

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

## Week eight

### **Approaching the Sevenfold Puja**

Sangharakshita, *Ritual and Devotion* Chap.3 & 4, pp37 – 50

## Objectives for Week Eight

- Know the origins of the FWBO Sevenfold puja and its relationship to the Buddhist tradition
- Appreciate puja as an expression of our commitment to realization of Buddhahood
- Understand how puja is a collective practice
- Explore Sangharakshita's guidelines for practising puja

# The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 8.1)

## Week eight

### Approaching the Sevenfold Puja

Sangharakshita, *Ritual and Devotion* Chap.3 & 4, pp37 – 50

### Questions:

1. 'When we take part in the puja we should regard it as primordial'. (p.40). What does this mean? How can we understand a puja to be 'a timeless process which is going on throughout the universe'?
2. In what way does the Sevenfold puja pave the way for the arising of the bodhicitta?
3. Do you see the Buddha as representing your innate potential (p43) and/or as existing objectively 'out there'? What experiences have given you faith in the Buddha?
4. Do you think it's possible to continue practising puja without some sort of 'emotional experience'? What benefits would there be of keeping going if our experience is 'quite dry'? Can devotion be 'dry'?
5. Do you 'think' about the Buddha in a puja? What part do the aesthetics have on you during a puja? What might help us bring the Buddha more to mind?
6. Given that our Western society values independence and is primarily a nuclear society, do we make enough of the sense of connectedness with others doing puja? What would help deepen this?
7. p49. 'Perhaps devotional feeling can only develop when surface emotions have subsided'. Why would surface emotions get in the way of devotional feelings? What does Sangharakshita mean by 'supra-personal emotion associated with devotion proper'?

## The Place of Imagination, Beauty, and Ritual in the Spiritual Life (Handout 8.2)

### Approaching the Sevenfold Puja

#### Home Practice

- You might like to follow up Sangharakshita's suggestion of studying the *Bodhicaryavatara*.
- Also you could explore each of the stages of the Sevenfold puja through reading chapters 5 – 13 of *Ritual and Devotion*.

#### Optional further reading for week 8:

1. 'Faith, Devotion, and Ritual' Tejananda pp22-29, in booklet *Puja and the Transformation of the Heart*
2. 'The Bodhisattva Ideal' Vessantara p46-47, in booklet *Puja and the Transformation of the Heart*