SANGHARAKSHITA’S SYSTEM OF DHARMA LIFE - PLAN FOR **WEEK 1**

**Main themes:**

* Introductions;
* Human life’s a ‘spiritual issue’ because we’re faced with sickness, aging and death;
* Introduction to Sangharakshita and his interpretation of the dharma;
* The 5 dimensions are intrinsic to our lives and our growth and maturity.

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| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 19:05 | Explain, and then introduce, saluting the shrine.  Welcome - Introductions to the team / any practical information  We will introduce the theme of the course after the break. | Ch |
| 19.15 | Introductions by students: What brings you back, what courses have you done?   * Acknowledge that Level 2 students might have a broad range of levels of experience! | Ch |
| 19.25 | Body awareness, then Metta Bhavana (30 mins)   * Could read a poem | Ch |
| 19.55 | Introduce Sangharakshita and his unique role in bringing a clear interpretation of the dharma to the west   * who he is, his photo on the shrine, the development of this model in terms of his interpretation of the Buddha’s teaching *for our time*) | Ch |
| 20.05 | Recap of Foundation course:   1. the central position of Dependent Arising & Cessation in the Buddha’s teaching; 2. interpretations of the Middle Way. |  |
| 20.25 | **TEA BREAK** |  |
| 20.50 | Short talk to introduce the theme:   * Question: What is ‘spiritual life’? How do we live our life in a way that incorporates the understanding that old age, sickness and death are integral parts of that life? * Answer: going beyond ourselves and our own preferences; allowing the Dharma (i.e. Reality) to express itself through us. * Eternalism and nihilism are strong cultural influences. Instead, Buddhism offers us the Middle Way (in its deepest sense). * Mention Maitreyabandhu’s ‘The Journey and the Guide’ | Ch |
| 21.00 | What are our responses to the above? | Ch |

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| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 21.10 | How can we live a ‘spiritual life’ (or, better, the Dharma life) as defined earlier?   * All life is a set of ‘regularities’, as specific instances of Dependent Arising & Cessation. There are 5 levels of regularity (*niyamas*), of which the first 3 are **physical, biological** and **mental** (i.e. how our minds have been conditioned by instinct, culture, education, etc.) * Fourth: the **karma-niyama** – how the individual interacts with, and modifies, the world (and is, in turn, modified by that interaction). We can be confident that, if we act skilfully, we shall produce a positive result. * Fifth: the **dharma-niyama** – regularities that manifest through us when we succeed in letting go of self (i.e. what consciousness does when it has no self-imposed constraints) * We can make use of the last 2 levels of Dependent Arising & Cessation in living the ‘Dharma Life’ | Ch |
| 21.25 | Tasks for the next week:   * Read the introductory section of the handout * Could listen to Dayanandi’s introductory talk (of 6) – go to ‘Talks’ and search for ‘*The Five Great Stages of the Spiritual Path’* * Might think about getting a copy of Journey & the Guide | Ch |
| 21.30 | Finish |  |