

# Triratna Dharma Training Course for Mitras

## Year Two – Teachers’ Notes

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### *Module 7: The Way of Mindfulness*

#### *A Training to Bring the Dharma to Life with the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*

*Compiled by Kamalashila*

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**N.B.** Kamalashila has recorded some audio and video meditations for this course on a special reference website. This is a project in progress – you can find these excellent resources here:

[www.kamalashila.co.uk/page1/mitrastudy/page31](http://www.kamalashila.co.uk/page1/mitrastudy/page31).

The meditations he plans to record are as follows:

- Week 1: first Ānāpānasati meditation: the breath in the body.
- Week 3: meditation on parts of the body.
- Week 3: meditation on the elements.
- Week 3: walking meditation – elements.
- Week 3: walking meditation – parts of the body.
- Week 4: feeling in the body.
- Week 4: second Ānāpānasati meditation: feeling.
- Week 4: walking meditation – feeling.
- Week 5: reflection on emptiness.
- Week 5: reflection on conditions.
- Week 5: walking meditation – reflection.

In the meantime, the module should still work without these meditations. Also, be aware that these Teacher’s Notes, whilst they include the main text of the Student Notes with Kamalashila’s additions for Teachers, do not include the sutta and diagrams found in the Student Notes.

### **Overview of the module**

The purpose of this six week training is to familiarise participants with the intensive practise of mindfulness as taught by the Buddha in the Pāli *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

Before you begin the module, it is important that you read Sangharakshita’s commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* called *Living with Awareness* (Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579389). It’s a short book and there’s no need to take notes at this stage. It would also be helpful to have a copy of Anālayo’s *Satipaṭṭhāna – the Direct Path to Realization* (Windhorse Publications, ISBN 1899579540) which is referred to throughout the module and provides an excellent

in-depth study of the Sutta (although you don't need to read it before you begin the module).

The course consists of three phases:

1. Phase one is a single week (plus the prior preparation outlined above) grasping the theoretical basis.
2. Phase two is a three week training establishing the theory in experience.
3. Phase three comprises two weeks of deeper reflections and insight.

The principles of mindfulness were introduced during the Foundation Year (Part Three, Week Six on the fifth precept) and within the Eightfold Path module (in the section on 'Perfect Awareness'). As well as clarifying principles, this course focuses on bringing the practice alive. Students are asked to commit strongly to practising mindfulness, taking to heart the Buddha's concluding words in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:

*“Monks, if anyone should develop these four Satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for seven years... six... five... four... three... two... one year... seven months... six... five... four... three... two... one... half a month... if anyone should develop these four Satipaṭṭhānas in such a way for seven days, one of two fruits could be expected for him: either final knowledge here and now, or, if there is a trace of clinging left, non-returning.”*

Ideally the group will work together over the course: applying the teachings, staying in contact, checking in with one another, doing rituals that support mindfulness practice and determining to realise its fruits. For example over a week the group would:

- **Prepare individually** the relevant material, understanding it and putting it into practice.
- **Read together** a chosen section of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* text.
- **Study** Sangharakshita's commentary on that section.
- **Reflect on and discuss** the ideas in various ways.
- **Meditate** together on relevant aspects of the Practice.

Right from the start, the value of good preparation needs to be strongly stressed. Students need to know that it is an essential part of what they are signing up for.

Individual work depends on time available. It need not involve any particular expertise, deep experience of meditation etc. Just engage with the students individually and be interested in what is happening for them.

- **Celebrate ritually** their aspirations for the practice.
- **Take the practice home** to continue throughout the next week.

Check Anālayo to see if he has any additional points or helpful clarifications of principle. Sometimes study selections from Anālayo's text.

The course leader will, if possible, work individually with each student, giving practice guidance and answering any theoretical questions that arise during the week. They may also vary the following programme if they think it is appropriate.

## Phase One: Acquiring a Basic Understanding

### Week 1: The Context and Crucial Role of Mindfulness

#### How mindfulness fits into Buddhist doctrine, and its central role in Buddhist practice

The emphasis this week is on understanding the underlying principles of mindfulness. The study is of the Sutta sections 1–6<sup>1</sup> and the first four chapters of *Living with Awareness*. You will be examining the structure of the Sutta, its definition of the four Satipaṭṭhānas and the qualities of sati and sampajañña.

#### Preparation before the meeting

1. **Review the opening chapters of *Living with Awareness***, i.e. ‘Beginning,’ ‘Remembering,’ ‘Goal-setting,’ ‘Breathing’ and ‘Living.’ pp. 3-37– you’ve already read them once. This time reflect as you read and notice what you understand and what you don’t. Let the meaning inspire your practice. Jot down a few notes to use in the group – key points and questions. (There is a copy of the Sutta text from Anālayo’s *Satipaṭṭhāna* in the Appendix below).
2. Read Anālayo p.17-18 (ask for a photocopy if you don’t have the book) and **get a general idea of the structure of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta***.
3. **Understand what the four ‘foundations’ are** (p.6)<sup>2</sup> and try to identify them in your own experience.
4. **Recognise in experience what the Buddha means by sati and sampajañña** (e.g. *Living with Awareness* pp.6 & 19; *Anālayo* pp.46-8 for sati, p.39 for sampajañña). Try to grasp these core ideas and look at how they work in your daily experience.
5. **Get a sense of the quality of mindfulness.** For example it is described by Sangharakshita as, “*The defining quality of all Buddhist practice,*” and as, “*The sum total of the ethical and spiritual qualities that a human being must develop in order to reach... Enlightenment.*”(p.5). The Buddha states

Phase one is strongly focused on grasping the basic ideas.

It’s vital that students prepare well in the weeks beforehand otherwise this first meeting will be heady and over-abstract.

If they do the preparation sincerely, by the time the course starts they will be experiencing the fruits of the practice already. Any sense that the material is abstract will have dissolved and the course atmosphere will improve 100%.

To enable this to happen it will be helpful – if possible – if the teacher can connect everyone to the material well before the course actually starts.

It may be useful to have the ‘structure’ diagram to hand, or offer it to the students. It’s included in the Student Notes.

Make sure everyone understands what the four foundations refer to in their present experience.

See important Teachers note in week 2 section below on using Anālayo and Sangharakshita for defining sati and sampajañña.

<sup>1</sup> For references to numbered sections of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, see the reading sections in the Appendix.

<sup>2</sup> Page numbers in brackets refer to *Living with Awareness* throughout

(in Soma Thera's and other translations), "This is the only way." But can't there be other ways?

## At the meeting

1. **The group reads together the first six sections of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*:** the preface, the direct path statement, the definition of how to practice each Satipaṭṭhāna, and the breathing of the body, the postures of the body and the activities of the body.
2. **Study and discuss how you have understood the basics:**
  - The structure of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.
  - The definitions of the four *Satipaṭṭhānas* of body, feeling, mind and dhammas.
  - The qualities of mindfulness as, "Diligent, clearly knowing, and mindful, free from desire and discontent in regard to the world."
  - Mindfulness as the link between the Wheel of Life and the Spiral Path.

Sangharakshita's lecture *Mind Reactive and Creative* could be referred to in which he clarifies that mindfulness is the central practice, the link in each moment between the reactive tendencies of the mind (the Wheel of Becoming) and the creative potential (the Spiral Path).

The meditation practice recommended for the next three weeks, is Mindfulness of Breathing. Use the Ānāpānasati sutta method – the usual Triratna method, as Sangharakshita explains in chapter 3. Here we are using the identical verses in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

The leader should understand and have practised the method for a time beforehand. Its simplicity will then come across. Otherwise the method may appear unnecessarily complex.

As an alternative, the recordings on the web page can be played.

The study leader should communicate his or her own experience of the practice (however it is). If he/she has independent, in-depth experience of the Ānāpānasati approach, their way of doing it could be substituted for what follows.

Stages 1 & 2. Noticing the 'long' and 'short' breath: "Initial taking hold of the experience of breathing"

- Ask: *would I call this particular breath long, or short?*  
*To connect with this instruction, try the following:*  
Ask: *is this particular breath relaxed, or not?*  
*Note: a breath may feel 'long' when relaxed, 'short' if awkward or panting.*  
Ask: *am I aware of this particular breath, or not?*  
*Note: a breath may feel 'long' when one's awareness dwells on it, 'short' when there is a lapse in attention.*

Stage 3. Noticing the breath body:

"Sustaining the awareness of breathing"

- Distinguish the volume of the breath as a distinct sensation from the rest of the body.
- Make sure it is actually the breath that is being experienced, and not a thought about it or some other sensation.

Stage 4. Allowing breath and body to calm one another (calming body and mind)

- Allow the touch of the breath naturally to relax the body. Then allow the relaxing body to relax the breathing even more.

**3. Meditation – connect with the breath in the body as in section 4 of the sutta:**

*“And how, monks, 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.’*

This text is identical to that in the *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (the *Discourse on Mindfulness of Breathing*, M.N. 118), in which the Buddha teaches the classic meditation. Over the next few weeks the suggested meditation practice will be based on the first eight of the sixteen *Ānāpānasati* instructions.

**4. Ritual – strengthen the resolve to practise.**

Collectively dedicate the next six weeks to bringing the Dharma to life through understanding and practising mindfulness. The suggested focus this week is Śākyamuni Buddha, the teacher of the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*.

## Phase Two: Establishing the Practice in Your Experience

### Week 2: The Key Practices of Mindfulness Clarifying what mindfulness practice is, what you actually do, and where you do it

The emphasis for the next three weeks is on meditation and on deepening experience in everyday life. The study is of the sutta sections 4–9 and *Living with Awareness* chapters 3 and 4, examining in particular the ‘refrain’ in the context of awareness of the body.

#### Preparation before the meeting

1. The idea of Phase Two is to **gain a much more in-depth experience and understanding of how to practise mindfulness.**
2. So from now, **intensify your practice** as you understand it.
  - Bring questions about your understanding of the practice to the group.
  - Do more meditation – especially mindfulness of breathing meditation..
  - Look again at Sangharakshita Chapter 3: ‘Breathing’.
3. **Look more closely at your experience** day-to-day.
  - Bring more attention to your breathing and let it *‘lead your awareness to a broader experience of the body’* (p.25).
  - Seek out the qualities of *sati* and *sampajañña* in your awareness.
4. At home, **study and reflect on what you learn.**
  - Look into the ‘refrain’ and consider how it applies in your experience.
  - See how you can apply points from Chapter 4: ‘Living’.

#### At the meeting

1. **Read as a group sections 4–9 of the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta:** starting again with the breathing section, continuing to the end of the ‘body’ section: the postures, body activities and anatomy, the body as the four elements, and the appearance of the body when dead.

Phase two is more practice based, looking for the experience and inner direction of mindfulness. So starting from now there should be a clear transition from theory into practice, and an increasing emphasis in the group on how everyone is applying and experiencing mindfulness practice. This will definitely happen if the students are encouraged to do the preparation for this week.

HOWEVER note that there is still quite a bit of conceptual material to absorb this week – bring in the new emphasis gradually. Think of week 2 as the transition into phase 2.

A weekend retreat would be helpful during this phase, or if the course is being done as an ‘urban retreat,’ some collective meditation sessions, or a day or weekend of meditation. The whole of phase 2 could be covered on a week’s retreat, or a retreat of say five days.

Teachers will benefit from reading Anālayo, p.31-43, especially pp.32, 34ff, 37-8, 39ff & 41ff – much of it is probably too detailed for the group, but Anālayo’s analysis informs these key ideas very well.

2. **Study and discuss your personal grasp of the meditation, and of what you think mindfulness means in practice.**

Here are some suggested areas: I suggest that the indentation for the next level of numbering needs to be increased - coleen

i. Discuss any personal practice issues arising out of Chapter 3: ‘Breathing’ – for example:

- The conditions and posture for meditation.
- Solitude v. collective practice.
- Sangharakshita’s explanation of the correspondence between the standard Triratna explanation of the Mindfulness of Breathing meditation and the Theravādin Ānāpānasati method (p.28).
- The stages of jhāna (p.32).
- The insight aspect of the practice as set out in the ‘refrain’ recitation in the sutta (p.33).

ii. Consider the role of body awareness in enabling mindfulness in these ways.

iii. Discuss Chapter 4: ‘Living’ and how it illuminates the practice of mindfulness in everyday life, perhaps in terms of:

- Everyone reviewing the experience of applying the definition of mindfulness as studied in week 1, clarifying further the qualities of sati and sampajañña.
- Reflect again on the ‘refrain’, the repeated verse about how to apply mindfulness in each situation - contemplating it internally, externally & both; contemplating its arising, passing away & both; contemplating its existence sufficiently for bare and continuous awareness, independently and without clinging.
- Discuss what Sangharakshita means on p.38 by: *“Mindfulness is inherently skilful, relying upon an understanding of actions and their consequences which goes beyond a petty minded and worldly need to get ahead.”*
- Do we think we are often in a state of ‘alienated’ awareness? What tends to cause it for us, and how can we avoid it (particularly over the next week)?

Note Anālayo’s observation, p.117 that other presentations of this same teaching of Satipaṭṭhāna use the same or similar verses, but position the section on breathing after the four body postures and the various kinds of body activity. This makes experiential sense as a bridge to the more internal body contemplations which follow.

- In what particular areas of your life could you start, “Doing one thing at a time.” (p.39) And how could you do this over the next week?
3. **Meditation** – mindfulness of breathing. Spend some extra time on meditation this week, if possible. Connect with the breath in the body as in section 4 of the Sutta like you did in Week 1.
  4. **Ritual** as appropriate for the group. The suggested focus this week is Akṣobhya, the first Buddha in the Mandala of the Five Buddhas.

Meditation this week is the same method as the previous week, but since everyone has been doing the practice more during the week, the experience will have deepened.

Assuming the students are able to settle reasonably well into the body mindfulness, the leader could additionally draw attention to the feeling tone in the body and direct them, via feeling, towards enjoyment and pleasure in the concentration.

At this stage the importance of looking for actual tactile body experience, rather than merely an idea of the breath, cannot be over stressed. At this stage students should not seek directly to concentrate the mind but simply to experience the body. Concentration will arise naturally from this emphasis.

## Week 3: The Nature and Experience of Embodiment

Look more experientially into the reality and significance of the physical body (*kāya*)

The study is again on sections 4–9 of the sutta, using *Living with Awareness* Chapters 5, 6 and 7, looking deeply at our relationship with, and attitudes to, the body and the natural environment.

### Preparation before the meeting

1. Bearing in mind the sections on ‘the body in action’, i.e. body posture and body activity, see what effect mindfulness has on these areas of your experience.
2. Take some extra time to read thoroughly Chapters 5: ‘Looking’, 6: ‘Getting Down to the Essentials’ and 7: ‘Dying’. Reflect on whatever this stimulates for you and consider the questions listed in the discussion section below.

### At the meeting

1. **Read together** sections 4–9 of the sutta once again.
2. **Study** the experience of body using Chapters 5, 6 and 7.
  - I. Check in from last week:
    - How is everyone managing to apply mindfulness in everyday life?
    - Did the practice reveal any indication of dividedness, distraction, alienation or emotional displacement?
    - Has anyone noticed any signs that their awareness of others has altered or improved?
  - II. Reflect using Chapters 5: ‘Looking.’ and 7: ‘Dying.’:
    - Sangharakshita says (p.48) that the aim of mindfulness of the body’s anatomy is to counteract craving by cultivating a sense that the human body is revolting. Could this be a potentially creative approach for us, if a surprising one?
    - Consider how to square this approach with problems one may anticipate, for example:

Since most people in the west tend to some form of nihilism and poor self-image, this could be a controversial discussion. So reflect on the issues yourself and get some clarity. Here Sangharakshita and the Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta are not demeaning the human body. It is a method, a way of practice aimed at gaining a clearer perspective. We do experience fear at encountering the body’s innards, and disgust with natural bodily products like excrement and vomit. This reluctance affects our experience of body, and this is what the Buddha is getting at.

- The common tendency to nihilism, negativity and depression (p.54 & Anālayo p.149 [monks' suicide] ).
- The ethical consequences of reducing others to bags of impurity (p.53).
- Consider how this reflection could be carried out within an appreciation of the human body's great preciousness (p.54).
- Reflecting on our own sexual desire, to what extent do we think it obscures our ability to see someone as an individual (p.49)? Is relating sexually always compatible only with crude states of mind (p.52) and incompatible with higher states of awareness?
- Sangharakshita clarifies (p.68) that the corpse reflections are not intended to engender revulsion but a sober awareness of the inherent impermanence of the body. How does the difference strike you?

III. Reflect on the four elements using Chapter 6: 'Getting Down to Essentials.'

- What effects do you notice when you think about yourself and the world in a more 'elemental' way?
- Do you experience the elements directly or are they just concepts?
- In what sense are the elements 'borrowed' during life? In what sense can they be 'let go'? Who lets go of what?

3. **Meditation**– mindfulness of breathing focusing on parts of the body and experience of the elements, plus walking meditation incorporating some of these aspects of body awareness.

4. **Ritual.** The suggested focus this week is Ratnasambhava, the Buddha associated with the earth element and with the beauty of awareness.

Meditation: some of the recordings on the website may be useful this week. All six aspects of body awareness – posture, activity, breathing, anatomy, elements and death – could, in an experimental spirit, be incorporated as reflections in a series of walking meditations.

## Week 4: Feeling – the key

### Experience and understand the significance of feeling (*vedanā*) and mind (*citta*)

The emphasis on deepening personal experience continues. The study is of the Sutta sections 10 and 11, and *Living with Awareness* Chapters 8 and 9, addressing in particular the crucial place of feeling in conditioning our mental states.

### Preparation before the meeting

1. Read *Living with Awareness* Chapter 8: ‘Feeling’ and compare Anālayo Chapter VII: ‘Feelings’.
  - i. Clarify for yourself precisely what the sutta means by ‘feeling’ using Sangharakshita’s definition on and around p.75.
  - ii. As part of your practice this week notice, each time you remember, exactly what ‘feelings’ are arising in your experience *now*. Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or indefinable (i.e. neutral)?
2. Read *Living with Awareness* Chapter 9: ‘Understanding’ and compare this with Anālayo chapter VIII: ‘Mind’.

Obviously it is vital here that everyone grasps the distinction between feeling (which is passive and unavoidable) and active emotional response (which is at some level a choice). Maybe check, again, *Mind Reactive and Creative*.

Resolve that in every moment that you remember the practice, you will check which particular mood is colouring your experience. One easy way to start may be to consider whether your mind is ‘contracted’ or ‘distracted.’ See if you can tell when your mood is influenced by craving, hatred or delusion.

### At the meeting

1. **Read together** sections 10 and 11 of the Sutta, on Feelings and Mind.
2. **Study** selected material from the sutta and the two commentaries.
  - Report in individually about your prevailing moods in the past fortnight, as well as feelings and mental states that have characterised your life overall. If this section of the course is being done on a retreat, one or two students might like to offer a short life story with these patterns in mind.
  - Do you see how the heart<sup>3</sup> is a key into all Dharma practice? How does Sangharakshita’s statement (towards the end of p.74) strike you – that,

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<sup>3</sup> Here meaning the whole affective aspect of mind, both positive and negative: i.e. the realm of *vedanā* and *samskāra*.

*“Being able to identify feelings...is what makes it possible for us to follow the Buddhist path.”*

- Understand the many ways you can lose touch with feelings. Consider how you could change your life so as to become more aware of them, and what effects increased awareness might have.
  - Discuss the relationship between feelings, moods, and thoughts.
3. **Meditation**– Mindfulness of breathing focusing on feeling both in the body, and as in the ĀnāpānasatiSutta feeling section. Walking meditation may also be practised with the same emphasis.
  4. **Ritual** as appropriate for the group this week. Suggested focus: Amitābha, the Buddha whose quarter of the Mandala houses great Bodhisattvas of compassion such as Avalokiteśvara.

Apply within walking meditation, as well as you can, the suggestions below for the sitting meditation.

It will be helpful for the group to acquire some experience in these sitting methods first. However if the teacher does these practices over the previous week he or she will have a degree of familiarity that will give confidence to the group in applying the instructions in walking meditation.

If this seems too much, it is important not to try to push forward but to continue with the simpler application of the walking practice done the previous week.

The suggestion is that the group do a mindful body scan, allowing the touch sensation of breathing to awaken the clearer body experience this requires. At each point in the body, note the particular feeling quality there.

### *Phase Three: Learn from Your Experience and Transform Your Life*

The following table may be useful as a guide to the meditation. The first column gives the sutta translation of the four parts of the feeling section of the Ānāpānasati Sutta. There follow three columns of commentary by Kamalashila summarising 1) how each stage arises; 2) a key instruction for establishing each stage; 3) the principle involved in each transition.

A full table of the Ānāpānasati Sutta meditation stages is available on the WOM web page.

Feeling ( <i>vedanā</i> )			
1. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) experiencing <u>rapture</u>' (<i>priti</i>).'</i>	Contacting feeling allows us to enjoy (be inspired by, feel creative in) the meditation. These stages also show the early awakenings of <i>dhyāna</i> as we move beyond the five hindrances into deeper integration	Connect with the seeds of rapture and bliss.	Feeling is the key to knowing and directing the heart / mind.
2. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) experiencing <u>bliss</u>' (<i>sukha</i>).'</i>	Concentration becomes more peaceful as we let go attachment to the excitement of <i>priti</i> and appreciate deeper happiness.		
3. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) <u>experiencing the mental formation</u>'.</i>	Deeper feeling brings us more in contact with the mind as a whole.	Then deeply know and quieten the mind.	
4. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) <u>tranquillising the mental formation</u>'.</i>	Closer intimacy with the heart / mind enables us to relax it		
Heart / Mind ( <i>citta</i> )			
5. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) <u>experiencing the heart /mind</u>'.</i>	Acknowledging the truth of our overall mental state or mood also connects us to our heart.	Knowing the mind, gladden it.	Truth is the key to integration and liberation.
6. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) <u>gladdening the heart /mind</u>'.</i>	Heart connected, we can discover <i>pramodya</i> . We rejoice in our amazing potential, and present good qualities.		
7. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) <u>concentrating the heart /mind</u>'.</i>	Feeling good about what is true enables more wholehearted involvement and thus concentrates the whole being	Bringing the mind together, begin to free it.	
8. <i>S/he trains thus: 'I shall breathe in (and out) ) liberating the heart /mind.'</i>	Acknowledging the truth, we begin letting go identification with moods and mental states as 'mine', as somehow belonging to us.		

## Week 5: Mindfulness in Depth

### Mindfulness of dhammas in the training context of the Hindrances and Skandhas

The general emphasis in these two weeks is on insightful reflection within experience.

With phase three, the course (perhaps gradually) begins to re-engage with the 'real' world with all its chaos and its obsessive thinking. It does this through going even deeper into personal experience by applying various dharma methods. The transition can only happen naturally, and if it does not happen easily, the previous phase probably received insufficient time and space. Sangharakshita's apparent emphasis on thought, which comes out especially from chapter 12 onwards, may seem daunting to some and it will be helpful if over the next two weeks the teacher brings plenty of their own experience into approaching this fourth foundation of mindfulness.

The study is on sections 12 and 13 of the Sutta, and *Living with Awareness* Chapters 10, 11 and 12, especially the emphasis on transformation through awareness of thinking.

### Preparation before the group

1. Read and apply in your daily practice *Living with Awareness* Chapters 10: 'Reflecting', 11: 'Analysing' and 12: 'Interlude: on Further Reflection'.
2. Do daily *cankamana* (walking meditation and reflection) practice at a regular time (see p.114) and consider some of the issues mentioned in the discussion section below.
3. Notice which of the five hindrances appear outside meditation as well as while sitting.

Walking meditation You need to get everyone doing this – so a good idea would be to start talking about it the previous week, or to discuss doing it via email if you have established that as a midweek link. It is a very helpful practice indeed – so again, the course leader should understand that from experience, so that his/her confidence communicates itself to everyone and generates enthusiasm for it amongst the group.

Let them know that walking meditation of this less 'sensitive' kind does not necessarily require especially good conditions. It can be done at work, in the street or in a room with other people doing things. It can be done anywhere there is room to walk five paces in one direction. What it strengthens is the personal discipline of stopping involvement with present activity and resting in one's own experience. Whatever the quality of that experience, turning to it is an important activity and in most people's distracted lives it represents a major achievement. For this reason in particular, this practice is extremely valuable and for some people could create a turning point in establishing a practice of mindfulness.

### At the meeting

1. **Read together** sections 12 and 13 of the sutta on the Hindrances and Skandhas.
2. **Study** selections from the three Sangharakshita chapters.
3. **Discussion** –suggested topics:
  - I. Report in about personal practice
  - II. The Five Hindrances:

- i. Discuss Sangharakshita's overall statement about the practice of mindfulness of dhammas on p.93: *"Only with a clear way of understanding what a given state of consciousness really is can we interpret what the mind is dwelling on at any given moment and thus transform our state."* Is he right?

At this point you could refer to the Abhidharma analysis of mind and mental events which is based on this aspect of Satipatthāna. Interested groups or individuals could study the whole or part of Sangharakshita's *Know Your Mind* (Windhorse Publications) as a way of following this up later.

- ii. Consider Sangharakshita's statement p.98: *"We tend to shrug off responsibility by disguising as a practical necessity what is really our personal choice."* Is that us?
- iii. How do you respond to Sangharakshita's somewhat military-sounding approach to the 'battle with the hindrances' (p.101): *"The best method of defence is attack: why not use the challenge and stimulation of ordinary life to cultivate even more positive states of mind than those you enjoyed on retreat?"* Could we rise to the challenge?
- iv. What is your own experience of the whole process of reflection? Do you feel that when you wander off from some Dharma topic you are holding in your mind, that sometimes the wanderings are part of the process of deepening understanding?
- v. Do you find that observation alone is enough to transform your mental states and tendencies? Can you say what actually happens when you become aware of something?

### III. The Five Skandhas:

- i. Study *Living with Awareness* definitions pp. 105-106. Do you agree it is a challenge to be mindful of your own consciousness?
- ii. Discuss your current understanding of śūnyatā (p.110ff.). Do you agree with Sangharakshita (p.111) that, *"All (śūnyatā) is meant to do is remind us that the ultimate point of our practice is not to be found in the means we employ to realize it."*?

### IV. 'On Further Reflection':

- i. In this chapter you get a sense of what Sangharakshita means by practising mindfulness full time. What would it mean to you?
- ii. *"Thinking should be under one's control, and when it isn't objectively necessary one just shouldn't engage in it."* Is that an impossible ideal? Could you plan in your thinking on a particular topic (e.g. p.115)?

- iii. Discuss: “*All your thinking should have an aim, even if that aim is sometimes best served by thinking associatively.*” (p.119).
- iv. Assess Sangharakshita’s advice (rest of the chapter) on developing one’s thinking and ability to reflect – the points on ‘originality’, place of associative thinking, the place of logic, the need to infuse thinking with positive emotion (p.122). What do you think of argument as a means of clarifying thinking (p.117)? Do you really believe this is relevant to Buddhist practice?

**Meditation** – walking meditation (cankamana); reflection on emptiness; meditation on conditions.

Use the meditation recordings on the web page. Again it will help if the teacher does these in advance, gaining familiarity with the practice of *cankamana*.

**Ritual** – with a suggested focus on Amoghasiddhi who is associated with the skandha of volition.

## Week Six: Insight

### Transformation through Awareness of Dhammas: the Sense Spheres, Factors of Awakening and Noble Truths

The study is on the final sections of the Sutta (14, 15, 16, 17 and 18) and on the concluding chapters of *Living with Awareness*, i.e. 13, 14, 15 and 16, looking at Sangharakshita's idea of a spiral path towards a purified awareness.

#### Preparation before the group

Continue the regular walking reflection practice, along with any other meditation you have been doing.

Read and absorb what Sangharakshita has to say in Chapters 13: 'Sensing', 14: 'Enlightening', 15: 'Suffering, and ceasing to suffer' and 16: 'Concluding'.

#### At the meeting

1. **Read together** the final part of the Sutta: sections 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.
2. **Study** selections from Sangharakshita's final chapters.
  - I. Final check-in on practice.
  - II. On the **fetters and sense spheres**:
    - i. Discuss in terms of your own experience Sangharakshita's statement p.124: "*(the eighteen dhātus) give us a closer analysis of experience than the hindrances or even the khandhas, and through them we can become aware of how mental states emerge into consciousness time and time again.*"
    - ii. Discuss any inklings of Sangharakshita's notion of 'pure awareness,' the state the fetters hold us back from: 'a pristine, non-deluded consciousness of reality' (p.125)... "*Give up the mental commentary, the ego-based, interpreting 'thereby'. Just see. Just think. It sounds simple enough. But if you have ever tried to achieve such mental clarity, you will know exactly how difficult it is. Once it is accomplished, the awareness created is like a mirror, reflecting everything without distortion.*" (p.126). Also see Sangharakshita p.129, after quoting William Blake on the doors of perception: "*When in the seen there is only the seen, consciousness ultimately opens out into a non-dual awareness.*"
    - iii. How are your own efforts progressing, in noticing the 'gap' arising in which particular fetters fasten themselves, "Whenever an external sense base impinges upon one or more of the corresponding internal bases." (p.127)?

- iv. Do you understand Sangharakshita's point (p.130) about the first three fetters being one and the same mental attitude, seen from different angles, and, being more or less conscious (in contrast to the other seven fetters) best seen through using conceptual means? Discuss this part of chapter 13 especially in relation to the fetter of restlessness (p.132-3).

### III. On the **enlightenment factors**:

Discuss your experience of the way the path unfolds from establishing a practice of mindfulness: "*(the bodhyaṅgas)... are simply the states that arise from establishing mindfulness more and more firmly.*"(p.148); and also with reference to Sangharakshita's idea of 'progressive Enlightenment' re-reading Buddhaghosa on 'the liberated state' (p.149).

### IV. On the **noble truths**:

1. Consider the experience of craving, i.e. the origin of suffering, in the light of Sangharakshita's recommendation that we, "Experience that craving, or stifled energy, or inner void, and not try to satisfy it or release it or fill it. This sense of insufficiency of inadequacy goes very deep and it will take us a lot deeper into our experience if we can resist the lure of superficial pleasure." (p.154). Also, "*(The idea that dukkha dissolves when craving ceases)... runs counter to our instinctive response to dukkha. We tend to think of craving not as the root of the problem but as the pointer to its solution.*"(p.154).
2. Sangharakshita gives (p.155) a valuable sense of what can be learned from noticing, during more precise observation of one's mental life, the great diversity of forms and aspects of dukkha. How do we think we can best approach this?

### V. On the **prediction and conclusion**:

1. Reflect on Sangharakshita p.164: "*The reiteration of the point that 'the way of mindfulness is the direct way' takes on a new significance... mindfulness ensures a gradual acceleration of the whole spiritual process, if you put enough effort into it.*"
2. Consider the concluding paragraphs pp.165-6: "*Work on the mind really is work, and full-time work too, both in meditation and outside it.*" and that: "*Once you are on your way mindfulness becomes steadily easier to sustain, especially if you have the moral support of your spiritual friends and indeed the whole spiritual community.*"

### 3. Meditation:

Depending on the extra time available for more exploratory meditation, some practice could be done on the six sense bases.

Meditation on the senses (the recording on the web page can be used) can be done in walking posture as well as sitting, but should first be introduced in a session of sitting meditation.

1. The eyes should be open, with a calm gaze resting on the ground in front.
2. Note that in this meditation one is not trying to withdraw from the senses (an obvious point perhaps, but many people are conditioned to withdraw in meditation posture).
3. The aim is to let go habitual recognition of sense data as objects, and instead to relax with the experience, exploring each sensation as it really is.
4. As a basis for concentration, maintain some attention on the breathing. Alternatively relax, receptive to present moment experience, in 'blue sky' just sitting.
5. Once a basis has been established, perhaps after 5-10 minutes, attend to each of the six senses in turn. Starting with this open space, five minutes per stage gives a session of approximately 40 minutes.
6. Example: for five minutes, give attention to the experience of seeing.
  - Notice that sights are manifesting to the organ of the eye and consider what the experience is really like
  - Try to do this independently of your ideas about what you are seeing
  - Notice, when you can, the conditioned mind turning the raw visual data into recognisable objects.
  - Every time you notice that you have applied a label to a visual experience (as, say, 'the shrine room carpet'), remind yourself of the actual process taking place.
7. Repeat this for each of the senses of hearing, smelling, tasting, touching and cognising.
8. The essential practice is to experience each sense impression as it actually is, unaffected by an idea of what it is supposed to be (as also expressed in iii. above). This is equivalent to Sangharakshita's idea of 'pure awareness' referred to throughout chapter 13.

Karuṇābhāvanā would also be appropriate in relation to the Noble Truths. Another appropriate reflection could be the meditation on conditionality, i.e. the Twelve Links. However if time is limited, it might be best to continue with mindfulness of breathing and walking reflection/meditation.

4. **Final Ritual:** Dedication of merits and aspiration to continue the practice until full awakening. The ritual could centre around Vairocana, with perhaps Vajrasattva or Śākyamuni.

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### Feedback on the Dharma Training Course

Once you've finished the module, please consider leaving feedback on the DTC on-line forum – a dedicated place for Mitra group leaders to make comments, suggestions, and corrections to the new course. This will have two big benefits:

1. It collects ideas and information needed to improve the course over time
2. It will also be a place where group leaders can find out how others have led or approached a particular module, share good ideas, and so on.

Each group leader needs to get their own username and password to access the forum. If you are a Mitra group leader and would like to participate, please e-mail Vajrashura (who has kindly set up the forum) and he'll set up an account for you, usually within a day or two. His e-mail is: [vajrashura@gmail.com](mailto:vajrashura@gmail.com), and the URL of the forum is: [www.dublinbuddhistcentre.org/DTCforum](http://www.dublinbuddhistcentre.org/DTCforum).