

The Higher Evolution

This term comprises a compression of the content of two lecture series' by Sangharakshita: *The Higher Evolution of Man* and *Aspects of the Higher Evolution of the Individual*. The first six units come from the first series while the final two come from the second. This term constitutes an attempt to relate the traditional teachings and concepts of Buddhism to those current in the modern world. As such, it represents the beginnings of the 'translation' of Buddhism into a language comprehensible by Westerners. In the course of this term we cover a great deal of ground, some of which we traverse rather rapidly. Because the term has 'telescoped' two lecture courses into one, there will be a certain amount of reference to materials that no longer form part of the term, please bear with this.

Primary Study Material

1. **Evolution: Lower and Higher (L75)**
2. **The Axial Age and the Emergence of the New Man (L76)**
3. **Art and the Spiritual Life (L77)**
4. **Buddhism as the Path of the Higher Evolution (L79)**
5. **Stream Entry: The Point of No Return (L80)**
6. **Buddhism, Nietzsche, and the Superman (L82)**
7. **From Alienated Awareness to Integrated Awareness (L84)**
8. **Is a Guru Necessary? (L90)**

None of these lectures have been published but the audio versions and transcriptions can be accessed via www.freebuddhistaudio.com.

Suggested Further Reading for the Series

The Evolving Mind: Robin Cooper (Ratnaprabha), Windhorse
'The Bodhisattva Principle', in Sangharakshita, *The Priceless Jewel*, Windhorse

Suggested Further Reading by Unit

Unit 1: *The Evolving Mind*, C1
Unit 2: *The Evolving Mind*, C6
Unit 3: *The Religion of Art* by Sangharakshita, Windhorse
In the Realm of the Lotus by Sangharakshita, Windhorse

Unit 4: *The Evolving Mind*, C8-9

What is the Dharma?, C7

Unit 5: *What is the Dharma?*, C6

The Meaning of Conversion in Buddhism by Sangharakshita, Windhorse

Unit 6: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* by Friedrich Nietzsche, Penguin, 1969

Nietzsche and Buddhism: A Study in Ironic Affinities by Dr. Robert Morrison (Dh. Sagaramati), Oxford

'God is Dead: What next? A Buddhist Response to Nietzsche' by Dh. Sagaramati in *The Western Buddhist Review 1* available from

<http://www.westernbuddhistreview.com/index.html>

Unit 7: *Living with Awareness* by Sangharakshita

Unit 8: *My Relation to the Order* by Sangharakshita, Windhorse

Study Questions

Unit 1: Evolution: Lower and Higher

1. Why do you think Bhante has chosen to describe spiritual life in terms of evolution?
2. What is the difference between the Lower and Higher Evolutions?
3. In the terms of this unit, what does it mean to be a human being?
4. What is meant by Absolute Mind or Absolute Reality here?
5. According to Bhante, how can mechanism be distinguished from vitalism?
6. What does it mean to understand humanity: a) genetically, b) teleologically? What are the advantages/disadvantages of each approach?
7. Can evolution and Buddhist cosmology be reconciled? Please give reasons for your view.

Unit 2: The Axial Age and the Emergence of the New Man

1. Who or what is the New Man? How is he to be distinguished from the primitive man?
2. Why is the New Man unpopular?
3. What is a True Individual?
4. According to the unit, how might the 'axial age' be best characterised?
5. In what way is the New Man creative?
6. Why is the New Man alone?
7. Are there any other leading characteristics of the New Man not mentioned in the unit?
8. Reflect upon the quotation from Artaud, then summarise your reflections.

Unit 3: Art and the Spiritual Life

1. According to the unit, what is art? Do you find this account satisfactory? Explain your response.
2. How is art part of the Higher Evolution?
3. "The enjoyment of great works of art enlarges our own consciousness." Reflect and comment upon this claim.
4. "To the extent that one is an artist of any kind, to that extent one is participating in the higher evolution of man." Comment upon this claim.
5. In what ways is the artist more aware than others?
6. Is Sangharakshita's characterisation of the artist convincing? Explain your answer.
7. What does it mean to say that "The place of religion has been taken by art."?

Unit 4: Buddhism as the Path of the Higher Evolution

1. Give a brief account of the meaning of faith in Buddhism
2. What does it mean to say that Buddhism is pragmatic?
3. Comment upon the criterion given by the Buddha to Mahapajapati for identifying the Dharma. Is it sufficient? Explain your answer.
4. Why does the spiral path begin on the basis of suffering? Why should we "cherish our dissatisfaction"?
5. "The Buddha's teaching is addressed to the minority." How does this remark fit with the supposed universality of Buddhism and the principle of compassion?
6. What is irrational guilt? How might it be differentiated from shame?
7. "Spiritual life, religious life, in fact should be ecstatic." Comment upon this remark.
8. Comment upon the metaphor of Buddhism as a path. Does it work? Does it have any limitations? What other metaphors could be used?
9. Why is the happy person the concentrated person?

Unit 5: Stream Entry: the Point of No Return

1. What is Stream Entry? a) doctrinally, b) principally.
2. Do you see Stream Entry as a realistic goal? What do you think it would feel like?
3. In practical terms, what is the gravitational pull of samsara?

4. What is the gravitational pull of the Unconditioned? How might it be experienced?
5. Give a brief description of the first fetter: 'fixed self-view' together with examples.
6. What is the difference between doubt as a fetter and doubt as a healthy questioning?
7. Identify some examples of the third fetter in your own practice. What is the antidote?

Unit 6: Buddhism, Nietzsche, and the Superman

1. What does it mean to say that 'God is Dead'? Identify some of its implications.
2. What is meant by 'giving style to one's character'? How do we do it?
3. What is the Overman? How does it compare with the Buddhist Ideal?
4. What is meant by 'self-overcoming'? How does this idea relate to Buddhism?
5. In what way might man be seen as a rope?
6. What does the Will to Power mean? How does it compare with the Will to Enlightenment?
7. How do we cultivate dissatisfaction with ourselves? Are there any dangers in this?
8. Why does the 'preparatory man' live dangerously?
9. Describe some of the implications of the 'Global village' for Buddhism.

Unit 7: From Alienated Awareness to Integrated Awareness

1. Why is the higher evolution difficult?
2. Give a brief account of the four grades of consciousness
3. What is alienated awareness? How does it arise?
4. What is integrated awareness? How is it developed?
5. How can we become aware of our psychological conditioning?
6. What is experience without awareness? Give some examples
7. What is awareness without experience? Give some examples
8. How might Buddhism exacerbate alienated awareness?
9. How can we learn to think for ourselves more fully?

Unit 8: Is a Guru Necessary?

1. What do *you* understand by the term guru?

2. Why is a guru not the head of a religious group?
3. Do we have gurus in the FWBO? Do we need them?
4. Is Sangharakshita a guru? Explain your answer
5. What is meant by a) horizontal, b) vertical communication? What is the value of each?
6. How might we overvalue the guru? How might we undervalue him?
7. How should we respond to the apparently unethical behaviour of a guru?
8. Do you think that the guru principle plays a part in modern Western society? Explain your answer
9. Why is it difficult to evolve without a guru?

This material was originally compiled by Nagapriya for the distance-learning version of the Mitra Study Course and has subsequently been edited and updated by Saccanama.