



FutureDharmaFund
Supporting Everyday Bodhisattvas

Gratitude and Giving Evenings

for Mitra study groups

Presenter notes

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

What is a Gratitude and Giving evening (GGE)?

The evening is an interactive series of workshops presented by one or two Mitras for their own study group exploring a Buddhist response to suffering, what we've received from meeting the Buddha Dharma and Triratna and our attitudes to gratitude and dana. The evening takes approximately 2 hours, plus tea break. At the end of the evening there is an ask to support Dharma projects worldwide by giving to FutureDharma. Mitras already use a lot of these projects regularly, such as **Free Buddhist Audio**, [The Sikkha Project](#) and [Windhorse Publications](#) and will likely connect with [other Dharma projects](#) and [people](#) across the world who are supported by FutureDharma donors.

Why run a Gratitude and Giving Evening?

To help Mitras explore what their involvement with Triratna has given them, to connect them to the wider International Triratna community and to help fund the vital projects supported by FutureDharma donors.

When to run a GGE in your study group?

In the Mitra study syllabus it's recommended that a GGE follows on from the [What is the Sangha?](#) module, as it builds on the content of that module, but they can be run anytime after the start of the second year until the end of the fourth year and beyond. Study group leaders often position them between modules.

Why are Mitras asked to give at the end of the evening?

An international Buddhist movement like Triratna needs to be resourced financially by those who are benefitting from it. People really appreciate having the opportunity to support something they care about. **The request for money to make Dharma projects happen all over the World is straightforward and it will be made clear that a decision not to give is also ok.** This is also [an exciting opportunity for a Mitra](#) to step up to the challenge of asking others to

support our precious movement and to challenge any wrong views they may hold about money and dana.

How to prepare for the evening?

The Mitra/s presenting the evening are asked to **register here**:

<https://sikkha.online/fundraising-training-registration/>

They will then receive an automated email with a link to the more detailed presenter notes and some short training videos. It's recommended that you then:

- Contact Varabandhu, fundraiser for FutureDharma, and arrange a short meeting on Zoom. Varabandhu will help you prepare for the evening and answer any questions. He works remotely from Dublin, Ireland and the quickest way to reach him is on Whatsapp/Signal: +353-87-6833021. Or email varabandhu@futuredharma.org .
- Download the presenter notes and read these through to familiarise yourself with the basic structure of the evening. Note each section includes notes on the **aim of the section** - this is to aid the presenter's understanding, you don't need to read this bit out.
- Watch the video tutorials — make a note of anything that is helpful.
- Familiarise yourselves with the timings for each section so that you are not left short for the important parts towards the end.

What you'll need to have with you on the evening

- Presenter notes
- Flipchart paper and pens **or** equivalent (e.g. poster sheets and blue tack)
- The projects video(s) downloaded onto your laptop.
- Pledge cards [downloaded](#) and printed out.

Important note

We ask that the GGE materials only be used in the context of Mitra study groups and not at other events (such as Sangha Night). If you wish to fundraise in a different way please contact Varabandhu, as above, and we will be delighted to explore this.

GGE PRESENTER NOTES

Introducing the evening (5 mins)

“ (In your own words) Welcome and thanks for coming along.... This will be an interactive evening exploring the statement, ‘the world needs what you’ve been given, pass it on’.

- During the evening we’ll be discussing the questions
 - “What does the world need now?”
 - “What have we been given? “
 - “How do we pass it on?”
- At the end I’ll ask if you’d like to make a monthly gift to enable Triratna Dharma projects. You aren’t under any obligation to give. Whether you give or not we can look forward to an inspiring evening together. ”

Section 1. What does the world need now? (25 mins)

1a. Discussion on what brought us to Triratna and the effectiveness of being part of a spiritual community (25 min)

Aims (no need to read these out - they are here to help you keep the section focused).

- Connecting to what brought us to the Dharma / Sangha and how we’ve changed as a result.
- Assessing how our responses to suffering in the world has changed
- Exploring whether our practice makes any impact on the issues we care about.

Brainstorm as a group the following questions (you may wish to take questions one by one or throw them all out there at once and see what responses come up - try to ensure everyone gets a chance to contribute).

- **Question 1:** What brought you to the Dharma / Sangha in the first place? Is this still important to you?
- **Question 2:** How have you changed as a result of finding the Three Jewels e.g. your relationship with yourself, with others, with a sense of meaning?

- **Question 3:** Has your way of responding to dukkha in your life and in the world at large changed? In what ways?

In regards to question 3 you may wish to draw out the global effects of our practice which people may not have thought of, for example:

- Our ethical consumer choices influence consumer patterns (e.g. vegetarianism and veganism).
- Our ethical choices affect the environment, both by our own personal use of resources and in influencing organisations environmental practices.
- Our practices of meditation and friendship help address the mental health epidemic — providing tools which help people with their mental health, depression, anxiety or addictions, and the supportive context of community.
- Our practices of friendship, open communication and building an inclusive community can help reduce hatred and prejudice on grounds of race, sexuality, creed and political polarisation.

Summary (in your own words):

““The Buddhist perspective is that suffering comes predominantly from the mind. By working on our minds through Dharma practice we have developed more skilful and effective responses to suffering, which impacts both our personal *and* global spheres of concern””

Section 2. What have we been given? (30 mins)

2a. Led discussion on gratitude (10 mins)

Aims

- Understanding Buddhist idea of gratitude and connecting with this
- Recognising potential blocks to gratitude

““The Buddhist word for gratitude is *katannuta* (pronounced kat-ann-u-ta) *kata* meaning what has been done, especially for oneself, and *annuta* means knowing or recognising. So *katannuta* is knowing or recognising what has been done for our benefit. This includes both the emotional response (feeling) and knowledge of what has been done for us (which requires reflection)””

Q. “We’ve explored how we have changed as a result of encountering the Dharma. So do we feel we have actually been given something valuable?”

Q. “What stops us from recognising our benefits as benefits - and from feeling gratitude?”

- Invite answers/comments - draw out any correlation between group suggestions any the traditional list of reasons below.
- Share from this traditional list (as set out by Bhante in ‘What is the Sanga?’) any reasons which didn’t get suggested in discussion:
 - **Failing to recognise a benefit**
E.g Not recognising the benefit of our education because we didn’t enjoy it
 - **Taking a benefit for granted.**
E.g. Feeling we are owed, or have a right to something
 - **Not recognising other people's contributions**
E.g. Overvaluing self-sufficiency or fear of indebtedness
 - **Forgetfulness.**
E.g. Time can weaken gratitude.

Q. “Does this teaching change your perception of having benefited? How? Does this inspire gratitude?”

2b. Led meditation on gratitude (20 mins)

You can either choose to use the voice recording of Maitrinara leading a Katannuta Bhavana (available from [our resources page](#)) or lead this yourself based on the text below.

Body scan: *getting in touch with the body, noticing the sensations of where we contact the floor and chair — connecting to the sensations / emotion at the heart centre. Does it feel open/closed, tight / relaxed, warm/cool?*

Lead into the four stages, inviting receptivity to changing sensations/vedana in the chest/heart centre (emotional responses). So alternating between the reflection and the response.

First contact with the dharma (beginning of stage): bring to mind a friend that supported us when we were new to the centre, or a teacher that first taught us to meditate or first taught us the dharma. Recalling how their help encouraged us to engage and become more involved.

(End of stage) ... thanking them for their help

A Kalyana Mitra (beginning of stage): bring to mind someone that helps direct or supports our spiritual practice. Someone who has helped us to grow and develop through the Dharma, has passed on that gift to us. Recognising how that gift has transformed our lives, recalling what they have done for you

(End of stage) ... thanking them for their help.

Those who have created Sangha worldwide (beginning of stage): The Buddha, his disciples through the ages, Bhantes teachers, Bhante, his early disciples, and their disciples, all the people that through their practice and efforts have developed the international network of friendships which is Sangha.

(End of stage) ...thanking them for their help.

Finally: just sitting – letting go of effort.

TEA BREAK

(10 min - you might need to return to the next session with tea, depending on time)

Section 3. How can we pass it on?

3a. Presentation: Expressing gratitude (2 mins.)

Aim

- Explore expressing gratitude by giving time and energy.
- Explore attitudes to money and to giving money as a practice.

“In Buddhist practice it is crucial not only that we recognise what we’ve received and feel grateful - but that **we act on this**. We can express our gratitude for the gift of the Dharma in different ways.

1. You can **practise** the Dharma as effectively and sincerely as you can. Your own practice will affect others.
2. Secondly you can **support the collective effort of building Sangha** through time / energy. Sharing time, energy or skills with the collective institutions that create Sangha. Triratna depends upon support for its institutions e.g. volunteering on teams for classes, courses and retreats.
3. The **practice of giving** money. The act of giving is absolutely foundational in Buddhism. Money is a traditional gift for the benefit of sangha building, and is not unspiritual, in fact quite the opposite, what we do with our assets and money is part of our ethical and Dharma life ”.

3b. Exploring our attitude to money (5 mins.)

“Money can be a sensitive and emotive topic. It is often a powerful symbol for all that we yearn for: freedom, security, status, even love. With this kind of significance perhaps it’s no surprise that we are often unwilling to let go of our money. And western culture often encourages us to be quite secretive about our money and our spending. ”

Q. What is your attitude to money? Fear? Scarcity? Abundance? Do you think of it as dirty/unspiritual? Do you hoard it or crave it or just avoid thinking about it?

“Money also can be seen simply as a way of directing our energy to what we value most - savings are then frozen energy that needs to be activated - the money we earn can make important things happen:

Benefiting others: The growth and flourishing of Triratna Dharma projects require money and depend upon people in the Sangha giving money. Only Triratna Buddhists are likely to give to Triratna Buddhist projects, so if we don't fund these Dharma projects then who else will?

Benefiting ourselves: Generous actions loosen self-attachment because they work directly against narrow self-interest, which is the basis of much of our dukkha and our painful sense of isolation from others. We have probably all had that experience of feeling lighter and happier after giving to a cause, or person, that we care about. It is skilful karma which is in line with reality.”

3b. FutureDharma Fund (20 mins)

Aim Introducing and promoting FutureDharma Fund.

“FutureDharma Fund is a Team Based Right Livelihood set up in 2016 to pioneer and strengthen Triratna Sanghas around the world. The idea is that money should never be an obstacle to the growth of our movement which is, in Bhante's words, the nucleus for a new society. Our role is to best serve the intentions of our donors to try to give any person, anywhere in the world, the chance to meet Bhante's presentation of the Buddha Dharma, which we know is so transformative. Grant applications sent to FutureDharma are put through a rigorous evaluation process and are then agreed upon by their Trustees, who are some of our most senior and responsible Order Members in the Triratna Buddhist order.

FutureDharma donors support projects which we all use weekly, such as The Buddhist Centre Online, Free Buddhist Audio and The Sikkha Project (responsible for keeping the Mitra Study syllabus revised and up to date). FutureDharma donors also fund [translations](#) of Bhante's Dharma books, youth projects in [India](#) and Australia, and outlying centres in places like Mexico, Venezuela, Brazil and [Scarborough](#). Our donors have funded Triratna projects in [New Zealand](#) and have helped the establishment of a new Triratna group in [Japan](#) in 2023”

You can now show the projects video or a number of short videos of a project/person that you connect with best to download all videos in advance to avoid Wifi or other technical problems - if playing short videos, total time should be no more than 10mins)

3c. Presentation: To give or not to give. Including a meditative reflection (10 mins)

Aim Encourage people to give if they feel inspired to, but make it clear that it is a genuinely individual decision. So we shouldn't belittle the "no" response, or over emphasise the benefit of the "yes" response.

Making the case for giving

“FutureDharma is not a large faceless charity. It's run by a small number of committed Buddhists just like me and you, who are working together to build our international Sangha and make the Dharma available to more and more people. The reality is that Triratna Dharma projects only happen if people like us give.

“If 500 Mitras across the Triratna world who completed a Gratitude and Giving evening were to commit to give equivalent of 2 hours of their wages, per month then we'd raise up to £300,000 each year to help spread the Dharma.

“Giving this amount may seem like too much of a stretch at first hearing, but you could ask yourself the questions

- “Is how I spend my money in line with my deeper values?”
- “What do I spend my money on that is not as important as this?”

Making the pledge [Important]

“Often when we're asked to give we say “I'll think about it” which usually ends up being a default “no” because life takes over and we lose touch with the generous impulse (remember the blocks to katannuta). It's fine to decide not to give to FutureDharma today - or if you really do want more time to think about it - but please make that **a conscious decision**. Please don't give for the sake of approval of others here — remember Bhante's teaching on being an Individual. **Give because you want to!**

Giving reflection

“ There is now an opportunity to take part in a short reflection to help you make a conscious decision about whether to give now or not.

- So, closing your eyes...Sit and see what thoughts / feelings / images arise in response to what you've heard and discussed tonight & to the request to give a monthly gift.
- Observe any 'Yes' response and how that feels.
- Notice if there is a 'No' and any associated thoughts e.g. 'I can't afford it right now', 'I give so much already', 'the money won't be used effectively'. Notice how that feels.
- Go back to the 'Yes'.
- Now the 'No'.
- Hold both together.....and come to a decision. ”

3d. Filling out the pledge forms or facilitating donations (5 min)

Aim

- Facilitate people who want to give using pledge forms **or**
- Provide a laptop open to facilitate those who want to set up their gift there and then.

Option 1 - Pledge forms and pens.

Pledge forms allow donors to express their intention to give without having to fill out their bank details on the night. You may have received pledge forms in advance. If not they can be [downloaded from the support page](#) and printed off in advance.

Let everybody know that you've been liaising with **Varabandhu from FutureDharma** and that he will follow up with anyone who has pledged a gift or asked to stay in touch to thank them and/or explain how to set up their gift.

Please ask that people **fill out the pledge forms legibly (ideally in capital letters)** and give them back to you before they leave. Stay around to address any confusion or queries regarding filling out of the forms and explanation of where the pledge forms go and how they will be replied to.

Option 2 - Having a laptop ready for setting up donations

Open the page <https://futuresharma.org/appeal-page/> on your laptop or phone/tablet for your Mitra friends to set up their monthly gift. You could also send this address to your friends' phones so that they can make the donation straight from their own device (if you do this, invite them to tell you they will be giving so Varabandhu can thank them later and so we know the donations came from your GGE).

Thanking your fellow Mitras and study group leader/s.

At this point your study group leader may want to get feedback from people in the group about their response to the evening, and hear from you about how it was preparing and delivering the GGE.

When the evening is over ...

- If you have collected pledge forms then as soon as possible, after the evening is over, photograph the pledge forms and send the photos to Varabandhu (You can send them via WhatsApp/Signal on +353876833021 or email them to varabandhu@futuresharma.org)
- Varabandhu will then contact supporters directly to provide instructions on how to activate their pledge. Once you've sent the forms and their receipt has been acknowledged by Varabandhu (and he has no questions about illegible handwriting), then please destroy the pledge forms.

Let us know how you got on - Please contact Varabandhu (varabandhu@futuresharma.org) and let him know how you got on.

THANK YOU!