. But circumstances have not allowed it. He has been called upon to give new life to the old truths, not only through ideas but through practical guidance and new institutions. All his work is entirely fresh, revolutionary even, yet completely faithful to the original insight and teaching of the Buddha. His own teaching consists essentially of restating that insight within the modern context or else working out its unexplored implications.

So that we can better appreciate the significance of Sangharakshita's ideas, we must learn more about their author. It is, however, not easy to get a full impression of the man. Sangharakshita is a complex figure who has lived a singular life and has a very individual intelligence. He has formed himself under rather unusual conditions and speaks with a particular voice. Thinker, poet, communicator, mystic, organiser, scholar, guide: it is hard to comprehend so many-sided and unique a character.

> Who am I? I must confess I do not know. I am as much a mystery to myself as I probably am to you. Not that I am a mystery to everyone, apparently. Quite a lot of people know exactly who and what I am (I am speaking of people outside the [FWBO]). Quite a lot of people 'see' me. But they see me in different ways. This was very much the case when I lived in India. According to who it was that did the seeing, I was 'the English monk', 'a rabid Mahayanist', 'a narrow-minded Hinayanist', 'the Enemy of the Church', 'a Russian spy', 'an American agent', 'the Editor of the Maha Bodhi', 'an impractical young idealist', 'a good speaker', 'the invader of Suez', 'the guru of the Untouchables', and so on. More recently, here in England, I have been, 'a good monk', 'a bad monk', 'the Buddhist counterpart of the Vicar of Hampstead', 'the author of A Survey of Buddhism', 'a crypto-Vajrayanist', 'a lecturer at Yale', 'the hippie

guru', 'a first-class organizer', 'a traditionalist', 'a maverick', 'a misogynist', 'a sexist', 'a controversial figure', and 'An Enlightened Englishman'.

All these different 'sightings' have at least some truth in them, even though the people doing the 'seeing' may have looked at me from the wrong angle, in the wrong kind of light, through tinted spectacles, or through the wrong end of the telescope. They may even have had spots floating before their eyes. The reason why all these different sightings have at least some truth in them is that I am a rather complex person.

- *My Relation to the Order*, pp. 26-27.

His life is immediately striking for the number of modern myths it embodies. To begin with, Sangharakshita is a 'self-made man'. He was born in relatively humble circumstances with few material or cultural advantages, without much benefit of formal education, and with little or no religious background and no effective spiritual mentors. Yet he has become a man of formidable learning, with a penetrating and creative mind, one of the leading Buddhist teachers of his age. Further, Sangharakshita made the 'journey to the East' and he made it well before the era of the package-deal spiritual trip. He did not merely drop in on oriental culture for a few weeks, but lived in the immemorial traditions of Indian asceticism and immersed himself in Indian culture. He met Indian gurus and Tibetan lamas and studied at first hand the great spiritual riches of the East. Sangharakshita made the 'return journey'. He 'came back home', bringing back to the land and culture from which he sprang the wealth that he had found while he was in India.

In India he began his career as 'helper of the oppressed'. He devoted himself to teaching hundreds of thousands of ex-Untouchables the true significance of the Dharma. Their recent conversion to Buddhism was of immense social significance since it gave them a basis for dignity and confidence. Later he encouraged his Western disciples to continue that work, supplementing the teaching of Buddhism with social action. Here, Sangharakshita reverses the modern myth: for he is a Westerner who brings wisdom to the East! In a certain sense, Sangharakshita is a 'rebel', the 'individual against the group', a gadfly to the herd. He has often found himself at odds with 'establishments', whether the authorities of the Maha Bodhi Society in India or the leaders of Buddhist organisations in London in the sixties. However, he has no psychological compulsion to rebellion: he has often shown he can co-operate well with others. The 'establishments' have found him inconvenient because of his fearless and uncompromising adherence to spiritual truth and his willingness to speak out when he sees hypocrisy and confusion.

The variety of the myths exemplified in his life illustrates the breadth and complexity of his character. He is a man with the inclinations of a hermit, preferring the peace of his hermitage and the company of a few close friends: yet he functions on an increasingly large stage, before the thousands of people who consider him their spiritual teacher and the many more who are interested in what he has to say. He is by nature a scholar and an artist: but he has shown himself to be a formidable organiser who has founded a movement of great flexibility and effectiveness. He is a witty and charming conversationalist, a sympathetic listener and counsellor, and a firm and faithful friend: yet he can be a fierce polemicist and a few of his works have aroused some controversy and even hostility.

Many who meet him for the first time are astonished that this man should be so 'ordinary' in appearance. His spiritual perspicacity shines out from his writing and speaking and he is honoured and respected by many - yet he is entirely lacking in 'charisma', as popularly

understood. Several tell of first meeting Sangharakshita at an FWBO centre without realising who he was. He lacks, even disdains, that animal magnetism that gains many a guru his following. Yet, if one attends closely when one is with him, one will feel the force of his presence. He has a great stillness and self-possession, a mindfulness of every movement. In his eyes there is an extraordinary watchfulness, betokening a deep awareness and an exceptionally penetrating mind. Yet those detached and watchful eyes that can make him seem somewhat Olympian can suddenly spark with humour, flash mischievously, or even blaze with a kind of angry fire. For, although he is invariably kindly and considerate in his dealings with people, and although he has always shown outstanding patience and perseverance in the face of some considerable difficulties, he has that underlying confidence, vigour, and determination that alone makes possible the successful completion of worthwhile tasks.

A self-made man

Sangharakshita's origins offer few clues to how he became what he now is. Dennis Philip Edward Lingwood, as he was first known, was born on 26 August 1925 in South London of working-class parents. Though his mother and father had little education themselves, they were upright and sensible people, providing a happy and loving home for the young Dennis and his sister. It was obvious from an early age that he was exceptionally intelligent, but life went on normally enough for him until he was eight years old. He was then diagnosed as having a serious heart condition that demanded he be kept completely immobile and calm at peril of his life. For two years he was confined to bed, seeing only his parents and the family doctor. What might have been an oppressive disaster was, for so lively a mind, a singular opportunity. Guided by a surprisingly mature sensibility, the eight-year-old boy kept himself occupied by reading: mainly the classics of English literature and all sixty-one parts of *Harmsworth's Children's Encyclopaedia*, several of which he read many times. In this way he gained an introduction to literature, philosophy, religion, and art.

Two years later, the original diagnosis being overturned by a pioneering doctor, Dennis was liberated from bed and eventually allowed to return to school. However, he himself asserts that he never learned anything useful from his formal education, particularly as it was further interrupted by the outbreak of the Second World War. He has acquired his considerable learning almost entirely by his own efforts. From the time he was confined to bed he has read several books of solid merit every week, absorbing the contents of each with keen discernment and an excellent memory. From that time also dates his love of art: indeed, so great was his early ability that it was assumed he would become a painter. But painting gave way to a new and greater love. At the age of twelve, on reading Milton's *Paradise Lost*, he discovered a passion for poetry and began writing verse himself - as he has continued to do throughout his life.

With the coming of war and the threat of air raids, most of London's children were evacuated from the city. Dennis left for Devon in 1940, in the second wave of evacuations, where he continued his self-education, spending many hours in public libraries. As soon as he could persuade his parents, he left school and took a job in a coal merchant's office. During this period he came across Madame Blavatsky's *Isis Unveiled*, a seminal work of the Theosophical movement. Reading this convinced him that he was not a Christian ‘and never had been’. He returned to London in 1941, for the next two years living at home with his parents once more and working as a clerk for the London County Council. This was a very turbulent period, during which he fell in love, began to have psychic and mystical experiences, composed much poetry, and wrote a novel – never published and now lost.

In 1942, in his insatiable scouring of the London bookshops, he purchased copies of two important works of Mahayana Buddhism: the *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita* or *Diamond Sutra* and the *Sutra of Wei-lang* (otherwise known as the *Sutra of Hui-neng* or the *Platform Sutra*). These had a decisive impact, convincing him that he was a Buddhist - and that he 'always had been'. He became a member of the London Buddhist Society, contributing an article to its journal, The Middle Way, and attending its meetings. Here he encountered Christmas Humphreys and most of the leading figures in English Buddhism of that time. The full-moon day of May 1944 saw his formal accession to Buddhism, during the Society's celebrations of Wesak - the anniversary of the birth, Enlightenment, and parinirvana of the Buddha. On that occasion, he recited for the first time the Refuges and Precepts after the Burmese bhikkhu, U Thittila.

The journey to the east

By this time, he had been conscripted into the army and had been trained as a signalman in the Royal Corps of Signals. In August 1944, he was sent with his unit to Delhi in India. He could hardly believe his good fortune, for here he was in the land of the Buddha, which he had never expected to see. However, there being little Buddhism to be encountered there, he secured a transfer to Colombo in Sri Lanka. Though now in a 'Buddhist country', he made no effective contact with Buddhists. It was among the Hindu swamis of the Ramakrishna Mission that he found some genuine spiritual companionship. Indeed, with the strong encouragement of the swamis, he discovered an urgent desire to renounce the world and become a monk. On his next transfer, to Calcutta, he continued his association with the Mission, without ever losing his basic loyalty to Buddhism. In 1946 a final transfer took him to Singapore and here he did make contact with Buddhists and began the practice of meditation. Hearing that his unit was to be demobilised in England, he checked in his equipment and left camp, technically a deserter.

Back in Calcutta he worked briefly with the Ramakrishna Mission and then with the Maha Bodhi Society, the leading Buddhist organisation in India. Both these experiences convinced him of the corruption of religious bodies and strengthened his determination to renounce the world. In August 1947, at the age of twenty-two, he took one of the most important steps of his life. With a young Indian friend he burned his identification papers, gave away his possessions, and, dressed in an orange robe, 'went forth' as a wandering ascetic, as the Buddha had done before him. He even left behind his name, from now on calling himself Anagarika Dharmapriya. The two friends spent the next two years mainly in South India. For periods they settled in one place, meditating and studying. At other times they wandered, always depending on alms for their food and shelter. They also visited the ashrams of various Hindu teachers, such as Anandamayi, Swami Ramdas, and Ramana Maharshi. While staying in a cave near the Maharshi's ashram he had a powerful vision of the Buddha Amitabha. This he took as confirmation that he should now seek ordination as a Buddhist monk.

Ordination did not however prove easy to come by. Their first request received a rather unceremonious rejection from the monks of the Maha Bodhi Society's vihara or monastery at Sarnath. The two friends next approached the Burmese bhikkhu, U Chandramani, then the senior-most monk in India, and with some difficulty persuaded him to give them the samanera, or novice, ordination. It was at this ceremony, in May 1949, that he received the name Sangharakshita: `Protector of (or Protected by) the Spiritual Community'. His full ordination as a bhikkhu took place at Sarnath in November of the following year, with another Burmese bhikkhu, U Kawinda, as upadhyaya or preceptor, and Ven. Jagdish Kashyap as his acarya or teacher. After their samanera ordinations, he and his friend travelled briefly into Nepal to minister to the disciples of U Chandramani, begging all the way. He then spent seven

months living with Ven. Jagdish Kashyap, one of the foremost Indian Buddhist monks of the twentieth century, studying the Pali language, the Abhidhamma, and Logic. This idyllic period ended when he and his teacher went on pilgrimage through the Buddhist sites of Bihar and up into the Himalayas. In the small hill-station of Kalimpong, on the borders of India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, and Tibet, Ven. Kashyap requested him to stay and 'work for the good of Buddhism'. In fulfilment of his teacher's wishes, Kalimpong was to be his base for the next fourteen years.

From his arrival in Kalimpong at the age of twenty-five, Sangharakshita worked very actively for the revival of Buddhism in the border regions, which contained a large proportion of nominally Buddhist peoples. Finding the existing Buddhist groups too factious and sectarian, he started a new organisation, the Young Men's Buddhist Association. The Association not only offered Buddhist teaching and practice but also cultural and social activities – even tutorial classes to help the young men pass their all-important examinations. It quickly established itself as a valued part of the life of the town, appreciated alike by young and old, Buddhist and non-Buddhist. Three years later, it became a branch of the Maha Bodhi Society, gaining thereby a small grant and affiliation with the major Buddhist organisation in India. Sangharakshita was however careful to ensure that it lost none of its autonomy.

During his first seven years in Kalimpong, Sangharakshita lived and worked in rented or borrowed accommodation. Despite the small grant from the Maha Bodhi Society for the branch's activities, he himself had no regular income. He lived entirely from the donations of well-wishers, small payments for articles and poems published in various journals, and fees for English lessons - many of which, however, he gave free of charge. There were times when he quite literally had no money at all - although he says that this never worried him. In 1957, through the generosity of the King of Sikkim and of an English Buddhist friend, he was able to purchase his own vihara.

A few months after his first arrival in Kalimpong, he commenced the publication of *Stepping-Stones*, 'a bimonthly journal of Himalayan Buddhism'. This very soon attracted an impressive list of contributors such as Lama Govinda, Dr Herbert Guenther, Dr Edward Conze, and Prince Peter of Greece. Although the journal had to cease publication after two years through lack of funds, it had achieved a wide circulation, bringing the young English bhikkhu to the notice of many in the English-speaking Buddhist world and introducing him to some prominent scholars and teachers.

Over the years he spent in the town, Sangharakshita managed to unite the Buddhist community in a quite unprecedented way. He arranged the joint celebration by all local Buddhist groups of various important Buddhist festivals. He even organised the commemoration of Tsongkapa's birthday by all the Tibetan Buddhists in the town together - a feat that brought the Dalai Lama's personal congratulations. His activities were not confined to the town: he gave lectures and held meetings all over the region. During regular visits to Sikkim at the personal request of the royal family and of the Indian Government's representative, he did what he could to revitalise the rather degenerate Buddhism of the kingdom, drawing up a scheme of studies for the monks of the royal monastery. So much a leader of the Buddhists in the region did he become that the Indian Government specifically asked him to stay on in the town, at a time when there were rumours of a Chinese invasion of the border regions, to help discourage the mass flight of its Buddhist inhabitants.

His association with the Maha Bodhi Society began in 1952 when he was invited by its General Secretary, Devapriya Valisinha, to write a biographical sketch of the Society's great founder,

Anagarika Dharmapala. Through this work, he came to have great admiration for Dharmapala and sympathy for Valisinha, his dedicated, if less capable, successor. He had, however, serious criticisms of the Society's present organisation: its governing body was dominated by caste Hindus, one member being openly hostile to Buddhism. He therefore took care never to compromise himself by becoming a member. Nonetheless, he was for many years the principal editor of its organ, *The Maha Bodhi*, and often lectured at its premises in Calcutta and elsewhere.

Helper of the oppressed

Though Kalimpong was his base from 1950 to 1964, he had a much wider sphere of operation. Most years he would spend some months away from the hills, lecturing in many parts of India. A very able speaker, he was much in demand at branches of the Maha Bodhi Society, as well as at various non-Buddhist organisations. He came to know a great variety of people: Buddhist monks of many different nationalities and schools, Western scholars who flocked to the Himalayas to study Tibetan culture and religion, Theosophists, Christian missionaries, politicians, even Raj Kapoor, the 'Clark Gable of India'. One of his most significant encounters was with Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar. This formidable man was among the foremost Indian politicians of the day: it was he who had headed the commission that drafted the constitution of independent India. Himself born an Untouchable, he had become the unrivalled leader of his people in their struggle for social justice. Dr Ambedkar eventually concluded that the only way out of the oppression of the Hindu caste system lay in leaving Hinduism altogether. After long and careful deliberation, he decided to become a Buddhist. This was to be one of the most significant events for Buddhism in the twentieth century, initiating the conversion of millions of people. Sangharakshita was able to advise him what conversion really meant and how it was undertaken. At Dr Ambedkar's invitation, he began teaching his followers the significance of the religion they were about to espouse.

Sangharakshita was not able to attend the ceremony in October 1956 at which Dr Ambedkar converted to Buddhism with nearly 400,000 of his followers. However, six weeks later he visited Nagpur, the city where the conversions had taken place, to be greeted with the news that the great leader had died just a few hours before. He had arrived at exactly the time he was most needed. Over the next few critical days he worked tirelessly to rally the grief-stricken multitudes, earning himself a secure place in their affections. Nearly every year from then until he left India he would spend several months touring among the new Buddhists of Western India, teaching them the tenets of their religion. He personally conducted the conversion ceremonies of more than 200,000 people.

Active as he was, both in Kalimpong and beyond, Sangharakshita did not neglect spiritual practice. He meditated at least every morning and evening, continued with his studies, and reflected on the Dharma. Each year he would observe the traditional 'rains retreat', remaining within his vihara compound for three months and devoting himself entirely to meditation, study, and writing. His situation in the border region gave him the opportunity to study Tibetan Buddhism at first hand. Many leading lamas were now escaping the Chinese invasion of their country and Kalimpong was often their first stopping-place. In 1956 he received initiation from Chetul Sangye Dorje, a highly respected, if rather unconventional, lama. He later received initiations and teachings from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, Dudjom Rimpoche, and Khachu Rimpoche, all of whom functioned within the Nyingmapa tradition, and from Dhardo Rimpoche, a Gelugpa whose previous 'incarnations' had all been Nyingmapas. From Dhardo Rimpoche, who became a close friend, he received, in October 1962, the Bodhisattva ordination, thus giving him ordination and initiation within all three yanas of Buddhism.

Throughout his stay in India he continued to write. Despite burning most of his poetry in 1949, he continued to pour forth verse, some of which appeared in various journals, including the widely-circulating *Illustrated Weekly* of India. In 1954 a volume of his poems was published, *Messengers from Tibet and other Poems*. Besides many articles and editorials for Stepping-Stones, The Maha Bodhi, and other periodicals, he wrote *Flame in Darkness: A Biographical Sketch of Anagarika Dharmapala,* and his major work, *A Survey of Buddhism,* both of which were published while he was in India. Two other works written at this time, *The Three Jewels,* an introduction to Buddhism that began life as contributions to an encyclopaedia, and *The Eternal Legacy*, a survey of Buddhist canonical literature, were not published until some years later.

The return journey

He had followed with sympathy the fortunes of the Buddhist movement in the West, particularly through correspondence with some of his English Buddhist friends. In 1964 he was invited to London for six months to help restore harmony in the already factious British Buddhist world. Realising that, for many reasons, he could do little more for Buddhism in India, he decided to see what opportunities awaited him in the West and accepted the invitation. He soon breathed new spirit into the rather staid atmosphere of English Buddhism, plunging into a vigorous round of classes, lectures, and meetings. He was clearly very popular and numbers at meetings began to mount. It was obvious that Buddhism had great potential in the West. Six months stretched to eighteen, and finally he decided that he would say farewell to his friends in India and then return permanently to London.

While he was in London he had been incumbent of the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, and it was to the Vihara that he intended to return. However, his nonsectarian approach and refusal to fit narrow expectations of what a Buddhist monk should and should not do turned some of the Vihara's trustees against him. While he was on his farewell tour of India he received notice that he would not be allowed to take up his former post. Despite the outcry of the greater part of those attending the Vihara, by a narrow majority the trustees had voted to exclude him. Sangharakshita's first response was one of relief. He was free to start again, free from the confusion and disharmony of the present British Buddhist world. With the full blessings of his teachers and friends in India, he returned to England. Just a few days after his arrival, in April 1967, he founded the Friends of the Western Buddhist Order with a small band of his disciples from the Vihara. One year later he ordained the first thirteen men and women into the Western Buddhist Order itself.

The rest of Sangharakshita's life is so closely bound up with the development of the FWBO/Triratna that it is difficult to reduce it to a simple account. Broadly, he completely devoted himself to the movement, which grew, on the whole, very steadily and surely. The first five years or so proved intensely creative. He had, so to speak, served his apprenticeship in the traditional Buddhist world: he had thought deeply about the Dharma and had practised it intensively. He was now on his own and must bring Buddhism to life in an entirely new environment, basing himself only on its fundamental principles. Step by step, Sangharakshita formed his new Buddhist movement.

Each week there would be three or four classes. At first, activities were held in a rented basement in central London, then in borrowed rooms at a macrobiotic restaurant and 'new age' centre, and finally in a disused factory in an area of North London scheduled for redevelopment. Not only was Sangharakshita taking all the classes but he personally did much of the organisational work, gradually training his disciples in the tasks of running a Buddhist

movement. He gave several important lecture series in which he set out the essential teachings of Buddhism, drawing on all schools and traditions. Twice a year he led major retreats, and throughout the year there were weekend or day seminars and workshops. Much of his time was spent in personal interviews with the many people who wished to see him - for he was not merely a teacher and leader to his disciples but a friend.

By 1973 it seemed that the new Buddhist movement was firmly enough established for its founder to withdraw from daily involvement. Not only was it possible, it was desirable. Order members needed the opportunity to take more responsibility themselves, and Sangharakshita himself needed to function in new ways. The movement now had two centres in London and two in New Zealand, besides substantial groups in Glasgow and Brighton and smaller ones elsewhere. Sangharakshita was the leader of a growing movement and could not remain involved in one centre alone. He moved first to a small chalet overlooking the sea in Cornwall and then to various cottages in East Anglia. He completed the first part of his memoirs, published in two volumes as *Learning to Walk* and *The Thousand-Petalled Lotus*, and wrote several articles and papers.

Although he was no longer involved in daily organisation, he still kept a close eye on everything that happened, being particularly concerned with new developments. As the movement expanded and deepened, he elaborated his teaching ever more fully, thinking out the principles that underlay its evolution at every stage. He continued, over the next fifteen years, to give several important lectures, and conducted seminars for small groups of his disciples on various Buddhist texts, modern accounts of the Dharma, and a few works from other sources.

Each year he would visit several centres and groups, both in Britain and abroad, meeting people, giving lectures, and talking with Order members. London was still the main focus and here he was a frequent visitor, particularly after the opening in 1979 of the large London Buddhist Centre, where he had a small flat. In 1977 he had shifted his principal residence to a country house in Norfolk, which became the Padmaloka Men's Retreat Centre. Here he gathered around him a small community, some of whom functioned as his secretaries, forming the nucleus of the Office of the Western Buddhist Order. By the end of the seventies the movement consisted of some fifteen centres, several of which had communities and businesses attached to them. The FWBO no longer offered only teachings and practices but a new and radical way of life, developing under the personal guidance of the founder.

In 1977 one of Sangharakshita's leading disciples made contact with some of his followers in India and, with their help, began to establish the FWBO there – where it was known as the Trailokya Bauddha Mahasangha Sahayak Gana (TBMSG). It was soon clear that Sangharakshita was not forgotten and that the principles of his new Buddhist movement were as applicable in India as in the West. Very quickly many thousands of people became involved with the movement. Sangharakshita himself visited India two years later, and conducted the first ordinations of Indians into the Order. He has visited India periodically since then and has interested himself closely in activities there, which are growing far more rapidly than anywhere else in the world. At his urging, his disciples in the West began to raise money for social projects among the new Buddhists of India. They formed what has now become a substantial fund-raising charity, the Karuna Trust.

By now Sangharakshita had an extremely heavy workload. Simply keeping himself informed of what was happening and maintaining contact with all those he had ordained occupied much of his time. By virtue of strong self-discipline, he kept at his literary work while also

visiting centres, giving personal interviews, lecturing and leading seminars, and dealing with the many questions and problems that flowed in from all parts of the movement. In 1981 he instituted an annual three-month-long retreat for men who were nearing ordination in a former Catholic monastery in Italy, himself leading many activities and supervising study. For the next eight years these retreats, though still demanding, were an opportunity to stand back from the regular duties of the ever-expanding movement. He also spent some time each year attending women's ordination retreats.

Fortunately, his senior disciples were maturing. In 1985 and 1986 he delegated the conferring of ordinations in India to teams of men and women Order members, and in 1989 he handed on responsibility for ordinations in the West. There were by now some capable teachers and leaders among Order members, well imbued with the principles he had been clarifying over the last twenty years. He decided that he needed to concentrate yet more on his literary work, as much as possible leaving others to direct the movement. Since 1989 he has been living in his flat at the London Buddhist Centre, paradoxically finding seclusion in the midst of the city. He retains several important central responsibilities, although he is in the process of handing these over. Besides his writing and organisational responsibilities, Sangharakshita keeps contact with his many disciples, seeing several each day and corresponding with others. From time to time he visits Triratna centres, taking a particular interest in places where the movement is newly taking hold.

The movement has grown now to the point at which the great majority of those involved have had little or no personal contact with its founder. Whilst there is no ‘cult of personality’ in the Triratna Buddhist Community, Sangharakshita is very much appreciated and his influence pervades every aspect of the movement. But he has always been keenly aware that his disciples must learn to carry on the work without him. From the outset he has engaged in a conscious process of stepping back, so that others have to take up the responsibilities he leaves behind. As he approaches his seventieth year he hopes to hand over his final duties to his senior disciples. He will then devote himself fully to his writing, through which he can clarify the principles and practice of the spiritual life to future generations.

Such is the bare outline of Sangharakshita's life. Perhaps one of the most remarkable things about it is that he has seldom premeditated what he is going to do. Opportunities have simply arisen and he has taken them. His thinking too, as perhaps all thought should, has arisen in relation to his experience. He himself has come to the conclusion:

> That the course of my life has been determined by impulse and intuition rather than by reason and logic and that, for me, there could be no question of first clarifying an idea or concept and then acting upon it, i.e. acting upon it in its clarified form. An idea or concept was clarified in the process of its being acted upon.
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> - *The History of My Going for Refuge*, pp.18-9.

The circumstances of his thinking are therefore important if we are to gain a full understanding of his ideas. We must then look more closely now at some aspects of his life as we explore the leading themes of his thought.

Excerpts from Sangharakshita's Memoirs

Reading the Diamond Sutra
From The Rainbow Road, *p.79.*

Return to London meant, almost as much as a return to Sonia, a renewal of acquaintance with the bookshops of Charing Cross Road. Expanding my sphere of operations, I began penetrating into two or three little courts which opened from it on the right. In one of these I discovered the oriental bookshop which, though well known to all serious English students of Eastern philosophy and religion, had been until then unknown to me. Unlike the other bookshops with their sixpenny and shilling boxes on either side of a wide open door, it was an aloof, reserved, almost mysterious place. In a single box outside the empty window on the left were some damaged specimens of the lighter sort of theosophical literature. The window on the right contained expensive books on the occult sciences. The door between was shut fast. Only after I had several times stopped to thumb the damaged volumes did I venture inside. The interior of the shop was even less like that of a bookshop than the exterior. Through a door at the back of the shop could be seen an octogenarian gentleman, in very powerful spectacles, sitting at a desk. Above the mantelpiece behind him hung a life-size photograph of Mme. Blavatsky. At John Watkins, which thereafter I visited frequently, I bought the two books by which I have been most profoundly influenced. These were the *Diamond Sutra*, which I read first in Gemmell's then in Max Müller's translation, and the *Sutra of Wei Lang* (Hui Neng). If, when I read *Isis Unveiled*, I knew that I was not a Christian, when I read the *Diamond Sutra* I knew that I was a Buddhist. Though this book epitomizes a teaching of such rarefied sublimity that even Arahants, saints who have attained individual nirvana, are said to become confused and afraid when they hear it for the first time, I at once joyfully embraced it with an unqualified acceptance and assent. To me the *Diamond Sutra* was not new. I had known it and believed it and realized it ages before and the reading of the sutra as it were awoke me to the existence of something I had forgotten. Once I realized that I was a Buddhist it seemed that I had always been one, that it was the most natural thing in the world to be, and that I had never been anything else.

...The realization that I was a Buddhist came in the later summer or early autumn of 1942. At about the same period I had for the first time experiences of the type which are generally known as psychic. Whether these started before or after reading the *Diamond Sutra* I do not remember.

Sangharakshita's Going Forth
From The Rainbow Road, *p.217ff.*

There was only one way out. Religious societies, organizations, and groups, far from being a help to spiritual development were only a hindrance. However lofty the ideals with which they were founded, they had a natural tendency to degenerate, in the hands of selfish human beings, into instruments for the acquisition of money, position, power, and fame. Instead of trying any longer to work with them we would follow the example of the Buddha and sever at one stroke our connection with an incorrigible world. We would renounce the household life and go forth into the life of homelessness as wanderers in search of Truth. For the last few months we had only sat hesitantly on the shore of the vast ocean of the spiritual life. Now, casting aside all fear, we would plunge boldly in. Having made this resolution, we lost no time putting it into effect. With the help of a handful of geruamati, the reddish-brown earth used since time immemorial by Indian ascetics, we dyed our shirts and sarongs the traditional saffron of the world-renunciant. Suitcases and watches were sold, trousers, jackets, and shoes

given away, identification papers destroyed. Apart from the robes that we were to wear we kept only a blanket each and our books and notebooks. As for the last three months hair and beard had been allowed to grow we did not need shaving tackle.

...Next morning, after joyfully donning our saffron robes, we walked feeling shy and rather conspicuous through the bazaar to Dr Gurukipal Singh's house. Lalla Pyarelal and other friends, though regarding our aspirations with sympathy, did not feel at all happy about our decision, which in their opinion was rash. Only Dr Singh wholeheartedly approved. With him, therefore, we had agreed to take breakfast before leaving Kasauli. Apart from one of his sons, a stalwart youth who accompanied us part of the way, our worthy Sikh friend, whose deep emotion when he wished us success in our quest both humbled and heartened us, was the last person to whom we spoke before setting out on foot along the ten-mile road that led to the plains.

Tibetan Buddhists believe that the appearance of a rainbow is one of the most auspicious of signs, and the biographies of their saints and yogis are replete with references to this phenomenon. Whether our going forth on 18 August 1947 may be considered an auspicious event I cannot say, but it was certainly signalized by the appearance not of one but of scores of rainbows.

As we left Kasauli it was raining, but, as in the course of our descent we emerged from the clouds into the bright sunshine below, we saw arching the road, at intervals of a few dozen yards, not only single but double and triple rainbows. Every time we turned a bend we found more rainbows waiting for us. We passed through them as though through the multicoloured arcades of some celestial palace. Against the background of bright sunshine, jewel-like glittering raindrops, and hills of the freshest and most vivid green, this plethora of delicate seven-hued bows seemed like the epiphany of another world.

On the afternoon of our second day of freedom, Satyapriya and I reached New Delhi, where we caught the first train to Madras. Our plan was to study Buddhism in Ceylon. Throughout the whole of the 1,000-mile journey the third-class compartment into which we had fought our way was so densely packed with passengers and luggage that each night, when we wanted to sleep, my friend and I had to scramble up on to a luggage-rack of such narrow dimensions that even one of us could hardly have slept there in comfort. What with the glare of ceiling-lights, the suffocating closeness of the atmosphere, and the slamming of doors, shouting of coolies, shrieking of passengers, and blowing of whistles at every station - not to speak of the excruciating discomfort of our position - we slumbered but fitfully, so that when on the morning of the fourth day we reached Madras, great was our relief.

Though they had not been unaware of my inclinations, the swamis of the Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, to which we went straight from the station, were astonished to see the young Englishman who, only eight months earlier, had visited them in a white tropical suit, now reappearing in the saffron robes of an Indian sadhu. Whether they were pleased at the sight of this sudden transformation or not they were too subtle to allow me to discern. But they received us kindly, and after showing us round the library and dispensary attached to the Math, which Satyapriya had not seen before, left us to sleep off our weariness in the guest-house in a manner that suggested we were their guests for the next few days. We had time, therefore, to visit the headquarters of the Theosophical Society at Adyar, only a mile from the Math where, from the wooded river bank, we watched the sun go down over the estuary as well as the famous Mylapore beach, a flat two-mile stretch of firm sand up and down which we strolled until long after nightfall with one of the younger swamis, now discussing

questions of religion and philosophy, now pausing to listen to the hiss of the breakers as with moonlit white crests they raced far up the beach.

Amitabha: the Vision in the Cave
From The Rainbow Road, *p.337.*

Despite frequent changes of abode, during the previous few months Satyapriya and I had not neglected our own practice of meditation. Wherever we might happen to be, we sat without fail morning and evening. While we were at Anandashram this had led, in my case, to some interesting side-effects. One afternoon I discovered I had a temperature. Though it was alarmingly high, so high that Satyapriya, on feeling me with his hand, at first wanted to call the doctor, I did not feel the least unwell. Indeed, I felt blissful, almost ecstatic, while the heat itself seemed to envelop the whole body in a melting sensation of infinite warmth, comfort, and security. The experience lasted two days; when we told Ramdas about it he pointed out that tapasya, the ancient Sanskrit word for spiritual practice, literally meant the generation of heat, and said that the experience signified the burning up of all impurities. Now that we were staying at the Virupaksha Guha, and devoting most of our time to meditation, even more extraordinary experiences were only to be expected, nor was it astonishing that some of them should seem to indicate the course of future developments.

One night I found myself as it were out of the body and in the presence of Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light, who presides over the western quarter of the universe. The colour of the Buddha was a deep, rich, luminous red, like that of rubies, though at the same time soft and glowing, like the light of the setting sun. While his left hand rested on his lap, the fingers of his right hand held up by the stalk a single red lotus in full bloom and he sat, in the usual cross-legged posture, on an enormous red lotus that floated on the surface of the sea.

To the left, immediately beneath the raised right arm of the Buddha, was the red hemisphere of the setting sun, its reflection glittering golden across the waters. How long the experience lasted I do not know, for I seemed to be out of time as well as out of the body, but I saw the Buddha as clearly as I had ever seen anything under the ordinary circumstances of my life, indeed far more clearly and vividly.

The rich red colour of Amitabha himself, as well as of the two lotuses, and the setting sun, made a particularly deep impression on me. It was more wonderful, more appealing, than any earthly red: it was like red light, but so soft and, at the same time, so vivid, as to be altogether without parallel. In the course of the next few days I composed a series of stanzas describing the vision. Contrary to my usual practice, I failed to write them down afterwards, with the result that they gradually faded from my mind. But the experience itself never faded. Nearly a quarter of a century later, the figure of the red Buddha is as clear to me, in recollection, as it was the next morning in the Virupaksha Guha.

With the approach of summer, the atmosphere of the cave had by this time not only lost its freshness but become quite stuffy. Satyapriya and I therefore decided to move to a square stone-built shrine that stood lower down, at the very foot of the hill. Better ventilated than the cave, and extremely cool, it consisted of a single chamber about six foot square divided into two sections. One section was occupied, from wall to wall, by a low stone platform, on which one of us slept at night, while in the other a lingam of polished black stone, eight or ten inches high, had been let into an anvil-shaped yoni sunk in the middle of the floor. Though involving such a short distance, our removal from the higher to the lower slopes of Arunachala was not without significance. The vision in the cave had convinced me that our two-years'

apprenticeship to the holy life had come to an end, and that we must now retrace our steps to North India and seek formal ordination in one of the Buddhist centres there. My desire for ordination had indeed become unbearably intense.

Ordination

At Sarnath
From The Rainbow Road, *p.79.*

Suddenly we saw above the tree-tops, about a mile away, the pinkish-grey pinnacle of the Mulagandhakuti Vihara, the new Sinhalese temple constructed about twenty years earlier. We were there! After a few hundred yards the road turned sharply to the right and as though in a dream we saw before us the park-like prospect of Sarnath. The next few days were among the pleasantest and the most painful of my entire existence...

Rarely in the history of Buddhism can two candidates for admission to the Sangha have been more quickly or more cruelly disappointed. Though we were allowed, rather grudgingly, to stay in the vast, empty Rest House, from the very first the attitude of the five or six resident monks towards us was clearly one of incomprehension, suspicion, and hostility. Our going barefoot might have been overlooked, and even our interest in meditation excused, but to be altogether without money was, we were made to feel, the unforgivable offence. Indeed, when we confessed that we had been trying to practise the precept of not handling gold and silver, the observance of which was of course incumbent on shramaneras and bhikshus alike, and that for the past few months we had not possessed as much as a single anna between us, they reacted rather as though we had told them we had leprosy. From that moment our fate was sealed. In the eyes of these representatives of 'Pure Buddhism' we were no better than beggars, and it was clear they wanted nothing whatever to do with us. They were even unwilling to give us a little food. When, in response to the bell, we turned up at the dining-hall, we heard one of them murmur angrily, "Why do they come without being asked?" After the open-handed hospitality of the Hindu ashrams we had visited, such an attitude came as a shock indeed.

Nevertheless, we decided not to be discouraged. In the case of a step so important as the one we now wanted to take, difficulties were bound to arise, and the best thing we could do was to treat them as tests. Accordingly, at the first opportunity, we acquainted the monks with our religious history and made the formal request for ordination. After listening to our account in silence, they said they would consult among themselves and let us know their decision. It was not long in coming. They were all members of the Maha Bodhi Society, they explained, and in view of the fact that the Society would be responsible for the maintenance of monks ordained under its auspices, they were not permitted to ordain anyone without the consent of the General Secretary. Since the Society was at present very short of funds, they were sure that in our case this consent would not be forthcoming.

Though we had known what the verdict would be, the shock when it came was none the less acute. All our plans were laid in ruins, all our hopes destroyed. Bitterly disappointed, we returned to Benares.

At Kusinara
From The Rainbow Road, *p.397.*

When the moon that rose every night above the shadowy dome of the Maha Parinirvana Stupa was almost full, U Chandramani called us to his room and with his customary affability told us that he was prepared to accede to our request. We would be ordained immediately after breakfast on the morning of the Vaishakha Purnima Day. It would have to be clearly understood, however, that in giving us the shramanera ordination, he would not be accepting any responsibility for our future training, nor would it be possible for us to stay with him at Kusinara. As we could see for ourselves, the resources of the Vihara were limited, and he was not in a position to support two more disciples. But if it was only ordination we wanted, he said, with evident warmth and sincerity, then he would ordain us with the greatest pleasure and we could have his blessing, too, into the bargain.

Ex-brahmin that he was, Satyapriya was at first shocked by the idea of our being ordained after breakfast, and not before it, while still fasting. But after breakfast it was definitely to be. Buddhism attached no importance whatever to ritual purity and impurity, we were reminded, and an empty stomach was no more holy than a full one. At nine o'clock on Thursday, 12 May 1949, therefore, after we had eaten our breakfast in the old Vihara, we received the long-expected summons to the Chapter House. Here U Chandramani handed us our robes, tied up in a bundle, and told us to go and take a bath and put them on. Our heads had already been shaved the previous day. The robes for which we now exchanged the informal saffron of the last two years were of the regulation size, shape, and colour, and along with the rest of the permitted articles - girdle, water-strainer, needle, and razor had been presented to us by Mother Vipassana and the other anagarikas, who in order to have them ready in time for the ceremony had, in fact, sat up stitching the complicated seams until late at night. U Chandramani himself had presented us with our begging-bowls. On our returning to the Chapter House, duly 'robed and bowled' as the texts have it, we were made to squat on our heels with our elbows resting on our knees and our hands joined together at our foreheads. This was an extremely difficult and uncomfortable position. Indeed, after a few minutes the pain in various parts of my body became excruciating. As I afterwards realized, the position we were made to adopt was that of the child in the womb, for the ordination represented the process of spiritual rebirth, and 'at the birth of a child or a star, there is pain'.

Having to remain in such a position throughout the ceremony was by itself ordeal enough, but for me at least the difficulties of ordination were by no means over. The Three Refuges – the Refuges in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha – had not only to be repeated thrice each but repeated in both Pali and Sanskrit. This was to make sure that the novice monk was able to distinguish between the two kinds of pronunciation, for in the early days of Buddhism, when the Buddha. Message was pre-served and transmitted exclusively by oral means, the slightest carelessness in matters of phonetics could in the course of time result in a serious distortion of the letter of the Teaching leading, perhaps, to eventual loss of its spirit. Try as I might, however, my English tongue could not manage to reproduce the elusive Indian sounds. U Chandramani, for his part, was determined that the requirements of tradition should be scrupulously respected. Time and again he intoned the sacred formulas, patiently coaching me in the production of aspirated consonants, nasalized terminations, and palatal sibilants. After much effort on my part, and much exercise of patience on his, I eventually succeeded in repeating the Refuges to his complete satisfaction in both Pali and Sanskrit and we were able to pass on to the next part of the ceremony, which consisted in the taking of the Ten Shramanera Precepts. This time reciting in Pali only, and with less regard to pronunciation, Satyapriya and I undertook to abstain from injury to living beings, from taking the not-given, from unchastity, from false speech, and from intoxicants, as well as from untimely meals, from song, dance, instrumental music and indecent shows, from garlands, perfumes, unguents and other worldly adornments, from large and lofty beds, and from handling gold or silver. All

these precepts we were already observing, but the kindly, simple, and good-humoured manner in which U Chandramani explained each one gave them a fresh significance, and we felt that we would die rather than be guilty of the smallest infringement. The more formal part of the proceedings ended with the Maha Thera solemnly adjuring us in the last words which the Buddha had addressed to his disciples, as he lay on his deathbed in the Sal Grove, only a few hundred yards away: 'With mindfulness strive on!' We were now fully-fledged shramaneras! The desire of our hearts had been fulfilled! We had been spiritually reborn! The ordination ceremony was over!

But not quite over, it seemed. Having been born anew, we had to be given new names. As we relaxed our cramped limbs, U Chandramani asked us on which day of the week we had been born. Neither of us knew. Well, well, murmured the old man, mildly astonished at such ignorance, but evidently not disposed to be over-strict about a matter of secondary importance, he would have to manage as best he could without the information. In Burma each day of the week was associated with certain letters of the alphabet, and a monk's name had to begin with one of the letters belonging to the particular day of the week on which he had been born. In our case, since it would not be possible for him to follow this procedure, he would have to name us at random, as he himself thought best. Satyapriya would be known as Buddharakshita. Dharmapriya would be known as Dharmarakshita. With these names, which placed us under the protection of the first and the second Refuges, we were well content. Whether on account of the forgetfulness of old age, however, or for some other reason, U Chandramani had overlooked the fact that he already had a disciple called Dharmarakshita. This disciple was the same Indian monk whom we had met at Sarnath, the one who had given us our letters of introduction, and he was even now in Kusinara, having arrived shortly before our ordination. On hearing that I had been given the same name as himself he came rushing over to the Chapter House. If there were two Dharmarakshitas, he protested, there would be endless confusion. People would not know which of us was which. My letters would be delivered to him. What was worse, his letters would be delivered to me. Neither of us would ever know where we were. ‘Oh well,’ said our preceptor, dismissing all this fuss and bother about names with a gesture of good-humoured impatience, 'Let him be Sangharakshita!'

In this unceremonious manner was I placed under the special protection of the Sangha, or Spiritual Community, rather than under that of the Dharma, or Teaching. Even before the matter of names had been sorted out, however, Mother Vipassana and the other anagarikas were thronging round us not only to offer congratulations but to salute our feet in the traditional manner, just as we had already saluted the feet of U Chandramani and the other monks. These symbolic acts served to remind us that our ordination had not only an individual but also a social significance. As shramaneras we belonged to a community, to a spiritual community, the community of the spiritually reborn. In this we had a definite place, and our relationship with other members of the community, lower or higher than ourselves in the hierarchy, was not only clearly defined but governed by a strict protocol.

Sangharakshita I and II and III
From The Rainbow Road, *p.435.*

Academic interlude
As might have been expected, during the whole of the time that I was with him Kashyap-ji made no attempt to restrict my freedom, in particular my freedom to read and write what I pleased. All his books, as well as his ticket to the University library, were at my disposal, and he never questioned the use I made of them. Indeed, it did not seem to occur to him to question it. When not occupied with Pali, Abhidhamma, and Logic I therefore read more widely than I had

done for several years. As the mood seized me, I also wrote. After being confined to works that I had come across more or less by accident, it was delightful to be able to range at will through all the fields of literature, ancient and modern, Eastern and Western, sacred and profane. But delightful though it was, such freedom was not without problems of its own. More clearly than ever before, it brought out into the open a conflict in my interests, perhaps a conflict in my nature itself, which the circumstances of my wandering life with Buddharakshita had tended to obscure. The nature of this conflict was well illustrated by two letters which I received during the second half of my stay at Buddha Kuti. One was from the redoubtable Bhikkhu Soma. He had already taken me very seriously to task for gadding about instead of settling in one place and getting down to serious work, and having seen some of my recent contributions to the Buddhist magazines of Ceylon he now wrote to put me to rights as regards my literary work. When I could write such excellent articles on Buddhist philosophy, he demanded, why did I waste my time writing those foolish poems? By a strange coincidence the other letter, which was from a Sinhalese Buddhist laywoman, arrived on the same day, and expressed exactly the opposite point of view. When I could write such beautiful poems on Buddhism, she asked, why did I spend so much time writing those dry, intellectual articles? The truth of the matter was that I agreed - and disagreed - with both correspondents. The conflict was not so much between the philosophically-inclined monk and the poetry loving laywoman, as between Sangharakshita I and Sangharakshita II.

Sangharakshita I wanted to enjoy the beauty of nature, to read and write poetry, to listen to music, to look at paintings and sculpture, to experience emotion, to lie in bed and dream, to see places, to meet people. Sangharakshita II wanted to realize the truth, to read and write philosophy, to observe the precepts, to get up early and meditate, to mortify the flesh, to fast and pray. Sometimes Sangharakshita I was victorious, sometimes Sangharakshita II, while occasionally there was an uneasy duumvirate. What they ought to have done, of course, was to marry and give birth to Sangharakshita III, who would have united beauty and truth, poetry and philosophy, spontaneity and discipline; but this seemed to be a dream impossible of fulfilment. For the last two and a half years Sangharakshita II had ruled practically unchallenged. Aided and abetted by Buddharakshita, who strongly disapproved of poetry, he had in fact sought to finish off Sangharakshita I altogether, and but for the timely intervention of Swami Ramdas, who firmly declared that writing poetry was not incompatible with the spiritual life, Sangharakshita I might well have died a premature death in Muvattupuzha.

However, despite the bludgeoning that he had received he had not died, and after leading a furtive existence in Nepal he was now coming into his own again at Buddha Kuti. Kashyap-ji's dealings were of course mainly with Sangharakshita II, but he had no objection to Sangharakshita I being around, and even spoke to him occasionally. Soon Sangharakshita I was feeling strong enough to demand equal rights. If Sangharakshita II devoted the afternoon to *The Path of Purity*, Sangharakshita I spent the evening immersed in the poetry of Matthew Arnold, which for some reason or other exerted a powerful influence during this period. When the former wrote an article on Buddhist philosophy, or edited the second edition of Kashyapji's *Buddhism for Everybody*, the latter composed poems. Sometimes, while one self was busy copying out extracts from the books he had been reading, the other would look idly out of the window and watch the falling of the rain. One day there was a violent clash between them. Angered by the encroachments of Sangharakshita I, who was reading more poetry than ever, and who had written a long poem which, though it had a Buddhist theme, was still a poem, Sangharakshita II suddenly burned the two notebooks in which his rival had written all the poems he had composed from the time of their departure from England right down to about the middle of their sojourn in Singapore. After this catastrophe, which shocked them both, they learned to respect each other's spheres of influence. Occasionally they even collaborated, as in

the completion of the blank verse rendition of the five paritrana sutras that had been started in Nepal. There were even rare moments when it seemed that, despite their quarrels, they might get married one day.

Facing Mount Kanchenjunga

Working for the Good of the Dharma in Kalimpong
From The Rainbow Road, *p.456.*

But much as Nepalis and Indians, Bhutanese and Sikkimese, Europeans and Tibetans, contributed to the colourfulness of the scene, it was not simply on account of their presence that Kalimpong was a new world. The whole atmosphere of the place was different. Coming as we did from the plains, where only too often life stagnates in its accustomed channels, we experienced everything as being not only fresher and cleaner but more sparkling and alive. It was like drinking ice-cold champagne after warmed-up soup. People went about their perfectly ordinary affairs in a perfectly ordinary manner, but whether on account of the altitude, or for some other reason, there was a sense of exhilaration in the air, as though it was the festive season, or as though they were all on holiday. Missionaries alone excepted, there was a smile on every face, and while it would be an exaggeration to say that there was a song on everybodys lips we could hardly put our head out of the window without hearing, loud and clear in the distance, the cheerful melody of the latest popular film song. And the colours! On account of these alone Kalimpong would have been a new world. From the blues and purples of the mountains to the reds and yellows of the flowers in the Nepali women's hair, they were all preternaturally vivid, as in a Pre-Raphaelite painting. Sometimes, indeed, they glowed with such intensity that everything seemed to be made of jewels. And all the time, above the mirth and the music, above the life and the colour, above the steadfastness of nature and the security of civilization – above everything – there were the snows.

On the morning of our arrival they had been veiled, and we had seen nothing of them, but since then they had shone forth every day, and often for the whole day. With the blue of the valleys at their feet and the blue of the sky above their heads, the shimmering white masses stretched from end to end of the horizon majestic beyond belief. Since the building where Kashyap-ji and I were staying faced north, we had an uninterrupted view of Mount Kanchenjunga, the second highest peak in the entire Himalayan range and the third highest in the world. In the early morning it was particularly beautiful. Looking out of the window just before dawn, I would see it glimmering ghostly in the blue twilight, more like ice than snow. Then, as the sun started rising, the bluish tip of the summit would be flushed by a fiery pink that, in a matter of minutes, had travelled all the way down the peak. Soon the whole range would be a mass of pink embers glowing against the pale blue sky. Pink would change to crimson, crimson to apricot, apricot to the purest, brightest gold. Finally, as the sun cleared the horizon, gold would change to silver and silver to dazzling white. On particularly fine days the mountain wore a white plume, almost like a plume of smoke. According to the experts, this was caused by a strong wind blowing the loose snow from its summit. But whether it wore its plume or not, and regardless of the time of day, I was never tired of looking up at Mount Kanchenjunga as it sat enthroned in the sky. Totally absorbed in itself though it was, and utterly oblivious of my existence, the great white peak nonetheless seemed to speak to me. What it said, I did not know, but perhaps, if I stayed in Kalimpong long enough, and looked hard enough, I would come to understand.

Though I did not then know it, I was to stay there for the next fourteen years. After weeks of indecision, Kashyap-jihad finally made up his mind not to return to the Benares Hindu

University. Instead, he would spend some time meditating in the jungles of Bihar, where a yogi whom he knew had a hermitage. Perhaps, as he meditated, it would become clear to him what he ought to do next. Meanwhile, I was to remain in Kalimpong. 'Stay here and work for the good of Buddhism', he told me, squeezing himself into the front seat of the jeep that was taking him to Siliguri, 'The Newars will look after you'. There was little that I could say. Though I did not really feel experienced enough to work for Buddhism on my own, and though I doubted whether the Newars were quite so ready to look after me as Kashyap-ji supposed, the word of the guru was not to be disobeyed. Bowing my head in acquiescence, I paid my respects in the traditional manner, Kashyap-ji gave me his blessing, and the jeep was off.

I was left facing Mount Kanchenjunga.

Meeting with Dhardo Rimpoche
From Facing Mount Kanchenjunga, *p.488.*

...it was obviously incumbent upon me to do everything in my power to prevent the dispute from developing into an actual breach between the two Buddhist communities.

The following morning I therefore set out for Sherpa Building, on the upper floor of which the Incarnate Lama was again staying. Since I did not know Tibetan and since Dhardo Rimpoche, despite Joe's tuition, spoke hardly any English, I took an interpreter along with me. The interpreter was Lobsang Phuntshok Lhalungpa, the young monk-officer whom I had met two years ago at Thubden Tendzin's bungalow. He had given up the robe and married, and now lived with his wife and infant son in the upper part of the 'Manjula' guest cottage. In recent months I had helped him improve the English of a political history of Tibet he was translating from the Tibetan and we were beginning to be good friends. Recently he had told me about the Tibetan school that he and his brother officers were hoping to establish in Kalimpong. The inspiration behind the project was Dhardo Rimpoche, with whom he was closely associated, and whom he was anxious I should meet. I had not yet had the opportunity of meeting the Rimpoche, though while I was away in Nepal, Joe had brought him to 'The Hermitage' and he had consecrated the standing image of the Buddha given me by Lama Govinda. Indeed I had not, as I well knew, so much as seen him in passing. What I did not know, and was not to learn until quite a few years later, was that although I had not seen Dhardo Rimpoche he had seen me. He had seen me in Buddha Gaya in 1949. Happening to look out of his window one day he was surprised to see on the flat roof on the Maha Bodhi Rest House a yellow-robed Englishman. So surprised was he, and so astonished and intrigued that a Westerner should be interested in Buddhism, that he called his monk-attendant to come and look. 'The Dharma has gone even so far as the West!' he declared.

Now, more than three years later, the same yellow-robed Englishman was coming to see him – coming to see him, moreover, in connection with a dispute that had arisen on the very spot where the Rimpoche had caught sight of him. Strange to relate, I have no recollection of my actual meeting with Dhardo Rimpoche at Sherpa Building that morning, possibly because it is so overlaid with memories of subsequent meetings. I have no recollection of the room in which we met and no recollection of what the thirty-five-year-old Incarnate Lama looked like on that occasion, though he must have been shaven-headed and have worn the maroon robes of a member of the Gelugpa order, with a triangle of gold brocade showing above the edge of the upper robe. What I do recollect – and recollect most clearly – is the impression of sheer goodwill, candour, and integrity that I received from Dhardo Rimpoche as he gave me a full account of the dispute between himself and Dhammaloka; a dispute in which the hot-headed Sinhalese had so far forgotten himself as to use expressions no monk should use to another. So

strong was this impression that when, the following day, I wrote to Devapriya Valisinha, I had no hesitation in assuring him that the Rimpoche was in no way at fault and that the blame for the dispute rested solely with Dhammaloka. Predictably, the little General Secretary of the Maha Bodhi Society did not agree with me and was inclined to support his compatriot and fellow Theravadin. But this did not worry me. I had heard on the monastic grapevine that Dhammaloka had decided to disrobe after the Vaishaka full moon day and leave Buddha Gaya, which he did, and I never heard of him again.

As for Dhardo Rimpoche, he was from now onwards to spend most of his time in Kalimpong, and I was to be in increasingly close contact with him for the remainder of my stay in India – in a sense, for the rest of my life.

Sangharakshita's Decision to Found the FWBO
From Moving against the Stream, *p, 330ff.*

Kalimpong was situated 4,000 feet above sea level. Here the air was thinner and clearer than in the plains, and the sky a deeper, darker blue. On most days of the year except during the rainy season one could see, high above the foothills to the north-west, the dazzlingly white shape of Mount Kanchenjunga, the second highest peak in the Himalayan Range. I had lived in Kalimpong for fourteen years, ever since the memorable day when Kashyap-ji had left me there with the parting injunction to stay and work for the good of Buddhism. During that time I had become an accepted part of the cultural and religious life of the cosmopolitan little town. Now I had come to say goodbye. I had come to say goodbye to my friends and teachers, some of whom I might never see again. I had come to say goodbye to my hillside hermitage, with its row of Kashmir cypresses, its flowerbeds and terraces, its hundred orange trees, its bamboo grove, and its solitary mango tree. I had come to say goodbye to the shrine room where I had meditated for so many hours, to the study-cum-bedroom where I had started writing the first volume of my memoirs, and to the veranda up and down which, during the rainy season, I had paced deep in reflection. I had come to say goodbye to Kalimpong, goodbye to Mount Kanchenjunga and its snows.

But though I had come to say goodbye, my 'homecoming' was in many ways a joyful one. The first to welcome me back to the Triyana Vardhana Vihara, or Monastery Where the Three Ways Flourish, were Hilla Petit and Maurice Freedman, who had been staying there for the last few days. Hilla was the elderly Parsee friend with whom Terry and I had had lunch in Bombay, and diminutive, big-headed Maurice was her long-term house-guest. I had first met the oddly assorted pair in Gangtok, when they were holidaying with our common friend, Apa Saheb Pant, the then Political Officer of Sikkim, and in later years I had more than once stayed with them at their comfortable Bombay flat. Both were keen followers of J. Krishnamurti, and soon Maurice and I were deep in one of our usual rather inconclusive discussions as to whether Truth was really a 'pathless land' that could be approached only by way of 'choiceless awareness'. Not that I had much time for such discussions that morning, at least not as much as Maurice probably would have liked. There were letters to be opened, other friends to be seen.

One of the first letters to be opened was from the English Sangha Trust. It was dated 1st November and was signed by George Goulstone in his capacity as one of the Directors of the Trust. After assuring me in the most fulsome terms of the Trust's deep appreciation of my services to the Dharma in England, he went on to inform me that in the opinion of the Trust and my fellow Order members my long absences from the Hampstead Buddhist Vihara, together with what he described as my extra mural activities, were not in accordance with the

Theravada's high standards of discipline and ethics. Moreover, I had not comported myself in a manner fitting the religious office that I held in the Order. The Trust had therefore decided to seek elsewhere for an incumbent of the Vihara. As my work in India was so dear to my heart, the letter continued blandly, I might think that my allotted task was to remain and serve Buddhism in the East. Should I, on careful reflection, consider that my work lay in the East, this would be acceptable as a reasonable ground for my resignation, and notification to this effect would be made to the Buddhist Authorities in the West. Should I not feel disposed to take this step, the trustees would feel regretfully obliged to withdraw their support from me. In so doing, they felt sure of having the agreement of the Sangha authorities in England.

'Do you know what this means?' I asked Terry, when I had finished reading the letter, 'It means a new Buddhist Movement!' The words sprang spontaneously from my lips. It was as if the Trust's letter, coming as it did like a flash of lightning, had suddenly revealed possibilities that had hitherto been shrouded in darkness or perceived only dimly. Though I had long felt that the Buddhist movement in Britain might need a fresh impetus, and had even discussed with the Three Musketeers and Viriya the feasibility of my giving lectures and holding classes outside the orbit of the Hampstead Vihara and the Buddhist Society, I had certainly never considered the possibility of my taking a step so radical as that of starting a new Buddhist movement, whether in Britain or anywhere else. But I now saw that a new Buddhist movement was what was really needed, and that the Trust's letter had opened the way to my starting it. The movement I was to found some months later may have been born in London, but it was conceived there in Kalimpong on 24 November 1966, at the moment when I addressed to Terry those six fateful words.

Yet clearly as I saw that there would be a new Buddhist movement in Britain, I had no idea what form that movement might take.

Some Poems by Sangharakshita

To give you a taste of his poetry, here are some of his better-known poems. The rest can be found in the *Complete Poems*, including the much longer *Veil of Stars*. His most recent poems are also available on his website.

The Lotus of Compassion

The Lotus blooms tonight,
The great golden Lotus of the Lord's Compassion.
With white roots deep in the slime of this sad world,
And huge green leaves spread on the surface of the waters of the Lake of Tears,
And surrounded by myriads of silver lotus-buds,
Like white hands folded in prayer for succour from the miseries of the world,
That Lotus blooms tonight.
O leave the crowded shore where men buy and sell,
Shake off the soft detaining fingers of your friends,
And in a little boat,
At midnight, when the moon is full,
And glitters at you from the water,
Row swiftly to the quiet Heart of the Lake where the Lotus blooms,
The great golden Lotus of the Lord's Compassion;
And you will feel the sweetness ineffable of its-heart-fragrance
Coming on a breeze which ripples the face of the silent waters
To meet you beneath the stars.

Life is King
Hour after hour, day
After day we try
To grasp the Ungraspable, pinpoint
The Unpredictable. Flowers
Wither when touched, ice
Suddenly cracks beneath our feet. Vainly
We try to track birdflight through the sky trace
Dumb fish through deep water, try
To anticipate the earned smile the soft
Reward, even
Try to grasp our own lives. But Life
Slips through our fingers
Like snow. Life
Cannot belong to us. We
Belong to Life. Life
Is King.

The Bodhisattva's Reply
What will you say to those
Whose lives spring up between
Custom and circumstance
As weeds between wet stones,
Whose lives corruptly flower
Warped from the beautiful,
Refuse and sediment
Their means of sustenance –
What will you say to them?

That woman, night after night,
Must sell her body for bread;
This boy with the well-oiled hair
And the innocence dead in his face
Must lubricate the obscene
Bodies of gross old men;
And both must be merry all day,
For thinking would make them mad –
What will you say to them?

Those dull-eyed men must tend
Machines till they become
Machines, or till they are
Cogs in the giant wheel
Of industry, producing
The clothes that they cannot wear
And the cellophaned luxury goods
They can never hope to buy –
What will you say to them?

Or these dim shadows which

Through the pale gold tropic dawn
From the outcaste village flit
Balancing on their heads
Baskets to bear away
Garbage and excrement,
Hugging the wall for fear
Of the scorn of their fellow-men –
What will you say to them?

And wasted lives that litter
The streets of modern cities,
Souls like butt-ends tossed
In the gutter and trampled on,
Human refuse dumped
At the crossroads where civilization
And civilization meet
To breed the unbeautiful –
What will you say to them?

'I shall say nothing, but only
Fold in Compassion's arms
Their frailty till it becomes
Strong with my strength, their limbs
Bright with my beauty, their souls
With my wisdom luminous, or
Till I have become like them
A seed between wet stones
Of custom and circumstance.

'Forgive me if I have stained...'
Forgive me if I have stained
Your beauty with my desire,
Or troubled your clear serene
Light with my fury of fire.
Forgive me; let us be friends.

Forgive me if I have looked
For response that you could not give,
Or raised in the deeps of my heart
This red rose too sickly to live.
Forgive me; let us be friends.
Buffaloes being driven to Market

We know when market-day is near,
For village folk to vend their store,
Because the blue-grey buffaloes
Are driven in the night before.

With long-lashed eyes, and massive horns
Low-curving from each patient head,
They shuffle sadly up the road,

Dusty, and lowing to be fed.

Their drivers, shouting from the rear,
Urge them with blows to left or right,
And, mindful of the broad red sun,
Make haste before the fall of night.

One evening, as I watched them pass,
My heart was heavy for their kind,
To see how slowly one great beast
Limped painfully along behind.
Slowly he moved, and slower yet,
Despite their whip and blood-stained goad,
Till, sagging at the knees, he dropped
On the sere grass beside the road.

He tossed his patient head; I saw
The deep blue eyes were glazed with pain.
Though shivering in a storm of blows
He could not rise and walk again.

And as the darkness fell, I mused
That simple folk who sell and buy
Could herd him to the butcher's shed,
Yet could not let him rest and die.

For the Record
You wrote four letters, one
To your parents, one
To the girl who looked after you, one
To your accountant, and one
To your best friend
Me,
Sealed them neatly.
You wrote out
Two cheques in settlement of small
Debts,
Walked around
Here and there
Came in, went out
Two or three times
Returned my typewriter
(It was early morning,
I was in bed, asleep, did not hear you)
Felt a little uneasy,
Perhaps, for a minute or two
Parked your bus
Down at Kentish Town
In front of an old brick wall
Where it would not be in anybody's way
(After drawing the faded red

Curtains) bought a ticket
To somewhere, anywhere
Rode
Down the escalator
Stood
Heron-hunched in your old black duffle-coat
Hands thrust deep in pockets
Brooding, thinking,
Meditating,
Watched, waited
Anticipated
And when the train came
Heavily lumbering along the platform
Slowly gliding along the smooth shining rails
Suddenly threw yourself under, and in a moment
Found what you had been seeking
All your life.

Four Gifts
I come to you with four gifts.
The first gift is a lotus-flower.
Do you understand?
My second gift is a golden net.
Can you recognize it?
My third gift is a shepherds' round-dance.
Do your feet know how to dance?
My fourth gift is a garden planted in a wilderness.
Could you work there?
I come to you with four gifts.
Dare you accept them?

The Six Elements Speak
I am Earth.
I am rock, metal, and soil.
I am that which exists in you
As bone, muscle, and flesh,
But now I must go,
Leaving you light.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Water.
I am ocean, lake, rivers and streams,
The rain that falls from clouds
And the dew on the petals of flowers.
I am that which exists in you
As blood, urine, sweat, saliva and tears,
But now I must go,
Leaving you dry.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Fire.
I come from the Sun, travelling through space
To sleep in wood, flint, and steel.
I am that which exists in you
As bodily heat, the warmth of an embrace,
But now I must go,
Leaving you cold.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Air.
I am wind, breeze, and hurricane.
I am that which exists in you
As the breath in your nostrils, in your lungs,
The breath that gently comes, that gently goes,
But now I must go,
For the last time,
Leaving you empty.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Space.
I contain all,
From a grain of dust to a galaxy.
I am that which exists in you
As the space limited by the earth, water, fire, and air
That make up your physical being,
But now they have all gone
And I must go too,
Leaving you unlimited.
Now we must part.
Goodbye.

I am Consciousness.
Indefinable and indescribable.
I am that which exists in you
As sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and thought,
But now I must go
From the space no longer limited by your physical being
Leaving nothing of 'you'.
There is no one from whom to part,
So no goodbye.

Earth dissolves into Water,
Water dissolves into Fire,
Fire dissolves into Air,
Air dissolves into Space,
Space dissolves into Consciousness,
Consciousness dissolves into – ?
HUM