SANGHARAKSHITA’S SYSTEM OF DHARMA LIFE - PLAN FOR **WEEK 5**

**Main themes:**

* Integration, skilful action and dharmic responsiveness will only bring us so far;
* According to the Buddha, the reason is that we naturally cling to self;
* The provisional sense of self is necessary for normal human life, but it’s also exactly what causes our suffering;
* We can begin the process of spiritual death by looking at our views and how they might be out of fit with reality;
* Using experiences of loss to look at the underlying nature of things.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 19.05 | Saluting the shrine | Ch |
| 19.10 | Body awareness, then Metta Bhavana (30 mins)* Could read a poem (e.g. John McGregor – If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things)
 | Ch |
| 19.40 | Initial exercise (with pen & paper): identify your own inspiration (whether ‘spiritual’ or not) | LM |
| 19.45 | Recap of last week:* Feedback from previous exercise;
* We need the ability to respond as well as to cultivate skillful will;
* Our meaningful responses can be to people, the arts or simply to quality or value;
* Friendship may be a particularly good context for receptivity;
* The practice of deliberately doing nothing**;**
* ‘Surrounding everything with space’ – the ‘just sitting’ practice.
 | LM |
| 19.55 | Any questions? | LM |
| 20.00  | Short talk introducing spiritual death:* Although the practices of integration, skilful action and dharmic responsiveness may give us glimpses of something greater opening up in us, that something will flower and then die away again – why?
* According to the Buddha, the reason is that we naturally cling to self – but what does that mean?
* We always interpret the data of our senses in terms of an inward ‘perceiver’ and an outward ‘perceived’ – in reality, there is no such clear boundary. The provisional sense of self is necessary for normal human life, but it’s also exactly what causes our suffering – as best seen when we are in some way provoked or threatened.
 | Ch |
| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 20.15 | Pairs: Can you find some examples of how your sense of self tends to add to your ‘raw’ sense experience in unhelpful ways? | Ch |
| 20.20 | Plenary discussion | Ch |
| 20.25  | **TEA BREAK** |  |
| 20.50 | More thoughts on spiritual death: * ‘Self-clinging’ has been broken down in Buddhist psychology into (a) attachment to self; (b) pride in self; (c) a failure to understand how things really are (ignorance) and (d) the belief that we really do understand! All of this inevitably results in suffering.
* The only way forward is to ‘kill’ self-clinging; to ‘die spiritually. We can begin this process by looking at our **views and opinions** and how they might be out of fit with Dependent Arising & Cessation (and the corresponding truths of unsatisfactoriness, impermanence and insubstantiality).
* When we have experiences of loss (whether great or small) we can use them as opportunities to look at the underlying nature of things. This will help us, progressively, to loosen our self-clinging.
 | LM |
| 21.05 | Class discussion | LM |
| 21.25 | Tasks for the next week:* Read the ‘spiritual death’ section of the handout;
* Could listen to the 5th of Dayanandi’s talks in the series “The Five Great Stages of the Spiritual Path”: The Insight of Selflessness (1:25:32);
* Try to notice your dependence on views, and ask yourself how things might seem different if they weren’t flavoured by your views and opinions.
 | LM |
| 21.30 | Finish |  |