

Week 3 – The Buddha and Enlightenment

Buddhism level 2 – What makes you a Buddhist?

Catchline: How can we understand and relate to Enlightenment

RESOURCES REQUIRED

Flip chart with epithets of Enlightenment written up

Flipchart with blank table written up

Yellow flower

MEDITATION

Sit like the Buddha, dignified, upright, ready for anything, determined & still like the night he was enlightened.

Towards the end... if the Enlightened you were an animal, what kind of animal would it be? I.e. Animal image for you as Enlightened being

Share that image in INTRODUCTIONS

REVIEW

Last week

Looked at refuges as ways we take shelter from anxiety, pain, meaninglessness etc. We're doing it all the time – get that sense from the home practice?

Some are better than others.

For Bst the 3J are the ultimate refuges cos lead to elimination of suffering

Talked of GFR to 3 J as the central defining act of the Buddhist

Now look at 3J in detail

Home practice

Did people do it?

Talk about experience of looking at refuges – what you learned if anything – any surprises?

Want to make any changes – move some things a bit nearer the centre of the mandala, other things a bit further away?

WHAT IS ENLIGHTENMENT?

This week GFR to Buddha. Looking at it by answering "What is Enlightenment?"

Personified in figure of Buddha – tho we're looking more abstractly

Translation of

Bodhi – awakening

Nibbana / Nirvana – extinction or unbinding – of craving, passions

The problem of language

Language – any verbal description of the Dharma – is instrumental and incomplete

Exercise in whole class -fruit

Anyone eaten an exotic fruit not found readily in UK? Please describe it to us?

Notice how always descriptions of what we don't know are in terms of what we already know. And how, even after the best description, we are still completely ignorant of the actual experience of eating this fruit.

Finger pointing at moon: descriptions of enlt are as different from it as the finger is from the moon.

A state of being that isn't captured by the dualism of language – our own experience is so unconceptualizable, how much more so in Enlt.

We'll look at enlightenment both metaphorically, and conceptually (just posh metaphors)

But first – hold up yellow flower

That was enough for Mahakassapa to gain Enlightenment, only he understood.

EPITHETS & METAPHORS FROM PALI CANON

Provide a different perspective – more poetic, felt.

Write up on board beforehand:

The harbour of refuge, the cool cave, the island amidst the floods, the place of bliss, emancipation, liberation, safety, the supreme, the tranquil, the home of ease, the calm, the end of suffering, the medicine for all evil, the unshaken, the ambrosia, the immaterial, the imperishable, the abiding, the further shore, the bliss of effort, the supreme joy, the holy city.

read this text:

Just as when a man taking a loan, engages in a trade, and his trade succeeds, he now not only disposes of his old debt but he has also, beyond that, a surplus for maintaining a wife. And at that he rejoices, is glad at heart...

Just as when a man is sick and in pain, suffering from a grave disease, his food does not agree with him, and he has no strength left in his body. But some time later he recovers from that sickness; he can again digest his food, and he regains his strength. And at that he rejoices, is glad at heart...

Just as when a man has been thrown into prison, but some time later he is released from prison; he is safe and without fears, and he did not suffer any loss of property. And at that he rejoices, is glad at heart...

Just as when a man is a slave, not independent, but dependent on others, unable to go where he likes, but some time later he is set free from slavery, is now independent, no longer dependent on others, a freeman who can go where he wants. And at that he rejoices, is glad at heart...

Just as when a man, rich and prosperous, travels through a wilderness where there is no food and much danger, but some time later he has crossed the desert, and gradually reaches safely the vicinity of a village, a place of safety, free from danger. And at that he rejoices, is glad at heart.:

From Sammanaphala sutta Digha Nikaya 2

Here referring only to absence of 5 hinderences!

Exercise in 3s

Chew over the images and see which ones if any appeal to you.

How do you relate to Enlightenment – do you have an image of your own? Do you find it helpful or unhelpful as an idea/ideal?

Do you believe the Buddha was enlightened? Do you believe it's possible for you?

ANALYSIS OF ENLIGHTENMENT

How can we look at qualities of Enlightenment? Only have components of mundane being to look at – one analysis is the skandhas – or khandas (pali)

Analysis of different components of being into 5 skandhas:

Write up table structure in advance, without the headings. Brainstorm for qualities of Buddha, write them into appropriate boxes. Extra one for “other”

Outer appearance – “form” (rupa)	Hedonic tone – “feeling” (vedana)	Perception & knowledge (samjna)	Emotional states (samskara)	Will & volition (samskara)	Consciousness (vijnana)
Bahiya: <i>pleasing, lovely to see, with calmed senses and tranquil mind, attained to perfect poise and calm, controlled, a perfected one, watchful with restrained senses.</i>	Bliss, peace “Nirvana is the supreme bliss” Dhp 203	Awakening, insight, wisdom, seeing truth of Reality Awareness of non-difference of self / other	Love, compassion, equanimity	Freedom (from mental bondage), energy, vigour	Pure, undefiled, luminous consciousness (jnana)

Enlightenment often referred to as state of union of wisdom and compassion – 2 wings, or sides of same coin. Why should that be?

Writing exercise:

Pick any one word or quality that appeals to you & free write for 5 mins about it, pen not leaving paper ideally, don't have to read it out. Allow pen to follow mind, don't have to stick to subject, get anything right.

Input from Team – how I relate to the Buddha jewel

PSYCHOLOGY OF GOAL-SETTING

(didn't get around to it)

How do people respond to this as goal / ideal?

Goal & no goal comparison

	Having goals	Not having goals
Advantages	Have a sense of direction, orientation in life, ideals to live by, sense of urgency, motive force	Ease, openness to experience, "going with the flow"
Disadvantages	Additional dissatisfaction, frustration, give self hard time, over-judgemental, too "willful"	Wooly, little vigour, relativist world, no "up"

Diagram – present self looking at possible future self

Difference goal & ideal?

How to avoid craving the goal? Just set up conditions in best way we can, then let go of attachment to outcome

Principle of openended development, unlimited states of mind

Spiritual life is lived in gap real – ideal. Can be frustrating -> need metta & patience for ourself.

Example of road sweeper – just clean what's in front – but need to know which way you're going.

We're not a problem – we're the way

Align self with broader reality, less driven by egocentric motives

Put out sail to the wind – higher will, greater will, being appropriate to occasion, less egoically driven.

Egs of contentment / happiness of tuning into broader situation.

Home practice

Last week, noticing GFR

This week, do same, but also try to GFR to Buddha, in sense of moving towards a more Buddha-like state of mind – a "higher" state of mind

Periodically whenever you remember, but at least once per day, do the following:

Centre yourself with a few breaths

Gain a flavour of your state of mind/being/body.

Chose one quality of being that you think is relevant to your current state (although any would do): eg. Relaxation, concentration, kindness, clarity, presence, awareness, buoyancy, creativity

Imagine how it would be to be feeling just slightly more of that quality (3.5 out of 10 rather than 3/10)

FINAL MEDITATION

Lead through the home practice

RECOMMENDED READING

“Enlightenment as experience and non-experience” in “The Taste of Freedom” by Sangharakshita, or Talk no. 119

“The Ideal of Human Enlightenment” in “Human Enlightenment” by Sangharakshita, or Talk no. 120

“The Three Jewels”, Sangharakshita, ch 14

<http://accesstoinsight.org/ptf/dhamma/sacca/sacca3/nibbana.html>