

## Triratna Dharma Training Course for Mitras Year Two – Teachers’ Notes by Saccanama

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### *Module 4: Transcending Views*

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#### *The Module as a Whole*

Welcome to the Module on Transcending Views. I hope that you’ll find the module interesting, and that the mitras will get a lot out of studying it.

I hope that the Student Notes will make clear enough what is the purpose of this module.

You will probably find that the material presented in the eight sessions of the module is recursive to some extent; some topics are addressed or are referred to in more than one session. That could be an advantage since it does help the whole module to hang together, even though occasionally it may strike some mitras as repetitive. In any case, I think it’s worth encouraging mitras to think again about a topic from a different angle, or after they have taken more ideas on board.

You may think that in making what Bhante has to say about wrong views in *Know Your Mind* central to the second to sixth sessions of this module I am saying too little about right view. In the suttas, the Buddha repeatedly explains right view by identifying wrong view and then teaching that right view is the opposite. Almost 1000 years later the Madhyamaka Chinese master Chi-tsang taught that, “The refutation of wrong views is the illumination of right views.” (Williams 1989, p.75).

I imagine that you’ll be wanting to encourage mitras to pay attention to the three levels of prajñā. I hope that the mitras’ material for the module will provide plenty of scope for exploring the first two levels, taking in and clarifying, and reflecting. And I hope that it will have a good effect on mitras’ meditation experience.

## *Week 1: Tutor's Notes*

### **A summary of this session**

This session aims to set out briefly and clearly the meaning and significance of view in the Buddhist tradition and in Bhante's teaching.

I think the extract from *A Vision of Human Existence* (p.1) should get the module off to a good start. If there's an opportunity to encourage mitras to read the extract before the session, that will probably help. I haven't suggested any questions for that extract, because I do mean it to be introductory, but it might be useful to ask mitras how they think meditation helps the development of right view. I think it would be a good thing to keep the momentum going through the material in order to ensure that Subhuti's extract (p.5) is the main focus for this first session. Bhante's point (in answer to, "Why are we looking at View at all?") is well worth reflecting upon, and maybe that's something that mitras could be encouraged to do after the session.

Incidentally, another useful source that you might want to draw mitras' attention to at some point is the first chapter of *Vision and Transformation* on 'Perfect Vision'.

In the quotation from *Fifteen Points for Old (and New) Order Members*, Bhante speaks of Perfect Vision, which should be understood as the first aṅga of the Transcendental Eightfold Path. At some points in this module, there will be references to 'No View'. Perfect Vision entails No View; No View does not mean that one literally has no view, but that one is not attached even to Right View. One makes use of Right View, but one is not attached to it. So you can't have Perfect View whilst being attached even to Right View.

A particular strength of Subhuti's short chapter is that it makes clear that we are not talking about a theoretical matter here, but one which involves and has a profound effect on everybody. I have suggested a few questions for the ensuing discussion. Studying this chapter is intended to be the central focus of this session.

A short extract from *Know Your Mind* completes the session. It raises a number of key points, which I have summarised. I have also listed some questions. If, as I expect, there isn't time to look at this extract in the session itself, mitras could be encouraged to read it before session 2 as a bridge to what follows.

The questions have two purposes: they are meant to help mitras to clarify their understanding and to help them reflect on the material. I have decided not to distinguish between the two kinds of questions.

I offer definitions in order to clarify what is meant by 'ditṭhi' in Pāli and 'view' in English. Definitions are not everyone's cup of tea, but clarifying meanings does help students to develop a common vocabulary, and can avoid time-wasting confusion. I wouldn't expect everyone to get hold of these meanings at once. It's probably worth pointing out that Nyānatiloka's dictionary is a useful book of reference; it can be

confidently recommended to mitras. In fact, I think it would be really useful if they got into the habit of looking up Pāli words in it – that is, if they haven't got into the habit already. There's a risk that some mitras may get a bit bogged down in the last list, which is why I have put it at the end.

Square brackets indicate something which has either been added by me for purposes of clarification, or something added from elsewhere. I think the context makes clear which of these is the case.

I have referenced Lokabandhu's anthology. It has many useful entries, including one on *dr̥ṣṭi* (*diṭṭhi*) (p.122) which should give the reader a good feel for the term. In later sessions, especially week 4, the anthology will be useful for looking up terms such as *saṃjñā* (*saññā*) (p. 20).

### **The session in more detail**

The list of ways in which views crop up in the Pāli Canon is not exhaustive, but I think it is long enough to make the point – that teachings on views occur so often and are given such prominence in the Canon, that we can confidently conclude that the Buddha thought the matter of View to be of crucial importance. I don't intend that the list itself should be gone into in detail – that would hold the session up. Mitras should have come across some of the references before, and noticing the new ones could take a few minutes. Quite a few of the references can be followed up in *Nyānatiloka* and *A Garland of Terms*. You may like to mention two references from the Mahāyāna to show that we are not only talking about the Pāli Canon here:

- In a later formulation of the root *kleśas* (Skt.) (see e.g. *Know Your Mind*) no less than 5 out of the 10 *mūla-kleśas* are forms of Wrong View.
- In another later formulation, view is represented in one of the two veils (*jñeyāvarana*, the veil of views; *klesāvarana*, the veil of passions is the other one. Both are Sanskrit words).

I have slightly shortened the quotation from *Fifteen Points for Old (and New) Order Members*. There is a lot in this quotation, which would probably repay much more study than there is time for in this first session. It is meant to make the point that Right View is regarded as crucial by Bhante.

Subhuti's chapter probably also contains more valuable points than can be dealt with. The first section of it is the most important for the purposes of this session. I would suggest that the sections 'Choosing a View' and 'The Buddhist View' are gone through a bit more quickly, although some points that are very relevant to this session are to be found near the end of the latter.

The definitions sections are fairly straightforward, I hope. They could probably be usefully referred to from time to time during the rest of the module. Again, I think it would be a good thing for mitras to be encouraged to look words up for themselves.

I am including below some more of the Nyānatiloka definition in case you don't have that dictionary to hand in the first session. It makes one or two useful further points.

The *Know Your Mind* passage is meant as a starter. Each of the following sessions of the module opens with a passage from the Dṛṣṭi section. Mitras should read this first short passage before the second session and ask themselves the questions that I have offered. Some of the questions are so important that it may be worth checking at the beginning of week 2 that they have been given at least some thought. The questions that I have suggested for this session quite straightforwardly invite mitras to look to see what Bhante actually says:

“**Diṭṭhi**: (lit. ‘sight’; root dis, to see): view, belief, speculative opinion, insight. If not qualified by sammā, ‘right’, it mostly refers to wrong and evil view or opinion, and in only a few instances to right view, understanding or insight.” (e.g. diṭṭhi-patta, [vision-attainer, one of the 7 ārya-puggala (p. 63)]; diṭṭhi-visuddhi, purification of insight; diṭṭhi-sampanñā, possessed of insight).” (p. 61).

“From the Abidhamma, it may be inferred that wrong views, whenever they arise, are associated with greed.” (ibid also p. 61)

### **From the Pāli Canon**

“No other thing than evils views do I know, whereby to such an extent the wholesome things not yet arisen are hindered in their arising, and the wholesome things already arisen disappear. No other thing than evil views do I know, whereby to such an extent human beings at the dissolution of the body, at death, are passing to a way of suffering, into a world of woe, into hell.” (*Anguttara Nikāya I, 22* – quoted by Nyānatiloka, p. 61).

### **An adjacent passage from the Pāli Canon**

“Whatever a man filled with evil views performs or undertakes, or whatever he possesses of will, aspiration, longing and tendencies, all these things lead him to an undesirable, unpleasant and disagreeable state, to woe and suffering.” (*Anguttara Nikāya I, 23* – quoted ibid.)

You may wish to draw attention to the fact that one can search and read Bhante's seminars and talks on *Free Buddhist Audio*. I have used Silabhadra's CD-Rom several times in preparing this module, especially for the material for week 5. It is a very useful resource. It's surprising what one can find by, for example, searching 'relative truth'.

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com>

## References

Williams, P. – *Mahāyāna Buddhism: the Doctrinal Foundations*, Routledge, 1989:

<http://tinyurl.com/o7gsg>

Sangharakshita – *Vision and Transformation*, Windhorse, 1990:

[http://www.sangharakshita.org/\\_books/vision-transformation.pdf](http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/vision-transformation.pdf)

## *Week 2: Tutor's Notes*

### **Summary of the material**

Session two begins by focusing on a section of *Know Your Mind* which discusses the way in which [fixed] self-view underpins all other wrong views. Mitras should be encouraged to read this section before the session. I have offered some questions and work points. Some mitras may find some parts of this extract difficult, but with a bit of help, I think most will get a lot from it.

There are some strategic options available in this session. The material includes a chunk of *Know Your Mind*, and a smaller chunk by Bhikkhu Bodhi. The *Know Your Mind* extract may be difficult for some people, and so may be the Bhikkhu Bodhi extract. I think it would be worth attempting the *Know Your Mind* extract, and if the group makes heavy weather of it, then it could be a good idea to cut to the extracts which begin on p.24 and have a look at the ‘What’s Wrong with this View?’ exercise. The most important thing is to enable mitras to see that fixed self view is a wrong view, to see why beings fall into this wrong view, and to begin to describe right view in relation to self.

The next section (p.19) addresses the question, “What is it that makes a view wrong?”

We then look further at what the Pāli Canon says about wrong view (p.20), by quoting again from Nyānatiloka and his dictionary. I think it’s useful to keep in touch with the Pāli Canon, since *Know Your Mind*, which discusses a commentary on a Yogācāra work and so refers to a later stage of the Dharma’s development, is highlighted at the beginning of each session. This should give a sense of the coherence of the tradition.

The extract from *Know Your Mind* has a lot in it. Your group may not be able to study in one evening both this and the extract from Bhikkhu Bodhi’s helpful introduction to his translation of the Brahmajāla Sutta and its commentaries. You may nevertheless decide that you’d like to encourage all mitras to read the Bhikkhu Bodhi extract.

The sutta itself is quite technical in parts for the purposes of mitra study; that’s why I have decided to extract some passages from a good commentary. Some people may find Bhikkhu Bodhi’s language a bit hard at first, but again, with perseverance, what he is saying should become clear. There is some constructive overlap with the Bhante extract.

Very able students could be encouraged to read the whole of Bhikkhu Bodhi’s introduction and perhaps his translation too. The sutta is, after all, a very significant one, standing as it does as the first sutta of the first nikāya of the *Sutta Piṭaka*. Study of an aspect of the sutta would make a very useful project. I mention the middle-length counterpart in the text above – *Majjhima Nikāya (MN) 102*.

You may like at this point to consider the exercise I have put together called ‘What’s Wrong with this View?’ which you will find in the appendix to the module. In the exercise I have gathered some examples of views; the idea is for mitras to come up with the reasons why a view is wrong – and not all of them may be. The exercise is split into

sections, so that you can, if you wish, work through it section by section over several sessions.

## **The material in more detail**

### ***Know Your Mind***

This session (p.15) will, I think, need to be actively led. The fourth paragraph is, for example, quite compressed, and will need some unpacking. Some paragraphs are quite difficult; it will probably be best to pick out the sentences that people are most likely to be able to work with, or show most interest in. The last few paragraphs should be accessible to everyone, so I suggest moving on to those if the group is getting bogged down in the more difficult parts.

Some of the comments below come from personal communication with Bhante; while I was preparing this module, I went to ask him about some parts of the sections included in it.

Self-view and personality view should always be taken to mean fixed self-view. It may be worth pointing out to mitras when the opportunity arises that fixed-self view can take on ever more subtle forms. Arguably, the more subtle, the more dangerous. Bhante has recently referred to an example of this, citing a dedication at the front of a recent book, in which the author memorialises the late dedicatee by referring to, “The indestructible essence of your being.” This may be regarded as an example of what Bhante refers to as “This misunderstanding...” in the second line of the second paragraph of this week’s extract. He considers that it is a subtle wrong view relating to self, i.e. a *sakkāyadiṭṭhi* (Pāli) or *satkāyadr̥ṣṭi* (Sanskrit).

*“It is possible eventually to elaborate a whole philosophy out of certain basic personal human weaknesses.”*

An example of this might be the way that Schopenhauer, who was apparently a wilful man, developed a philosophy in which the will figured prominently.

*“All the systematic philosophies that we have...”*

All philosophers are systematisers, searching for a comprehensive account of reality. Hegel is the most obvious example, but Spinoza and Schopenhauer were others. Schelling produced three different systems at three different times in his life. Can philosophy be anything else other than the product of unawakened minds?

Nietzsche thought that a will to system was a will to untruth. He did write in aphorisms, but this may not have been a special characteristic of his later writing.

Encourage mitras to look up *skandhas* (or *khandas* in Pāli) in Nyānatiloka. As regards the twenty permutations of skandhas and self-view, the note which begins at Bodhi’s

*Majjhima Nikāya* (MN) page 1239 is useful – the similes should help mitras to get some idea of what can come across as an involved and complex teaching. Once they can see how *rūpa* combines with the four different ways of projecting oneself, that’s probably enough for the purpose of expounding self-view at this point. This skandha practice could be compared with the six element practice.

The Buddha said that it was less absurd to think of the body as a self than to think of the mind as a self, because the latter is always so obviously changing if one takes the trouble to look.

The paragraph on the fourteen inexpressibles can seem rather complicated. It would be fine to skip to the next paragraph which refers to the inexpressibles that are particularly relevant to the personality view.

What Bhante refers to here as the fourteen inexpressibles appear elsewhere as the ten unanswered questions. In the version of MN 72 that Bhikkhu Bodhi has used for his translation, Vacchagotta asks fourteen unanswerable questions and some answerable ones. The first six questions are presented as pairs:

- Is the world eternal or not?
- Is the world infinite or not?
- Are the soul and the body the same or not?

The remaining eight questions are presented in groups of four, so the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth questions are:

- Does the Buddha exist after death?
- Does the Buddha not exist after death?
- Does the Buddha both exist and not exist after death?
- Does the Buddha neither exist nor not exist after death?

The eleventh to fourteenth questions (relating to the appearance or non-appearance of a Buddha after death), are also grouped in a four. Paragraph 14 of MN 102 (the *Pañcattaya Sutta*) contains a list of sixteen speculative views referring to the self and world, which are interesting in our context, and may be worth referring to. Steven Collins discusses the ten unanswerable questions helpfully in his book *Selfless Persons* (p.131ff).

The paragraph which begins with ‘Vacchagotta’s fourth question...’ introduces the mind-body problem, which, as the *Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, says, “...is one of the deepest puzzles in philosophy, and [one] that will continue to test our philosophical intelligence and imagination.” (p. 580). A short introduction to the problem, for anyone who might be interested, can be found in chapter 4 of Thomas Nagel’s *What does it all mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*.

The paragraph beginning, “In fact, it is impossible...” is another challenging passage. If people are finding it hard going, it would be best to move smartly to the later paragraphs about the body which will, I think, engage most people. For example, the way the body is affected by karma is an interesting work point.

An example of, “Absolute dualities...” would be Christianity, in which there is good and evil, God and the devil; the devil can never become good. William Blake was trying to get away from dualism in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Buddhism criticises the idea that mind and matter can also be regarded as absolute dualities.

Here are some additional questions that you can ask if it seems appropriate:

1. How are the 20 forms of self-view made up; i.e. the five skandhas x four ways of seeing self?
2. How do the skandhas relate to each other in your experience?
3. Why does, “Who am I?” continue to be a relevant question?
4. What does, “‘Body’ is more like a principle of configuration, a unitive principle.” mean?
5. What does it mean to say that the, “...imagination is arguably a more reliable faculty than the intellect alone, and the poet more reliable than the philosopher”?

The section ‘What is it that makes a View ‘wrong’?’ is my attempt at a definition of wrong view. Bhante thought it was useful, and pointed out that one part of the definition can be seen as objective and the other as subjective (see below). Apart from *Know Your Mind* (see index), you’ll find helpful definitions of wrong view in *What is the Dharma?* (see e.g. page 41) and in the excerpt from *A Vision of Human Existence* used at the beginning of the first session.

First we are offered an objective definition. At least, we can try to see *paṭiccasamuppāda* in that way.

Next we are offered a subjective definition. This is also *paṭiccasamuppāda* – we are in it. Holding onto a view is grasping (*upādāna*); we are involved in it.

### **The Brahmajāla Sutta**

Bhikkhu Bodhi refers to, “Acceptance of right view which leads to the cessation of the round.” It may be worth pointing out here that elsewhere the Buddha talks about positive conditionality (e.g. *Sutta Nipāta*, Bodhi I, page 553-6); Bhante’s emphasis on the spiral path could also be pointed to.

The first paragraph mentions views as an obstacle to rebirth in higher worlds. If you think that this is a bit of a red herring at this point, you can gloss over it.

Dogmatic clinging will be gone into in some detail in a future session, but it may be worth asking people what they think it means, as I do in the list of suggested questions.

The point about wrong view arising from meditation experience is a very important one. See Anālayo's note below. It confirms the importance of meditating with right view.

By using the analogy of the red glasses, the author is claiming that, just as taking a person from one situation to another will not prevent him from seeing red, so adopting practices (and maybe different practices) will not make any difference to someone who is wearing the 'glasses' of personality view. Discussing this analogy could be a useful way of introducing analogy to mitras who have not met it before. The Buddha used analogy and simile very often in his teaching e.g. the Raft, which will come into Week 5.

### **Another suggested question**

- Are you clear what is meant by analogy?

You may like to have a look at some interesting comments offered by Anālayo on the *Brahmajāla Sutta*.

These are all taken from Anālayo's commentary on the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, The Direct Path to Realization* (2003).

What follows here are some footnotes in Anālayo's text which refer to the *Brahmajāla Sutta*. Page numbers refer to his book.

p.45 [...], according to the Buddha's penetrating analysis in the *Brahmajala Sutta* (BJS), sole reliance on direct extra-sensory knowledge had caused a considerable number of mistaken views among contemporary practitioners.

n4: A survey of the sixty-two grounds for formulating views, presented in the *Brahmajāla Sutta* (BJS) (*Dīgha* I 12-39), reveals that 'direct' meditative experiences are the most frequent cause for formulating a view, while speculative thought assumes only a subordinate role: forty-nine instances appear to be based purely or at least in part on meditative experiences [nos, 1-3, 5-7, 9-11, 19-22, 23-5, 27, 29-41, 43-9, 51-7, 59-62]; against only thirteen instances based on pure reasoning (nos 4, 8, 12-16, 18, 26, 28, 42, 50, 58].

p.161, n21: In fact the BJS discusses sixty-two 'grounds' for formulating views (*Dīgha* I 39: *dvāsaṭṭhiyā vatthūhi*), not sixty-two 'views'. The actual number of views is much less, as e.g. the first four 'grounds' make up one 'view' of eternalism, formulated in each instance in exactly the same terms. This shows that

the Buddha's analysis was mainly concerned with the epistemological grounds for formulating views, much less with the individual content of any of these views.

n22: [...] The commentary Sv-pt I 180 explains the genesis of such views to be the outcome of not understanding the arising of feelings with craving.

n23: At D I 45 the Buddha explained that one who has understood the arising and disappearance of contact (contact being the necessary condition for the arising of feelings and therewith of craving), has thereby realised what goes beyond all these views.

p.181, n34: Of the sixty-two grounds for view presented in the BJS (D I 12-39), forty-nine appear to be related to concentrative attainments of various types: recollection of past lives [nos 1-3, 5-7, 17]; the divine eye [31-4, 51-7; *kaṣiṇa* meditation [9-11, 19, 23-5, 29-30, 35, 39-41, 43, 47-9]; and *jhāna* in general [20-2, 27, 36-8, 44-6, 59-62]. This ratio (nearly 80%) constitutes an overwhelming testimony to the view-generating propensity of deep concentration experiences.

### Further references

Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: the Direct Path to Realization*, Windhorse, 2003:

<http://www.windhorsepublications.com/CartV2/Details.asp?ProductID=681>

Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons*, Cambridge, 1982:

<http://tinyurl.com/l2bgz2>

Ted Honderich (ed), *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 1995:

<http://tinyurl.com/nsg64p>

Thomas Nagel, *What Does it All Mean? A Very Short Introduction to Philosophy*, Oxford, 1987:

<http://tinyurl.com/l7ad7c>

### ***Week 3: Tutor's Notes***

The session offers a substantial extract from *Know Your Mind*, and a whole sutta from the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

In *Know Your Mind*, Bhante explains the metaphysical and psychological dimensions of extreme view.

#### **Know Your Mind**

In fact, the Buddha did not actually stay silent, at least not in the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*. There, he patiently answers each of Vacchagotta's questions by saying that he does not hold that view, and, in the case of the last four questions, that the key terms used in the questions do not apply. In other words, the Buddha did not commit himself; one could therefore see this as a kind of silence. I have not been able to find any reference in the Pāli Canon to the Buddha responding with actual silence to a question. Bhante's reference to silence reminds me of Vimalakīrti's silence; Thurman's note about this (note 15 of chapter 9 in his translation of the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa*) is worth a look.

The way Bhante introduces self-hatred constitutes a critical warning. I think that some mitras may be a bit sobered by this passage. Question 3 on my list opens this up a bit. I thought it best not to ask a more leading question like, "Do any of you experience self-hatred and do you think that some of that comes from misunderstanding the *anātman* doctrine?" Whether you want to go into this territory will, I suppose, depend on your assessment of how the group is going at this point.

I repeat the definition of the term 'absolute' since it crops up often in this session.

I suggest a question (7) about 'the conditioned' here to keep mitras thinking about what it means. Conditioned by what? At this point, it seems to be helpful to refer to *pratītya samutpāda* and its two modes, cyclical and spiral. (See *Know Your Mind*, mid-p.176).

I would postpone a full explanation of the Yogācāra until Week 8.

I have imported a chunk – the last three paragraphs – from section e 'wrong views', which comes at the end of the chapter. I think it fits well here.

I have tried to restrict the number of questions to eight. Here are some additional questions that may be of interest:

1. What is the right interpretation of the doctrine of *anātman*?
2. What are 'absolutes'?
3. Why do we seem to want absolutes?
4. "It is not clarity but certainty [that people] are looking for." Is that true of you?

## 5. How do we and should we face uncertainty?

Very able students could be encouraged to follow this session up by reading section 16 of chapter 1 of *A Survey of Buddhism*, which is the locus classicus for Bhante's exposition of the Middle Way. It isn't an easy read, but it's a very rewarding one. Cittapala has put together a diagram relating to chapter 16. It can be downloaded from his website ([www.cittapala.org](http://www.cittapala.org)). This could help those intrepid souls who want to engage with that section of the *Survey*.

There are some options after the *Know Your Mind* extract has been looked at. I have included a whole sutta from the *Majjhima Nikāya* because reading the Pāli Canon alongside *Know Your Mind* can give mitras a sense of the continuity of the teaching. One possibility would be for members of the study group to take turns in reading it aloud. I think it's a good thing to recite suttas in study sessions. It contains the famous (and humorous) simile about the poisoned arrow, and it raises a number of other interesting points. You can use Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation to clarify any points of translation. Thanissaro's 'stress' for dukkha, for example, may be imaginative but it sounds a bit odd.

An alternative to reading the sutta would be to do some more of the 'What's Wrong with this View?' exercise, or to introduce the first of the two reflection exercises which you'll also find in the appendix. The one I suggest that you introduce first is called 'Reflecting on View', which I have used successfully on Dharmapala College seminars. It offers a routine by which one person with the help of another person can reflect effectively on a 'piece' of doctrine. So one can use it to reflect on an expression of right view. This would make it a very useful adjunct to the fourth, fifth and sixth sessions of this module. A similar version can also be downloaded from the *Dharmapala College* website:

<http://tinyurl.com/mosogk>

## *Week 4: Tutor's Notes*

The *Know Your Mind* section does refer to some things that have been mentioned before in previous weeks, and it also raises some very useful additional points. Depending on how the study group is going, you may wish to spend the whole session on the *Know Your Mind* extract, and then turn to one of the reflection exercises (see below), or you may want to spend some time on the *Know Your Mind* extract and then move on to the *Honey Ball Sutta*.

### **Know Your Mind**

Bhante says that we have seen how an ideology is established because he has referred to it in an earlier extract. And of course Subhuti talked about this in the extract studied in the first session of the module.

I think it would be useful to bring out the significance of the second sentence in this extract. If an 'emotionally negative perspective' is a necessary condition for an ideology to be established, does that mean that if you do the mettā bhāvanā regularly, you will be ideology-free? Does it really mean that if everyone in the world did the mettā bhāvanā, there would be no more conflict? The material on the *Honey Ball Sutta* below will take this up. In the meantime here is a good opportunity to make the link between views and meditation.

I think it's important to make the point that views on the one hand have an extremely far-reaching effect e.g. ideologies which support 'ethnic cleansing', and on the other views can work on a moment to moment basis to support small but significant actions and thoughts. The latter can so easily grow into the former. In fact, there is an interesting discussion to be had here about how minor thought-habits relate to major ones.

The term Hīnayāna, which means 'Inferior Vehicle', is a polemical one coined by followers of the Mahāyāna. Modern scholars don't regard it as a neutral expression that can be appropriately applied to non-Mahāyānists. The term 'Mainstream Buddhism' is usually used instead to refer to non-Mahāyāna Buddhism (Williams, 2009, p. 268).

The rejection of the *pudgala* comes at the front of the Theravādin *Kathavatthu* (translated as '*Points of Controversy*'). Bhante affirms that the Theravādins still reject it; they don't think about it, and this is an example of their unsophisticated approach when it comes to metaphysics. An illuminating short discussion of the *Pudgalāvada* can be found at page 124 in Paul Williams' *Buddhist Thought*, on which he collaborated with Dharmachari Anandajyoti. They explain the grounds of the controversy down the centuries about the *pudgala*.

Here are some additional questions:

1. Does avoiding, "Hit[ting] someone over the head with Buddhist truth," mean that one cannot argue energetically with people about view?

2. Why is right view that is treated as dogma no longer right view?
3. Why might describing Enlightenment as a state of non-selfhood be quite misleading?
4. What do you understand by the term ‘operational concept’?
5. What does Bhante mean when he says that Theravādins are sometimes quite unsophisticated when it comes to metaphysics?
6. How can a wrong view serve a skilful purpose?

### **The Honey Ball Sutta (*Majjhima Nikāya 18*)**

This is the very important *Madhupiṇḍika Sutta* (MPS). It is a rich sutta, which would require a whole session or more to itself. But I think it would be useful if mitras could be introduced to it at this point, so I am including some notes about what it says. Of particular interest in relation to the matter of ideology is the context of the sutta, and the way the Buddha describes his teaching as, “A teaching that does not quarrel with anyone in the world.” In this, it is reminiscent of the Buddha’s claim that, “It is not I that quarrel with the world, but the world which quarrels with me.” (*Samyutta Nikāya* 22:94/iii.138. see Bodhi’s translation p 949). (See also *Sutta Nipāta* 4.11: *Kalahavivada Sutta*, especially verse 877, and *Dīgha Nikāya*, *Sakkapañha* 21.2.2 page 328 in Walshe 1987).

This sutta offers an interesting variation on the familiar twelve nidāna chain, and also shows how conditionality works in relation to obsession and ideology and how this process gives rise to conflict. The sutta of course does not show where the exit to the spiral path is, but it seems to me that both *vitakka* and *papañca* are dukkha-ridden experiences which could give rise to faith. It might be worth asking mitras where they think the exit could be.

If there is not time to study these notes on MPS in this session, the notes (and preferably the whole sutta, which only runs to five pages in Bodhi) could be read as homework, since it shows how some of what Bhante is talking about in the *Know Your Mind* extract can be seen in the Pāli Canon. Reading the whole sutta aloud in the session is also, I think, a good thing to do.

Although I would have liked to use Bhikkhu Bodhi’s translation of the sutta, I have not yet been able to get permission from Wisdom Publications to do that. So I am using a translation by Bhikkhu Thanissaro which is found on the *Access to Insight* website. But I would strongly recommend Bodhi’s notes especially 227, 229, and 232.

<http://tinyurl.com/meoqyf>

Bhikkhu Nanananda’s booklet is also very helpful (see references). It is, though, quite

difficult in several places, although most of what he has to say about the MPS, which is the locus classicus for *papañca*, is reasonably clear.

Anusaya is an interesting and useful term which I don't think is mentioned in study very much. It does occur in many places in the Pāli Canon (see e.g. Bhikkhu Bodhi's MN index at p 1398) Nyanatiloka defines it as 'underlying tendencies'. Although there probably will not be enough time to go into the significance of *anusaya* in this session, there would be no harm in flagging it up for another day.

I hope that my notes on *papañca*, which rely heavily on Nanananda's booklet, will be enough to enable both the study leaders and mitras to see how the Buddha (via Kaccana) explains how the process of perception, driven by the *kilesas*, leads to obsessive views including ideologies. My note on eliminating *prapanca* strikes a practical note and may be useful.

You could also lead into one of the reflection exercises in the appendix.

Here's an additional question:

- Can you think of an example of how the grammar we use influences the way we think?

## Reference

Paul Williams (with Anthony Tribe), *Buddhist Thought*, Routledge 2000:

<http://www.routledge/religion.com/books/Buddhist-Thought-isbn9780415207010>

### ***Week 5: Tutor's Notes***

The *Know Your Mind* extract this week is less complicated than some earlier ones. I have as usual listed some questions which I think may be useful.

I have also included relevant extracts from some seminars, which I hope will provide some grist to the mill. I have invited mitras to spell out the main points that Bhante is making in each of the extracts.

You might like to ask the group about, “The fear of breaking the rules.”

I have also included Bhikkhu Thanissaro’s translation of The Raft simile from the MN 22. (See also Bodhi p. 228 and his notes). I include this because it provides a good opportunity to talk about why all teachings (including right views) need to be used for the purpose for which they are intended, and then let go of when they have served their purpose. Some questions are included here too.

There is no need for either the seminar extracts or the raft simile to be studied in the session if you think that time could be better spent doing the down-loadable reflection exercise that I referred to in the session for last week.

For further reading, you may like to recommend Bhante’s booklet, *The Meaning of Orthodoxy in Buddhism: A Protest* (Windhorse, 1987), which contains very useful comments on the third fetter:

[http://www.sangharakshita.org/\\_books/meaning-orthodoxy.pdf](http://www.sangharakshita.org/_books/meaning-orthodoxy.pdf)

## Week 6: Tutor's Notes

Mitras may find it odd that the fifth category of wrong views is called simply 'wrong view'. It might be interesting to see how these wrong views are expressed in the Pāli Canon. Here I'll reference three places where the four are given:

- MN 41.10, the *Sāleyyaka Sutta* (and see Bhikkhu Bodhi's note 425).
- MN114.10, the *Sevitabbāsevitabba Sutta* also MN).
- MN 117.5, *Mahacattārīsika Sutta* (*The Great Forty*).

Nyanatiloka refers to "The so-called [three] 'wrong views with fixed destiny'." (*niyata-micchādiṭṭhi*):

1. The fatalistic 'view of the uncausedness' of existence (*ahetukadiṭṭhi*).
2. The 'view of the inefficacy of action' (*akiriyadiṭṭhi*).
3. Nihilism (*natthika-diṭṭhi*).

The first view was taught by Makkhali-Gosāla, a contemporary of the Buddha who denied every cause for the corruptness and purity of beings, and asserted that everything is minutely predestined by fate.

The second view was taught by Pūraṇa-Kassapa., another contemporary of the Buddha who denied every karmic effect of good and bad actions, "To him who kills, steals, robs, etc., nothing bad will happen. For generosity, self-restraint, and truthfulness, etc. no reward is to be expected."

The third view was taught by Ajita-Kesakambala, a third contemporary of the Buddha who asserted that any belief in good action and its reward is a mere delusion, that after death no further life would follow, that man at death would become dissolved into the elements. (For more on these three views, see D. 2, and M. 60.).

These three correspond with the first three referred to by Bhante and by the Buddha in the references above.

For note 195 in the text, see *Know Your Mind*. It's about the Sātkāryavādins and the Asātkāryavādins. I didn't think that it would be useful to cite it below the extract from *Know Your Mind* above, but you may wish to use it if mitras want to know more.

This long extract is rich in material to reflect on. There are four substantial wrong views here all of which could do with a good going-into, especially in terms of their implications. You might like to raise the last two questions on the list with each of the four wrong views in turn.

In the third paragraph of the *Know Your Mind* extract, Bhante speaks of the Enlightened mind. He says, “Whether you yourself see things in that way is another matter.” This raises the question, “How does an Enlightened person see things?” Perhaps he or she sees people in conditioned existence and wants to help them. It’s hard for us to know what it would be like, but it is a good question to ask since it might stretch the mitras’ imagination a bit.

I imagine that there will be a good deal of discussion about responsibility to parents, about sex, and about egalitarianism. If you think it’s appropriate, you could ask whether anyone has had any experience of faith inhibiting or even dissolving sexual experience.

I am listing some more possible questions here:

1. Do you agree that the viewpoint (that life, even spiritual life, is simply about doing what we feel like doing) “Is more or less bound to lead to an over-valuation of the sexual relationship”? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. Why are these wrong views given a category of their own?
3. Why can’t we say that suffering is caused by the kleśas?
4. What are the implications of accepting that these wrong views are in fact wrong?
5. Do you believe that ‘stream entry’ is possible in this life? If so, why? If not, why not?
6. Why does belief in a creator God prevent one from becoming Enlightened?
7. Do you agree that ex-Protestants and ex-Catholics generally have different attitudes to the path and spiritual attainment?
8. If you have been to a festival which has celebrated, for example, Śākyamuni or Padmasambhava, do you think it worked as a way of connecting you better to actual exemplars of the goal of the path to Enlightenment?

I assume that you’ll think it useful to review the module up to this point, however briefly. So I’ve included a few questions which may be helpful.

If there is time, you may like to invite the mitras to do the reflection on view exercise, or the exercise on identifying views, or the ‘What’s Wrong with this View?’ exercise, all of which have been mentioned already.

There is now a shift of gear as we go on to look at views in the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra.

## *Week 7: Tutor's Notes*

This session is composed of an excerpt from Bhante's commentary on the *Heart Sutra* (*Wisdom Beyond Words*), and some notes on the Madhyamaka and its thinking about views. I suggest that you concentrate on that excerpt, and on the sections 'What did the Madhyamakas want to say?' (p.66), 'Views and Madhyamaka' (p.69), and 'Regarding the five kinds of wrong views that we have looked at in previous sessions' (p.71). I'd hope that mitras would be able to digest beforehand the *Heart Sutra* itself with commentary (p.61-64), and the section 'A definition' (p.65).

This session represents something of a change of gear. So far, we have been looking at a series of extracts from *Know Your Mind*. The next two sessions look at the investigation into views of the two great Mahāyāna schools, the Madhyamaka and the Yogācāra. I hope that the mitras' notes explain this shift well enough.

I haven't introduced the Mahāyāna. If this is needed, I suggest that you look up the brief summary of characteristics of the Mahāyāna which appears on page 224 of Gethin's *Foundations of Buddhism*:

<http://tinyurl.com/p2fhyg>

He discusses the complex relationship between what Bhante calls 'Basic Buddhism' and the Mahāyāna helpfully in several other places in his book. Nowadays there is thought to be more overlap between the two than was probably expressed in the sources that Bhante used when he wrote *A Survey of Buddhism* and gave the seminars from which *Wisdom Beyond Words* was compiled. Bhante himself has recommended Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism* as a way of accessing later scholarship about these matters.

I suggest that you start by having a quiet few moments and then reciting the *Heart Sutra* in either Conze's or the version to be found in the pūjā book. There could be a few moments quiet afterwards also.

Several of the dramatis personae this week are on the Triratna Refuge Tree.

Bhante's commentary is very useful indeed. The only aspect of it that would not be accepted nowadays by many scholars is that he seeks to bring out a discontinuity between the Sarvastivādin Abhidharma and the Madhyamaka project, whereas many contemporary scholars would emphasise continuity with the earlier Abhidharma tradition. I will draw attention to the points at which this happens.

One scholar has argued at some length that the *Heart Sutra* was excerpted from the *Longer Prajñāpāramitā Sutra* in China, probably for liturgical use. It was then later back-translated into Sanskrit as an independent work, and re-introduced into India in the 7th century by Xuanzang.

Not all Abhidharma enquirers rejected the five aggregates (skandhas). It was one of the frameworks used by some enquirers, and can, for example, be found in Buddhaghosa's

*Visuddhi Magga*. But the Sarvastivādin and Theravādin Abhidharmas may have thought that analysing experience in terms of the fourfold classification would yield new or better information, although the two forms of classification don't seem very different to us.

I have offered a definition of pluralistic realism, but I suggest that you do not allow this point to hold up discussion.

For more on conventional and ultimate truth (or relative and absolute truth), see *Wisdom Beyond Words*, pp. 218 and 263.

Sangharakshita comments that Avalokiteśvara is dismissing the whole scholastic apparatus of the Abhidharma. Perhaps one could see Avalokiteśvara as wanting to purify the Abhidharma of a tendency to scholastic literalism. The Madhyamaka also was concerned to criticise those Abhidharma enquirers who had taken the Buddha's teachings too literally, so it would be true to say that the Madhyamaka criticised some trends in Abhidharma thought. The Sarvastivādin-Vaibhāṣika Abhidharma project, in its enthusiasm to classify all experience, seems to have laid great stress on dharmas as the ultimate 'substantial bits' (*dravya*), of mentality and materiality out of which the whole world is constructed. The Madhyamaka's project was a critique of such literalism and reification.

Bhante also says that "Perfect Wisdom, *represented by Avalokiteśvara* (my italics), destroys... the Abhidharma." Nowadays, many scholars would see the Abhidharma as a project which has continued from the death of the Buddha to this day. What Avalokiteśvara was probably wanting to destroy was any literalistic or reifying trend in Abhidharma scholarship. It is a danger that we humans do well to be awake to – that a merely intellectual approach to enquiring into the Dharma runs the risk of reifying the concepts involved. As the second Noble Truth implies, beings are always likely to grasp onto 'bits' of what is actually a process in flux in order to feel secure. That propensity is what Nāgārjuna is trying to put right under our noses.

Many verses of the *Mulamadhyamakakarika* are obscure, but I'm hoping that the translation of the verses given here will enable some sense to be made of what Nāgārjuna is trying to get us to see. The translation is Garfield's.

It is important for mitras not to misunderstand what Nāgārjuna is saying in the famous MK 25 v 19. He is *not* saying that saṃsāra and nirvana are the same in the sense that a person who is 'in saṃsāra' experiences what a person 'in nirvana' experiences. He is saying that they are both concepts, and that because they are both concepts, they are both conventional truths, and they are both śūnya. They do not differ in that respect. But as concepts they are each fingerposts pointing to different orders of experience. So one could say that what he is referring to is an epistemological difference, but an ontological similarity. In other words, the two concepts are different because they point us to an understanding of two different things, but the two concepts are the same because they both lack inherent existence.

I have used Rupert Gethin's book *The Foundations of Buddhism* a good deal in this session. He summarises the Madhyamaka critique very well, and I think you can safely refer mitras to that book. For more detail, you can recommend, as Bhante does, Paul Williams' *Mahāyāna Buddhism*, now out in its second edition.

Something that you might consider doing is inviting mitras to think of images of process and change, e.g. a river, the weather. These images can be compared with images that we use when we think of permanent substance, e.g. a mountain, rocks. Mitras could be invited to reflect on the way that we use these images, how we can reify a current of water and turn it into the River Wye, and how we like to think of mountains and rocks as being unchanging, when they aren't really. Reify means to refer to something which isn't a thing in a way which makes it into a thing. To refer to civilians who are killed as a result of a military invasion as 'collateral damage' is to reify them.

I hope that the exploration of the five views at the end of the mitras' text will enable them to see how the Madhyamaka relates to what we have done in the first six sessions.

You could end the session by reciting the Heart Sutra again, or chanting the śūnyatā mantra: *Om svabhava suddhah, sarvah dharmah, svabhava suddho 'ham*. "Empty of fixed nature are all events. Empty of fixed nature am I."

## *Week 8: Tutor's Notes*

This is a brief rather than a comprehensive account of the Yogācāra's investigation of views. I have provided some references for those who wish to study further. But I do hope that this session will give mitras a good introduction to what the Yogācāra was trying to do, what part it played in the history of the investigation of 'Buddhist views', and how it continued the great work of the Abhidharma.

For the purposes of this session, I have chosen to restrict my account to the early classical Indian version of Yogācāra. This is the place to start, and then one can explore the development of the Yogācāra from there. Sangharakshita's, Paul Williams' and Skilton's accounts all contain traces of a rather different version. Although the origins of different versions can probably be found in the *Samdhinirmocana*, they all appear to be influenced by ideas which are associated with the development of the Tathāgatagarbha doctrine. I have chosen to avoid going into that because it would need at least a week (and probably a module) on its own to do it any kind of justice. I think that the account that I have offered here is a valid and useful place to start.

I hope that the background to the Yogācāra that I have given in the mitras' material will set a good enough context for discussing the two teachings, and especially the teaching about the Three Natures. I hope that the clear crystal simile will attract some interest and some good discussion, and you may want to highlight that section.

It's probably a good idea not to get side-tracked by the question of whether the Madhyamaka was or was not in fact nihilistic. This point is still warmly debated. There are too many good things in this session to get stuck there.

You may wish to bring out the following issues:

1. The different ways *suññata/sūnyatā* was used in the three turnings. This affords a good example of the way in which one school of thought developed on the basis of another, or rather, others.
2. The *ālaya* is part of dependent origination, so can be seen as being included in the *Paratantra-svabhāva*. The *Paratantra-svabhāva* can only be known by our senses, which is why it is said to have a mental aspect. We can think of what we call dependent origination as a process, but we can only know those aspects of the process that we can pick up on through our senses. We don't actually know what we are not able to pick up, nor how much.
3. On pages 73-74 it may be worth while drawing attention to the way in which the *Heart Sutra* can be misunderstood, and ask mitras whether they think they have ever misunderstood it.
4. The consciousnesses (*vijñānas*) are often counted as eight, but sometimes as seven. You get eight if you count a mind sense as the sixth, and then the *kliṣṭa-manas* as seventh and the *ālaya* as eighth, or seven if you don't count the mind

sense on its own, but regard the kliṣṭa-manas and the ālaya as an elaboration of the mind sense. The *Samdhinirmocana* speaks of seven vijñānas.

5. In the illustration about gold, which works quite well as a way of showing how we become involved in delusions, I think it's important to guard against taking the illustration too literally. We do get involved in delusions in that way, but at the same time, we may get some inklings of dependent origination and that we are not getting things quite right. If we were to steal gold from somebody, for example, we would probably get at least some intimations that the theft had not actually made us much happier, or solved any of the big existential problems.

This brings us to the end of the module. I hope that you and the study group have got something out of it, and I hope you and they will find that there are things here that are worth returning to.

## *Appendix 1*

### **What's wrong with this View?**

Here is a list of views. Try to answer the question at the top of this page. You may decide that you would need more information about the context in which they are expressed to make your decision. If so, identify what information you think you would need. There is one *question* on the list which implies a view.

This exercise gives us an opportunity to think about what we might well hear another person say, and to practise how we might respond.

Most of these views are linked in some way with the study material, but not all are.

There's room at the bottom to add your own favourite wrong views, so please make a note of views that you think of as you go through the exercise.

The views are organised in groups of no more than eight. Each group could be addressed on a separate occasion.

1. There's no such thing as a wrong view. There are just different views.
2. All religions add up to basically the same thing in the end.
3. A true Buddhist has no views.
4. When you're dead, you're dead, and that's all there is to it.
5. The Buddha taught that we should test out everything we hear in our experience. But we can't test the truth of re-becoming, so Buddhism is clearly inadequate in the matter which probably affects us most deeply.
6. The aim of Buddhism is to abolish the self.
7. The aim of meditation is to rid the mind of all thoughts.
8. Some people never change.

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1. If it feels good, do it.
2. Practice of the Dharma brings certainty about the truth of things.
3. There must have been a point in time when the universe began.
4. The universe is infinite.

5. All Buddhists are anarchists at heart.
6. It is wise to be wary of all non-Buddhists.
7. One does not always suffer the consequence of one's actions. For example, you can often get away with lying.
8. Sex is a private and sacred matter.

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1. Is the universe eternal or not eternal?
2. It's a fine day, Mr Stevens.  
Yes, it is, Mrs Bell, but we'll pay for it.
3. I really wanted that flat. I'm so disappointed, that I can only console myself by thinking that it was not meant to be.
4. I'll stop flying when everyone else does.
5. There is no point in getting worked up about climate change. Science has developed so rapidly in recent decades, and has made discoveries that were unthinkable only a few years ago. It has always found an answer to a problem when enough money is spent on it.
6. If the universe wasn't created by God, then it must have begun by chance.
7. This is the way we do things in the Triratna Buddhist Community.
8. No one is better than anyone else.

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1. When I begin to get really involved in something, I know that my ego is getting involved, so I take care to draw back from whatever it is that I am doing.
2. You made me do it.
3. I can't make a difference.
4. Is the king of France bald?
5. My parents did their best, but it wasn't a very good best, so I don't owe them anything.

6. After death, there is nothing.
7. I have never met an Awakened being, so I don't see why I should believe that Awakening is possible.
8. The universe bloomin' well ought to be just and fair!

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1. I don't deserve this!
2. Relationships ought to be reciprocal in nature.
3. One doesn't learn without making mistakes, so it's good to make them.
4. When that new Mac laptop came on the market, I just had to buy it.
5. Going abroad at least once a year is good for my spiritual development.
6. I have a right to a private life.
7. One must be original at all costs.
8. I must have my needs met.

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1. Owning a lot of books makes one a bad Buddhist.
2. If it doesn't hurt, it's not doing you any good. (No pain, no gain).
3. Hell is other people. (L'enfer est les autres – Jean-Paul Sartre).
4. I shouldn't be dissatisfied because I'm a Buddhist.
5. There is no absolute truth.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

## Appendix 2

### Reflecting on View

#### 1. Before the Reflection begins

First, choose a sentence of text or teaching, or identify a view which you hold (however provisionally). It needs to be written down. One sentence is usually enough.

Some examples of text that you could use are:

*“For there is suffering, but none who suffers  
Doing exists although there is no doer;  
Extinction is but no extinguished person;  
Although there is a path, there is no goer.”*

Visuddhi Magga, XVI, 93, BPS p 521.

*“If you are always aware, Mogharaja, you will look at the world and see its emptiness. If you give up looking at yourself as a soul [a fixed and special entity], then you will have given yourself a way to go beyond death.”*

Sutta Nipāta, v 119, trans Sadhatissa.

*“For him [the sage] there is no desire to strive for this or that, in this world or the next. He has ceased to associate with dogmas for he no longer requires the solace that dogmas offer.”*

Sutta Nipāta v 801 (ibid).

You could take all or part of one of these passages or choose another short passage that you have found. Or you can write out a brief formulation of a view that you hold.

Secondly, you pair up with someone else.

#### 2. Beginning the Reflection

Both of you agree on the length of time that you will set aside for the reflection. Each of you may want to take a turn. Choose who will go first and who second. Usually each of you will choose a different text or view. 20-30 minutes each would be good to start with.

Whoever goes first (hereafter called ‘she’) slowly and clearly reads the chosen piece of text or view out loud.

The other person (‘he’) listens carefully, and then asks her what she would like him to do.

Then she can decide whether she would like him just to listen or to be active. See below what I mean by ‘active’.

### **3. What she does next**

She then starts at the beginning of the text or view, and speaks out loud each word or phrase and ponders them each in turn. As she does this, she can:

- Pause to notice her response which could show itself as emotion e.g. interest, aversion, embarrassment, bafflement, enthusiasm; take time to feel any response in the body, whatever it might be. She can say her responses out loud or just ponder them, as she wishes. “I don’t really believe this,” or “I’m feeling irritated/confused/curious/excited.”
- Ask herself out loud such questions as, “Do I understand what that means?” and, “If it means x, what would I make of that?”
- When the whole text or view has been explored in this way, she can then ask herself out loud, “If I were to accept this, what would be the implications or consequences for me?”

### **4. What he can do**

If he has been asked to listen, he does just that – listens attentively while she explores the text or view.

Keeps the time. Note the starting time and tell her when she has five minutes left, or whatever has been agreed.

If she has said that she would welcome verbal help, there are several things that he can do:

- Ask questions to help her to clarify her response to each bit of the text or view. “When you say x, do you mean....?” Or “Would you like to say a bit more about that?”
- Summarise what she has said, “What I’ve heard you say is....”
- Reflect back a thought or feeling relating to what she has said, “You’re feeling puzzled/inspired/intrigued by.....”
- Helping her to tease out implications and possible consequences of accepting (or rejecting) the text or view.

Most of us want to be helpful and end up saying too much. If you think that might be you, try saying very little. ‘She’ can tell him if ‘he’ is saying too much. If when time’s up she is obviously still exploring something that seems important to her, he can remind her that she can continue the reflection in her own time, or revisit it with another listener.

### ***5. Some general points***

- Allow pauses to happen, i.e. avoid filling the spaces with words.
- Big things can happen in pauses.
- Stay as relaxed as you can.
- Trust that something will emerge – it may do some time later and/or be quite subtle.

Some comments by Ratnaguna have been incorporated into an earlier version of this exercise, which is downloadable from Dharmapala College website:

<http://dharmapalacollege.org/download-articles-and-resources/>.

Some of the ideas here have come from Gregory Kramer's book *Insight Dialogue*:

<http://www.metta.org/home/insightDialogueBook.htm>

Another version of the exercise is to be found in Ratnaguna's mitra training module on reflection:

<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/study/yearfour>

## *Appendix 3*

### **Identifying Views**

#### *Introduction*

Do we really know what views prompt our actions? Fortunately, our very actions – including our ‘thought actions’ – can give clues to views that might have escaped our notice.

Here you will find a relatively simple exercise designed to unearth underlying views by means of investigating your actions. It’s been used at Dharmapala College several times, and most people have found it well worth doing.

#### *The exercise*

This is a fairly simple exercise that can be done in pairs. The idea is that one person tries to identify their views, while their partner sensitively guides or simply accompanies them through the steps below. In what follows, I shall refer to the person who is trying to identify his or her views as ‘the reflector’, and the person doing the accompanying as ‘the partner’. The reflector needs to take responsibility for what they do in the exercise.

For the first time you do the exercise, reckon on it taking half an hour. When you’ve done it once, you may find that it takes less time on other occasions. If you can make the time, you can of course change places and do the exercise again.

The reflector should not hesitate to tell their partner if the latter is saying more than is helpful.

Throughout the exercise, stay relaxed and open to your own responses. Stay in touch with the body. You may at some point feel that you have come to a place where you want to stop. Just take time to take in what that feels like, and then make a clear decision whether to continue or to stop.

1. First, relax!
2. Then choose an action or ‘piece of behaviour’ which you recognise as habitual and/or which you find yourself wondering or thinking about sometimes. At first, don’t choose something that is too ‘near the bone’. It could be something very simple. It could be a habitual thought.
3. Give your partner a factual description of what happened the last time you did this or noticed this: what was it that you actually did?
4. Pause to notice what feelings arise with the memory of that occasion. Check the body for any feelings. If you can, say something about what you’re feeling now.

5. Explore the story about this action:

Does this action have a particular meaning for you?

What were you thinking and feeling before, during and after this action?

6. Try to identify the reasons that you then gave or now give yourself for this action.

Look at the reasons one by one, and with each ask, “Is that true?” It may help if you touch the earth (actually or metaphorically) after asking this question.

What feelings arise as you consider each reason?

Identify any view(s) you discover, and spend a few moments acknowledging it/them either silently or aloud.

7. When you think that you’ve done enough, pause for a while. Then you can either take some time to reflect on what happened, or if you like you can tell your partner what you think you’ve learned. It’s worth making a note of that.
8. It’s quite likely that your partner will have been affected by what you’ve said, and may want to say something. If you’d prefer that they didn’t say anything at that point, you can of course say so.

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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).