

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

Week five

Beauty and the Hierarchy of Art

Sangharakshita, *In the Realm of the Lotus* p47 - 53

'The Making of a New Buddhist Culture' in: Subhuti, *Sangharakshita: A New Voice* p265 – 273

Objectives for Week Five

- Two meanings of 'culture'
- Relationship between culture and the spiritual life
- Understand background (from Sangharakshita's life) of the emphasis placed on the fine arts in the FWBO
- Connection between beauty and selflessness
- Sangharakshita's definition and hierarchy of art

The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 6.1)

Week five

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Questions

Please bring something you consider beautiful (a reproduction of a painting, an image, photo, poem, music)

1. What aspects of our contemporary culture (as in 'totality of ideas and beliefs ...') support your spiritual growth? Are there any aspects you need to beware of?
2. What books, music, art etc. of any culture have been formative in your life? What was it that made them significant for you?
3. Do you think 'beauty' is an important aspect of the spiritual life? If so, in what areas of your life do you express your value of 'beauty'? Are there any areas into which you'd like to bring more beauty?
4. How can we imaginatively identify with nature? How might this alter our actions in relation to it? (p49 ITROTL)
5. 'The more selfless people are, the more possible it becomes to appreciate beauty' (p50 ITROTL) Why would selfishness get in the way of appreciation of beauty? Why would appreciation of beauty help us to be less selfish?
6. Do you agree with Sangharakshita's definition of art? Have you had any experience where you felt in touch with the artist's 'sense of values' which transformed your life? What difference has this made to you?

The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 6.2)

Beauty and the Hierarchy of Art

Home Practice for following week

Draw a Mandala of your life at the moment showing aspects of our broader culture or society (not just the arts) that affect you; those closest to the centre of the Mandala signify a greater influence. Are there things further out in the Mandala that you wish to bring more into your life?

Optional further reading for week 5:

1. **'Beauty on the Spiritual Path'**, pp184-187, *Yogi's Joy* Sangharakshita
2. **On aesthetic appreciation 'The Greater Mandala'** pp186-189 *Wisdom Beyond Words* Sangharakshita
3. **On beauty and appreciation, The snows of the Himalayas** pp473-475 *Facing Mount Kanchenjunga* Sangharakshita
4. **'Pauses and Empty Spaces'**, p95-96 *Crossing the Stream* Sangharakshita
5. **'The Simple Life'**, p91-94 *Crossing the Stream* Sangharakshita
6. **Video *In the Realm of the Lotus*** Sangharakshita in conversation with Olle Mallander