SANGHARAKSHITA’S SYSTEM OF DHARMA LIFE - PLAN FOR **WEEK 2**

**Main themes:**

* Taking full responsibility for our ‘karmic agency’;
* finding an organising principle that absorbs all our energies;
* ‘Flow’ (Mihali Csikszentmihalyi);
* Attending to the context in which we live (re: dependent arising & cessation)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 19.05 | Saluting the shrine (give a recap for anyone who missed week 1) | LM |
| 19.15 | Body awareness, then Mindfulness of Breathing (25 mins)* Could read a poem
 | LM |
| 19.40 | Pairs: what do you recall from last week and what has seemed relevant since? | LM |
| 19.45 | Recap of last week:* A definition of ‘spiritual life’: 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).
* All life is a set of ‘regularities’, as specific instances of Dependent Arising & Cessation. There are 5 levels of regularity (niyamas): physical, biological, psychological, karmic and dharmic.
* We can cultivate the ‘Dharma life’ by harnessing the energies of Dependent Arising & Cessation – particularly the last 2 niyamas.
 | LM |
| 19.55 | Any questions? | LM |
| 20.00 | Short talk introducing integration:* Sangharakshita’s terminology: “We get ourselves functioning as a smoothly-working whole, not a jumble of bits and pieces and fragments of selves, all jostling for supremacy”.
* The Mindfulness of Breathing has been described as ‘emblematic practice of integration’.
* In terms of the karma-niyama it means really taking possession of our responsibility (i.e. ‘agency’) – the choices we make, the actions we carry out as a result, and the mental states that we develop.
* To do this, we need an organising principle, without which our sense of agency will not be continuous or comprehensive. Milarepa’s illustration: our habitual tendencies are like a flock of sheep; our Going for Refuge to our deepest values is the sheepdog which rounds them up in a single direction.
 | LM |
| 20.15 | Pairs: Do we recognize the idea of our lacking integration, so that we’re “a jumble of bits and pieces and fragments of selves”?  | LM |
| 20.20 | Feedback (plenary) | LM |
| **START TIME** | **TOPIC** | **LED BY** |
| 20.25 | **TEA BREAK** |  |
| 20.50 | Modern notion of the sense of ‘flow’ coming out of our being single-mindedly committed to a given activity (mention Mihali Csikszentmihalyi for those who want to investigate further) – this is another way of looking at integration.* Could give personal examples, possibly from areas of sport, music, literature, other arts, being in nature, etc.
 | LM |
| 20.55 | Class discussion: can you relate to this broad idea of integration? | LM |
| 21.05 | Practical areas in which we can work on our integration: * the context in which we live;
* communication with other people;
* addressing our past ethical failings;
* periods of solitude in which we can more fully experience ourselves.
 | LM |
| 21.15 | Class discussion | LM |
| 21.25 | Tasks for the next week:* Read the ‘integration’ section of the handout;
* Try to be open to a sense of enjoyment in your meditation practice;
* Give some thought (and, ideally, time) to those activities that can bring you into ‘flow’.
* Could listen to the 2nd of Dayanandi’s talks in the series “The Five Great Stages of the Spiritual Path”: Mindfulness and the mandala of integration (1:05:17)
 | LM |
| 21.30 | Finish |  |