



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)?

As an optional evening in the Dharma Training Course, the GGE is led by a mitra for their group. A series of interactive reflections allow the group to explore a Buddhist response to suffering, how they've benefited from contact with Triratna and how gratitude and generosity are skilful states which support one another. At the end of the evening there is an ask to support Dharma projects worldwide by donating to Future Dharma. Mitras already regularly use a lot of these projects, such as Free Buddhist Audio, [Windhorse Publications](#), and the Dharma Training Course material (provided by [The Sikkha Project](#)). Mitras will also likely connect with other Dharma projects and [people](#) across the world who are supported by Future Dharma donors.

Why run a Gratitude and Giving Evening?

1. Inspiration! GGEs connect mitras to a bigger vision - the wider international Triratna community.
2. Kusala karma. Gratitude is a skilful and inspiring mental state. The GGE format invites mitras to explore how we've benefited from finding the dharma & Triratna.
3. An altruistic dimension. To continue to grow so that more and more people can benefit from Sangharakshita's teaching Triratna needs to be resourced financially by those who are benefitting from it - us. The GGE makes it clear that Triratna is built on dana and invites mitras to be a part of that dana economy to whatever degree that they can.
4. Activating a flow of abundance. Awakening gratitude and generosity can inspire mitras to do more to support their local centre/group as well as the wider movement.

When to run a GGE in your study group?

A GGE can be run anytime after the start of the second year of the Dharma training course. As it draws on Sangharakshita's lecture on gratitude from [What is the Sangha?](#) it follows well from this module but it will sit perfectly fine alongside most other modules. It runs best as an evening in itself, situated between the final week of a module and the week of projects.

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

Triratna thrives on dana through us all giving time, energy and money. While some people may find it uncomfortable to ask fellow mitras to donate money, most people appreciate having the opportunity to support something they care about. Giving in this way is beneficial to both the giver and the receiver (the Dharma projects being funded) and this is a straightforward request for money in order to make Dharma projects happen all over the world. It will be made clear that it's ok to decide not to give. The GGE is also [an exciting opportunity](#) for a mitra to take on responsibility and step up to the challenge of asking others to give money, with lots of guidance and support from Varabandhu at Future Dharma available before and after the event.

How to prepare for the evening?

- Firstly **please contact [Varabandhu](#)** from FutureDharma to let him know you're interested in the GGE. You can reach him on Whatsapp/Signal: [+353-876833021](#) or by email varabandhu@futuredharma.org
- Varabandhu will provide you with a link to **a page of resources** for preparing for the evening. Read through the presenter notes on this page to familiarise yourself with the basic structure of the evening. Each section includes notes on the **aim of the section** - this is to aid the presenter's understanding - you don't need to read these bits out.
- Watch the video tutorials and make a note of anything that is helpful or any questions.
- Familiarise yourselves with the timings for each section so that you you don't end up rushing through the equally important parts towards the end.
- **Arrange a call with Varabandhu** well in advance of the GGE to explore the various sections of the GGE and to address any concerns or questions you may have.

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

- Presenter notes
- Projects video(s) downloaded onto your laptop
- Pledge cards - provided by Future Dharma
- (Optional) Flipchart paper and pens **or** equivalent (e.g. poster sheets and blue tack)

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? (20 mins)

1a. Discussion on what brought us to Triratna and the effectiveness of being part of a spiritual community (20 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 - alternatively give people a minute to silently reflect on each question in turn before asking them to share responses). You can use a flipchart if you like to collect the responses.

- **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. Exploration of *katannuta* (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 - you can write these up on a flipchart if you like.
- Draw out any correlations between group suggestions and the traditional list of reasons below.
- Share (on flipchart?) 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 use the voice recording of Maitrinara leading a Katannuta Bhavana (available from [our resources page](#)) or you can lead it 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) ... thank 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) ... thank them for their help.

Those who have created Sangha worldwide (beginning of stage): The Buddha, his disciples through the ages, Bhante Sangharakshita's teachers, Sangharakshita, 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) ...thank 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, if you are running behind schedule)

Section 3. How can we pass it on? (50 mins - covers all of second half)

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 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. It is not unspiritual and what we do with our assets and money is part of our ethical and Dharma life. ”

3b. Exploring our attitude to money (8 mins)

Training tip: If you have time beforehand take a look at these [money archetypes](#) - you could even do the short quiz to find out what your archetype is.

“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?

Give 3 to 4 minutes for some responses but there may not be time for everyone to share here.

“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 depends 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. The vital role of Future Dharma (20 mins including videos)

Aim Introducing and promoting Future Dharma - one way of doing this is to ask people to raise their hands if they have ever used Free Buddhist Audio or TBCO or read a Windhorse book (see 2nd par below)

“Future Dharma was set up in 2016 to pioneer and strengthen Triratna Sanghas around the world. Their mission is to help support conditions all over the world so that more and more people can have the chance to meet Sangharakshita's presentation of the Buddha Dharma, which we know from our own lives is so transformative. Applications for grants sent to Future Dharma are put through a rigorous evaluation process and are then agreed upon by their Trustees, who are some of our most senior Order Members in the Triratna Buddhist order.

Future Dharma donors support projects which we all use, such as The Buddhist Centre Online, Free Buddhist Audio and The Sikkha Project (responsible for revising and updating the Dharma Training Course we use every week). Future Dharma donors also fund [translations](#) of Bhante's Dharma books, youth projects in [India](#) and Australia, and 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. It's best to download all videos in advance to avoid Wifi or other technical problems - if you need help with this please ask Varabandhu. If playing a number of short videos, total time should be no more than 10mins. If there is time, invite people to share comments or ask questions - but please make sure you **leave at least 15 minutes for the parts to follow.**

3c. Presentation: To give or not to give (10 mins)

Aim Encourage people to give if they feel inspired to, making it clear that it is a genuinely individual decision.

Training tips *Take a moment to check in with how you're feeling as you prepare to ask people for help. Connect with your body, feet on the ground. Notice your breathe. Notice emotions or thoughts and see if you can breath into them. Try to stay connected with your body for the rest of this section.*

Making the case for giving

“Hopefully now you have a sense of the vital role Future Dharma donors play in supporting our movement across the world. **You can play your part too. Can you give a regular gift to help pass on the benefits of what we've received to others? Can you give a monthly gift?**

Training *PAUSE - GIVE 15 SECONDS FOR THIS TO SINK IN - FIND YOUR BREATHE*

“Could you give the equivalent of one or two hours of your income each month?

- How much would that be for you?
- 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?”

Training *PAUSE AGAIN. ARE YOU IN TOUCH WITH YOUR INSPIRATION?*

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 we looked at. It’s fine to decide not to give to Future Dharma today - or if you really do want more time to think about it - but please make that **a conscious decision**. And please don’t give for the sake of approval of others here. **Give because you want to.**

Giving reflection - allow 20 seconds for each step

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

- So, closing your eyes...connect with our body, and notice any thoughts / feelings / images arising 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.
- Observe any ‘No’ response and any ‘No’ 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’.
- Go back to the ‘No’.
- Hold both together.....and now come to a conscious decision. ”

3d. Filling out the pledge forms or facilitating donations (5 to 10 mins)

Aim

- Facilitate people who want to give using pledge cards/forms or a laptop

Option 1 - Pledge cards and pens.

Pledge cards allow donors to express their intention to give without having to fill out their bank details on the night. Varabandhu may have sent out professionally printed pledge cards out to you but if not a sheet of pledge forms can be [downloaded from the support page](#) and printed off in advance.

“I’ve left a pledge card and a pen with each of you - this isn’t to assume you will give. It’s to make it easier to capture your intention to give if you do intend to give. If that is the case please fill out the card in very clear neat hand writing as somebody will need to be able to read it later. I will give the cards to Varabandhu from Future Dharma and 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. ”

*It’s good to have a **dana bowl** for people to drop the cards into. Otherwise ask people to give them to you. 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://futuredharma.org/give/> on your laptop or phone/tablet for your mitra friends to set up their 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, ask them to tell you they will be giving so Varabandhu can thank them later and so we check the donations coming in).

End the evening by thanking your fellow mitras and the group leader/s. Take in any gratitude expressed for your efforts in making it an inspiring evening of practice.

When the evening is finished ...

- If people have completed pledge cards please photograph these (4 cards to a photo works well) and **send the images to Varabandhu as soon as possible** ([WhatsApp](#)/Signal on +353876833021 is best but you can also email them to varabandu@futuredharma.org). Please send these the next morning if possible (it's important that we honour people's wish to practice dana by following up with them while they are still in connection with their inspiration).
- Varabandhu will contact supporters directly to provide instructions on how to follow through on their pledge. Give Varabandhu a week to follow up and check for any bounced emails because of mis-read handwriting before destroying the pledge cards. You should then carefully **destroy and discard the pledge cards** as they will likely contain personal information.
- **Finally, please let us know how you got on** - Text or email Varabandhu to tell him how it went for you and share anything you learned.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR EFFORTS