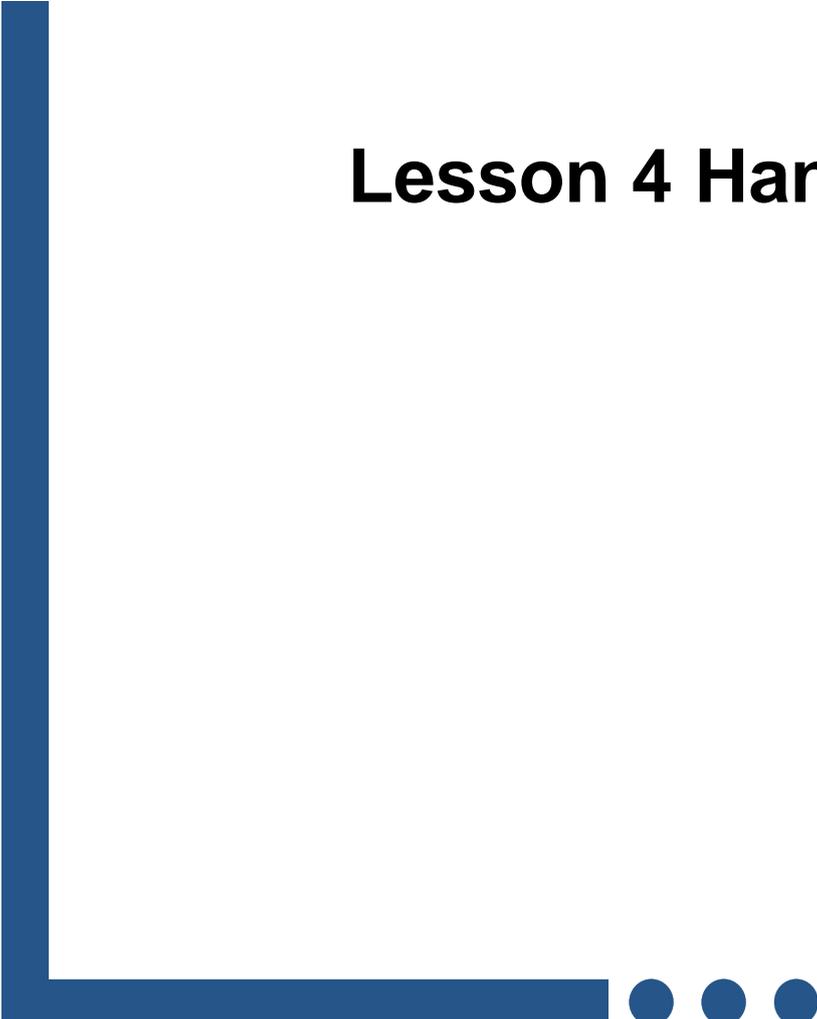




# **University Learning in Schools**

# **RE**

## **Buddhists in the World**



## **Lesson 4 Handouts**

## Sheet 4a: Daily Routine of Monastic Sangha

WHAT DOES THE FOLLOWING TELL YOU ABOUT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE SANGHA AND THE LAITY IN BUDDHISM?

**A typical day in a Theravada monastery would involve rising at around 4.30 am.**

4.30 am Study or meditation

6.30 am Alms-round

7 am Breakfast

8 am Communal chanting

9 am Teaching and instruction

10.30 am Main meal

11.30 am Rest period

12.30 pm Further instruction or ordinations

5 pm Refreshments (drinks only)

5.30 pm Chores or personal free time

7 pm Communal chanting

8 pm Evening administration, study, further chanting or meditation

## Sheet 4b: Buddhist Precepts

ALL Buddhists ABSTAIN (that is, AVOID DOING) from the following Five Precepts:

- HARMING LIVING THINGS
- STEALING
- MISCONDUCT OF THE SENSE-PLEASURES
- LYING OR FALSE SPEECH
- USING INTOXICANTS

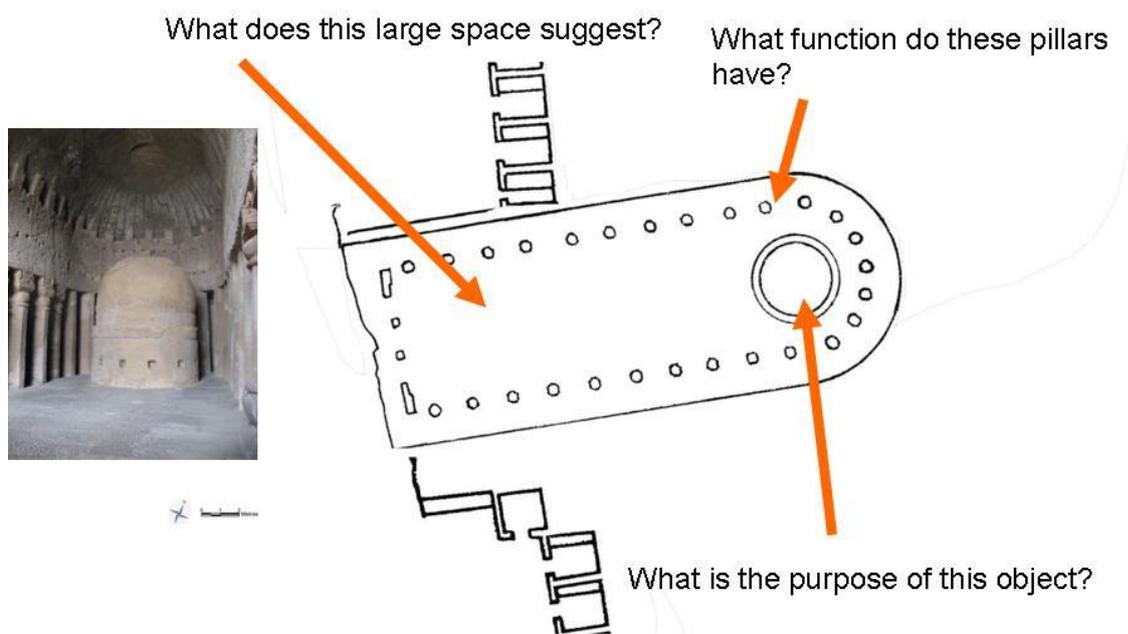
In addition, MONKS living in a community ABSTAIN from these further five, making Ten Precepts also:

- EATING AFTER MIDDAY
- DANCING, SINGING, MUSIC AND SHOWS
- WEARING GARLANDS, SCENTS, COSMETICS AND ADORNMENTS
- LYING IN LUXURIOUS BEDS
- ACCEPTING GOLD AND SILVER

Please note that Theravadin monks observe 200 precepts! Main ones here only!

Sheet 4c

# Chaitya



This is a rock-cut cave in western Indian that was used for meditation around 2000 years ago. What does the plan tell us about how the chaitya hall may have been used for meditation?

**The chaitya hall, tells us that the Buddhist sangha helped Buddhists meditate because .....** (Include discussions on all three pieces of evidence below – some may point to one answer, others may point to a different answer.)

(Clues: What is the stupa? – How does it help the Buddhists to meditate?)

How does the pathway around the outside of the cave link to Vipassana meditation?

What does the large space in front of the stupa show about the community?)

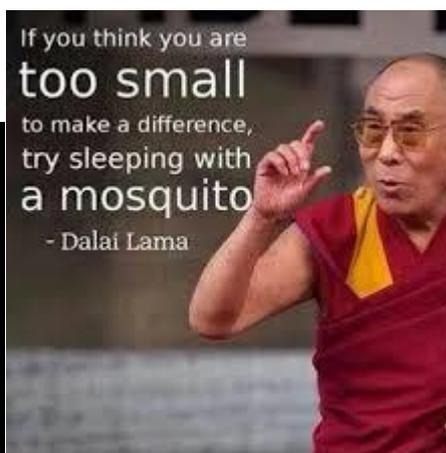
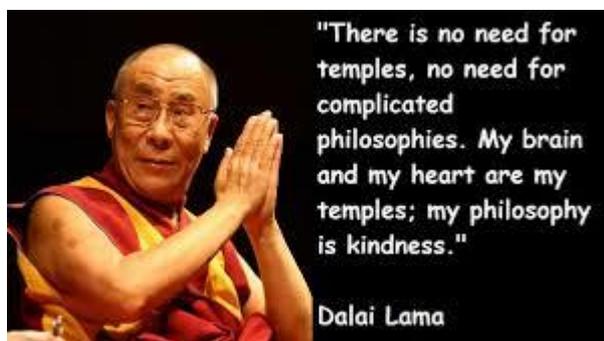
See PowerPoint slide which shows examples of other modern and historical stupas, that are not enclosed in chaityas, but that are also foci of meditation.

Sheet 4d

**EXTRACT FROM BOOK BY THE DALAI LAMA (SPIRITUAL LEADER OF TIBET)**

So far as the conditions of inner peace are concerned, one of the most important is our basic attitude ..... the governing factor is my mental attitude. Our basic outlook, how we relate to external circumstances is thus the first consideration in any discussion on developing inner peace. In this context, the great Indian scholar-practitioner, Shantideva, once observed that whilst we have no hope of finding enough leather to cover the earth so that we never prick our feet on a thorn, we actually do not need this much. He observed that enough leather to cover the soles of our feet will suffice. In other words, whilst we cannot always change our external situation to suit us, we can change our attitude.

*Ancient Wisdom, Modern World: Ethics for a New Millennium* His Holiness the Dalai Lama (Little, Brown and Company: London, 1999) p.62



## 1. Effects on people

The Venerable Ajahn Maha Somchai Kusalacitto says there is a 2-way exchange between the

East and the West.

In Thailand, many are leaving behind Buddhist teachings and practices, in favour of a Western-based life-style.

‘One reason he (Ven. Ajahn Maha Somchai Kusalacitto) favoured such research had to do with the increasing problems he saw in Thailand – the social costs of disturbing emotions as manifest in, for instance, increased rates of child abuse. Scientific studies documenting the benefits of Buddhist practice, he felt, would have an influence in Asian countries, where he feared there was beginning to be a real lack of understanding of the value of Buddhist teachings and practice. As he put it, “The influence from the West will be important in stimulating interest and acceptance of the values of Buddhism. If we Thais do something ourselves, we will tend to ignore it – but we get excited about something that comes from the West.” ’ p. 365 of *Destructive Emotions*

## 2. Destructive Emotions: and how we can overcome them A Dialogue with the Dalai Lama narrated by Daniel Goleman (Bloomsbury: London, 2003)

KQ of book: **Can research prove that ‘a person, through his or her own efforts, can bring about lasting positive changes in brain function that are even more far-reaching than medication in their impact upon emotions?’**

‘And that question, in turn, raises others: for instance, if in fact people can train their minds to overcome destructive emotions, could practical, nonreligious aspects of such training be part of every child’s education? Or could such training in emotional self-management be offered to adults, whether or not they were spiritual seekers?’ (page 4)

**METHODS OF EXPERIMENT** Electrodes were placed on head of a geshe (a monk-practitioner), and brain electrical energy was measured – ‘to see whether, just in his every-day, base-line state, the activity in this region associated with strong positive emotion and a decrease in the amygdala activation was, in fact particularly active.’ Compared with 175 other individuals who had participated in previous experiments, ‘the geshe had the most extreme positive value out of the entire hundred and seventy-five that we had ever tested at that point.’ (page 339)

Richie Davidson, Chair of the Center for Investigating Healthy Minds, and colleagues tested on a number of people who worked for a biotechnology corporation (and therefore subject to severe deadlines/stress). There were 2 groups, consisting of people who had volunteered to use mindfulness meditation practices, and a control group. All participants had their brains measured by EEG to assess base-line. The meditation group were trained by Jon Kabat-Zinn, with a 2-3 hour class each week for 8 weeks, plus a one-day retreat. In addition, each participant was asked to practice for 45 minutes each day. Also, measured by blood sample, the functioning of the immune system was also measured.

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(p. 344) Richie Davidson – ‘I would like to share with you four findings and one observation that came from this study. The first finding was, as you could expect, that the participants in the meditation group reported that their anxiety level went down. Their negative emotions went down and their positive emotions went up compared to the participants in the control group. We very much expected that to happen and other studies have shown that, so it was not a surprise. But we were particularly interested in whether the brain activity changed in the way that we had predicted.’

And in fact: ‘The meditation group showed a significant increase in left-sided activation from before they began.’

‘The stronger the leftward tilt in prefrontal activity, the more positive emotions in their daily life people reported after the meditation training.’

Also, there was a correlation with the immune system. ‘These earlier findings led Richie Davidson to the conjecture that the more positive a person’s disposition, the bigger and better their immune system’s ability to mount an antibody response to a flu vaccine.’

**3. The Dark Night project (investigating whether some people have a bad experience with meditation)**

See [www.MindandLife.org](http://www.MindandLife.org)

“Does it promote good relationships? Does it reduce cortisol? Does it help me work harder?” asks Britton, referencing these more lucrative questions. Because studies have shown that meditation does satisfy such interests, the results, she says, are vigorously reported to the public. “But,” she cautions, “what about when meditation plays a role in creating an experience that then leads to a breakup, a psychotic break, or an inability to focus at work?”

As a trained clinician, it can be hard for Britton to reconcile the visible benefits of contemplative practices with data unearthed through the Dark Night project. More than half of her patients reported positive “life-altering experiences” after a recent eight-week meditation program, for example. But, she says, “while I have appreciation and love for the practices, and for my patients . . . I have all of these other people that have struggled, who are struggling.”

Shinzen Young, a Buddhist meditation teacher popular with young scientists, has summarized his familiarity with dark night experiences. In a 2011 email exchange between himself and a student, which he then posted on his blog, Young presents an explanation of what he means by a “dark night” within the context of Buddhist experience.

*“Almost everyone who gets anywhere with meditation will pass through periods of negative emotion, confusion, [and] disorientation . . . The same can happen in psychotherapy and other growth modalities. I would not refer to these types of experiences as ‘dark night.’ I would reserve the term for a somewhat rarer phenomenon. Within the Buddhist tradition, [this] is sometimes referred to as ‘falling into the Pit of the Void’. It entails an authentic and irreversible insight into Emptiness and No Self. Instead of being empowering and fulfilling . . . it turns into the opposite. In a sense, it’s Enlightenment’s Evil Twin. This is serious but still manageable through intensive . . . guidance under a competent teacher. In some cases, it takes months or even years to fully metabolize, but in my experience the results are almost always highly positive.”*

**FOR WIDER READING:**

RICHARD DAVIDSON'S CURRENT WORK <http://www.investigatinghealthyminds.org>

Exceptional Purposes Project – [www.paulekman.com](http://www.paulekman.com)

Cultivating Emotional Balance – [www.MindandLife.com](http://www.MindandLife.com)

Mark Greenberg's work on helping children with their emotions PATHS (Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies) [www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/papers/CSPV-012.pdf](http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/publications/papers/CSPV-012.pdf)

