

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

**Week four**

## ***The Life and Death of the Imagination***

Booklet by Aloka

### **Objectives for Week Four**

- Appreciate the value of the imagination as a liberating faculty
- See how our experience is purely through the six senses
- Value of the imagination for perceiving the world more metaphorically
- Importance of developing a greater sense of mystery in relation to whatever we experience (ourselves, the world, `other)

# The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 4.1)

Reading for week four:

## **The Life and Death of the Imagination**

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### Questions

1. How does imagination liberate us? Do we want to be liberated from the moment? (p.4) How does this fit with the teaching of being in the moment? What aspects of mindfulness include the past and the future?
2. What do we use our imagination for on a day-to-day level? Is it for what will make us 'feel safe and comfortable out in the big bad world' (p6) or for our highest aspirations? Should we let go of trying to make ourselves feel safe and comfortable?
3. Do we become 'obsessed' by what our desires 'image or create'? (p6)
4. What could we do to develop an even greater sense of mystery? (i.e. to help us realize that what is outside ourselves is unknown, even that we are unknown)
5. What does it mean to relate to our experience 'metaphorically'? In what ways would that be helpful?
6. 'It is surely mad to say that the image of the Buddha's compassion is reflected in the mirror of karmic existence'. (p9) Why would it be mad to say that? What does this sentence mean (by the Fifth Dalai Lama) in this context?
7. Aloka talks about 'active receptivity to otherness'. (p10) How could we be actively receptive to otherness? Any suggestions of how to develop this active receptivity?

## The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 4.2)

### *The Life and Death of the Imagination*

#### Home Practice for following week

Experiment: Look at a tree, the sea, the sky, anything ` Just go out and try and get into some sort of imaginative identification with “it”. Try dropping the label.

#### Optional further reading for week 4:

1. *What is Myth?* Aloka
2. **On imagination as one of the five pillars of the Fwbo**  
<http://www.freebuddhistaudio.com/texts/talks.php> for downloading talk or CD 174  
Sangharakshita
3. **The Diamond Path, Crossing the Stream** Sangharakshita
4. **Journey to Il Convento, *The Priceless Jewel*** Sangharakshita
5. **St Jerome Revisited, *The Priceless Jewel*,** Sangharakshita