

The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life

Week two

Faith and non-faith

Sangharakshita, *Know Your Mind* pp119-125, pp230-233,

Objectives for Week Two

- Faith as a positive mental event/state
- To be able to differentiate between faith and pleasure
- Understand relationship and difference between devotion and faith
- Faith is neither reason, nor emotion, nor a balance of them
- Understand idea of the imaginal faculty

The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 2.1)

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Faith and non-faith

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Questions

1. Is faith something we can develop? How?
2. Do you experience all aspects of faith: conviction, lucidity, longing? Do any of these aspects need more emphasis in your life? How might you do this?
3. How much do we let pleasure guide our way of life? How do you relate to your experience of the spiritual life when there's no pleasure or gratification?
4. Given that our roots are in a western culture largely devoid of devotion, how comfortable do you feel about expressing your faith through devotion? In what ways might you express devotion to the Ideal?
5. What does it mean to say that 'faith is action, it is ... very weighty karma'? (p125)
6. In what areas (if any) of your practice/spiritual life are there laziness or dullness? Do you know why this might be? Any ways to open up appreciation and understanding of these areas?
7. What might be the difference between an 'understanding' (of the Dharma) and 'right attitudes and expressions and genuine positive feelings about the Dharma and the spiritual life'? (last para p231)
8. What does it mean to have faith in our spiritual friends? What might be the dangers of just wanting friends we associate with pleasure? (p232)
9. How can we 'integrate' the emotions with the intellect? (p.233)

The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 2.2)

Faith and non-faith

Home Practice for following week

- At the end of each day, you could reflect on any experiences of faith that day (as a positive mental event, a volition, a glimmering of something higher, a conviction there's something more). What conditions brought it into more prominence? What were the effect of these actions (of body, speech, mind) based on faith?

Optional further reading for week 2:

1. **On faith** pp146-148, *What is the Dharma?* Sangharakshita
2. **On positive emotions** pp204-205, *Wisdom Beyond Words* Sangharakshita
3. **On faith** pp215-217, *Mahayana Buddhism* Paul Williams
4. **On faith and devotion** pp150-152, *The Buddhist Path to Awakening* Tejananda