

Week 6 – Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi, Vairocana

Buddhism Level 2 – Buddhist Wisdom – symbolic Dharma

RESOURCES REQUIRED

5 tables with cloths & Buddha rupas on
Two predrawn flipchart pages (as below)
Quality cards
Bland, crayons, paper etc. for mandala drawing exercise
Handout images of Ratnasambhava etc
Questionnaires to fill in

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Form associations with all five Jinas
Have intuitive sense of the archetypal power of the mandala symbol
Understand mandala as a harmonious arrangement

MEDITATION (15 MINS)

settling in & gathering around breath
Visualisation warmup – writing name, see red square, turn it into blue triangle
Now read the descriptions of Akshobhya & Amitabha in Meeting the Buddhas (needs some tweaking) or make it up.

INTRODUCTION TO SESSION

Going to look at other 3 buddhas of the mandala & look at symbol of Mandala itself.

Home practice review (10 mins) – in threes

How did you find home practice? Or effect of visualising colour in medn?

Previous class Review (10 mins)

Exercise

On board, write up grid:

	Akshobhya	Amitabha
Name		
Colour		

Quality:		
Emblem:		
Element:		
Wisdom:		
Poison:		
Realm:		
Animal:		

Brainstorm responses giving guidance as necessary

Together, try to come up with other salient points from previous session.

MUDRAS

Demonstrate mudras of different figures

A mudra is a symbolic gesture, representing the permeation of one's whole being by the truth. [It is] essentially Enlightenment expressed by the hands.

Sangharakshita, Creative Symbols of Tantric Buddhism

Eg. Connection Amitabha, dhyana mudra, meditation, sunset (withdrawal)

RATNASAMBHAVA, AMOGHASIDDHI & VAIROCANA

Produce predrawn flipchart paper

	Ratnasambhava	Amoghasiddhi	Vairocana
Name means	Jewel producing / born	Unobstructed success	The illuminator
Colour	Yellow	Green	White
Emblem			
Time of day			
Quality / mudra			
Wisdom			
Realm			
Poison			
Animal			

Handout the pairs of quality cards as per week 5

Remind people it's not neat & tidy.

Try to draw out peoples responses without giving away the "answer" too soon. Look for discussion to arise, rather than people trying to guess right.

But don't let them place the cards til they have got the right answer! And then write them up on the board

Discussion roundup

This isn't a practice in learning long lists of qualities to impress friends with. It's about slowly forming associations with the five Buddhas, getting an intuitive feel for their qualities, and how that pattern plays out in my own consciousness.

Similes of the 5 Buddha mandala

[The five Buddha mandala represents] a gradual filling out of the original Buddha ideal. It is as though you had an uncut diamond: it's surface would not easily catch and reflect the light, and consequently its true beauty would easily be missed. But worked upon by a master jeweller, its facets would sparkle with reflected light and iridescent colour, and its beauty would be revealed.

Sangharakshita, Creative Symbols of Tantric Buddhism

Or like splitting white light – the central principle – into its constituent colours via a prism or rainbow

(Draw on flipchart – or better, have a picture)

Buddha families

Explain: each buddha is head of a family! Associated consort (standing for the wisdom), protectors, bodhisattvas, wrathful figures etc. Very complex picture. Families named after Buddha qualities:

Akshobya	Ratnasambhava	Amitabha	Amoghasiddhi	Vairocana
Vajra	Jewel / Ratna	Lotus / Padma	Action / Karma	Buddha

Exercise: Discuss own affinities

In pairs talk of own affinities with the Buddhas or their families; could be any aspect: their colour, mudra, name, poison, quality etc. Do you feel a closer affinity with one more than the others?

Please fill in questionnaires in tea break

TAKE NAMES OF ANYONE NOT WANTING TO CONTINUE NEXT MODULE

TEA BREAK

SYMBOLISM OF MANDALAS

Input on mandalas

Mandala lit "circle":

"a harmonious arrangement around a central point, a symbol of the harmony & integration of the different levels and aspects of our being"

Vessantara, Meeting the Buddhas

Jung found that his patients spontaneously produced or dreamt of mandalas when undergoing a significant integration ("individuation" in his language)

Way of organising patterns of consciousness, especially enltd consciousness. Helps us to view, assimilate, integrate.

Contemplating mandalas has a balancing & harmonising effect.

Letting the pattern and details of the mandala sink into your consciousness, the deeper energies of our mind being to take on the pattern, like iron filings arranging themselves around a magnet. It is a basic principle of Buddhism that whatever you set your heart and mind upon, that you become. So if you repeatedly meditate on an ideal mandala, your mind increasingly takes on that harmonious pattern.

Vessantara, Meeting the Buddhas

Exercise: Fill in our own mandala

On own draw our own mandala of our life as it is now:

What takes up our time, & energy. Most significant things go in middle, everything else arranged around it. Beliefs as well as activities can go in.

Then re-draw, or indicate on your drawing, how you'd like it to look.

Plenary

What did people learn? Was there much difference between mandala as it is & how like it to be? Anything not fit in at all?

Some will be simple, some complex. OK to have a full mandala, but need to keep focussing in on the centre, what's most important, make sure it doesn't get crowded out by the periphery; assign things to correct place. Any examples from your life?

The task for each of us is to reorganise and rearrange everything in our mandalas around what is most important. You may have to leave certain things aside for the time being; perhaps you can't quite see where they are going to fit. There are some things you will have to throw out because they are unskillful and there can be no place for them. But it is important to be quite careful about what you throw out. In many cases it is just a matter of assigning everything its appropriate place.

Sangharakshita, Creative Symbols of Tibetan Buddhism.

HOME PRACTICE

Continue last weeks practice; ie.

Colour in line drawing of Buddhas if you wish.

Notice your emotional response to colours; in noticing colours see if you can bring to mind the appropriate Buddha or something of their qualities.

Maybe notice & reflect on the affinities between different qualities that we've talked about

FURTHER READING

The Symbolism of the five Buddhas 'Male & Female', Sangharakshita, CD 110 or in The Creative Symbols of Tantric Buddhism

Meeting the Buddhas, Vessantara, Windhorse (Part Two) – rich descriptions, and an invaluable reference work for Buddhist symbolism.

The World Beyond Thought chapter in *Secret of the Vajra World*, Reginald Ray, Shambala (if you want to blow your mind).