

Preface

I have run these Speakers' classes on three Men's Ordination Courses over the last ten years. They have been appreciated as a step towards gaining more confidence in what has been said to be the most frightening of human endeavours: standing up in front of a group of people and opening one's mouth. That then is the purpose of these classes: to develop confidence. Confidence in who one is, and what one has to say, I believe, is 80% of what makes for a good speaker. Everyone has something worth saying. It is a matter of being relaxed enough to say it.

At the same time, the details of technique, delivery and so forth very definitely do make a difference, and yet, I believe, are picked up much more easily 'on the hoof,' so to speak, rather than through reading about such things. What's important is to get lots of practice whilst learning from our mistakes. But, if we are too frightened to even start practising, then no amount of good advice will help.

In making these talks available in booklet form, I hope that Going for Refuge groups, and even Chapters, will take time to have a bit of fun, which is my over-riding impression of the experience of those who have participated in these classes.

Cittapala
Padmaloka Spring '96



PWP

POSITIVE CRITICAL FEEDBACK

Each participant of the group should keep a separate sheet of comments and observations made on himself by other members of the group and also his own impressions of his own progress. In addition each participant should keep another separate sheet on each of the other group members for the purpose of recording critical feedback of observations made during the sessions. A suggestion of the sort of areas that should be covered is made below.

Often, unfortunately, there will not be time actually within the session to relay these observations, but hopefully participants will do so outside of the sessions.

DELIVERY STYLE

- a) physical mannerisms?
- b) speed of delivery - pace?
- c) Voice: pitch & tone?
 - rhythm & modulation?
 - interest - monotonous / varied?
 - Intelligibility, pronunciation and accent?
 - mannerisms?
 - Volume?
- d) Connection with material?
- e) Overall impression of speaker and content during and after talk?

CONTENT

- a) logical - linear or associative thinking?
- b) feeling-tone?
- c) conceptual - non-conceptual?
- d) use of allegory, story, anecdote etc.?
- e) Miccha ditthis or mistakes?
- f) Relevance and usefulness?
- e) Affability, warmth?

ORGANISATION AND PRESENTATION OF CONTENT

- a) construction ? Beginning / Middle / End?
- b) Introduction - lead in?
- c) Conclusion?
- d) Main points?
- e) Sign posting?
- f) Emphases - light/shade - complementarity?
- g) Sequencing of Argument, main points?
- h) Red Herrings, Padding?
- i) Use of constructive Repetition?

SESSION ONE

The object of the session is to get as much experience of simply talking as the time allows and to foster confidence in speaking and thinking on one's feet in front of others in this semi-'formal' situation. Hence the titles are simple and hopefully designed to be such that you will have no difficulty in having something to talk about. Although participants should start to make notes about each other's delivery (see guidelines) there should be no critical feedback actually given until the end. Critical feedback can be given if there is time or outside the group, and only then with the mutual agreement of participants.

These are 5 minute impromptu talks to be taken turn and turn about in a continuous cycle - each person doing four talks (groups of 4 will have to go over the hour i.e. using topics 13-16). You should keep talking for the full 5 minutes. Each talk should be started as soon as the title has been read (Titles should be covered up by folding the sheet in half). When the five minutes is up, given by a hand signal from one of the other participants, the speaker should conclude immediately, and be replaced asap by the next speaker. Speakers should not use a watch in this session, but concentrate on maintaining a continuity of delivery.

1. A SPORT or HOBBY I ENJOY or HAVE ENJOYED
2. A RECENT HOLIDAY or TRIP ABROAD
3. WHAT I WAS DOING FIVE YEARS AGO
4. HOW I TRAVEL TO WORK EACH DAY
5. WHY I DO or DO NOT KEEP FIT?
6. MY FAMILY
7. A BOOK THAT I COULD RECOMMEND
8. ART THAT I HAVE ENJOYED
9. MY FWBO CENTRE AND/OR RIGHT LIVELIHOOD
10. HOW I FEEL ABOUT BUDDHIST NAMES
11. WHICH BUDDHAS OR BODHISATTVAS I AM DRAWN TO
12. WHY I AM A BUDDHIST
13. WHY I AM A BUDDHIST
14. WHY I AM A BUDDHIST
15. WHY I AM A BUDDHIST
16. THE RIGHT CONDITIONS FOR PRACTICE

SESSION TWO

The objects of this session, as in Session One, are to help build confidence in talking, and to gradually start to extend the time period, each set of exercises lasting for a longer time. Each of the three exercises should be approached in the same way as Session One i.e. turn & turn about, with the speaker winding up as soon as their time is up. In addition, speakers should try working with a watch, as well as being given two hand signals: the first as warning thirty seconds before their time is up, so that they can try to wind up more cleanly, and second as time up signal. - Don't forget to make notes regarding your own & the others' delivery.

Exercise One: 5 Minutes. Simply tell the Story with as many vivid images as you can.

1. Describe Siddhartha's Four sights.
2. Kisa Gotami & her dead child
3. Mila.repa and the towers
4. The parable of the Raft

Exercise Two: 7 minutes

1. The significance of Sarana Gamana
2. Who or What is a Bodhisattva?
3. Why mindfulness is the Way to the Immortal
4. What is Right Livelihood?

Exercise Three: 8 minutes

1. Habit, Superficiality and Vagueness.
2. Hedonism or Asceticism?
3. Impermanence.
4. Is Buddhism escapist?

SESSION 3

The objects of this session are the same as in Session 2. In addition, please take note of the particular emphasis of each exercise, on which you should try to focus as a way of developing that particular facility. Please take care to use a watch as the ability to time-keep for yourself is an integral part in the build up towards being able to speak from short notes. Hand signals are still to be given as warnings thirty seconds before time is up, so that speakers can try to wind up more cleanly. If you have time and the mutual inclination, please give each other feed-back. This can be a very useful way of learning.

Exercise One - 5 minutes: Concentrate on telling the story, conjuring up the images, getting them to live in the minds of your audience.

1. The Night of the Buddha's Enlightenment
2. The Night of Siddhartha's Going forth
3. A Case of Dysentery
4. Meghiya (or some other story from the suttas)

Exercise Two - 7 minutes: Find a metaphor or set of images to which you can relate your topic. Work the metaphors, images etc. Make your points through them.

1. The importance of Friendship
2. Does Buddhism encourage blind faith?
3. How is myth, symbol etc. important?
4. Buddhism starts with Dukkha

Exercise Three - 8 minutes: Illustrate the basic point with as many examples from your own experience as possible.

1. More & more of less & less.
2. If your work is not your meditation, then your meditation is not meditation.
3. You cannot be a Buddhist unless you are free not to be a Buddhist.
4. No psychological solutions for psychological problems

SESSION 4

This session follows exactly the same format as Session 3 by way of consolidating ground made so far. As before, please take note of the particular emphasis of each exercise, on which you should try to focus as a way of developing that particular facility - remember that you are speaking to each other in this particular situation as you are now; do not adopt a 'role'. Please take care to use a watch as the ability to time-keep for yourself is an integral part in the build up towards being able to speak from short notes. Hand signals are still to be given as warnings thirty seconds before time is up, so that speakers can try to wind up more cleanly.

Exercise One - 5 minutes: Concentrate on telling the story or conjuring up the images you choose to depict, getting them to live in the minds of your audience - keep the conceptual material to a minimum - paint the picture.

1. The Human Realm.
2. The Deva & Brahma Realms.
3. Nanda & the Dove-footed Nymphs.
4. The Parinibbana

Exercise Two - 7 minutes: In discussing your subject try to find metaphors or set of images through which you can make your points. Work the metaphors, images etc. - see how far you can push them.

1. The significance of creating the Right Conditions
2. The Higher Evolution.
3. Samatha & Vipassana.
4. The Middle Way

Exercise Three - 8 minutes: Discuss the basic theme drawing on as many examples from your own experience as possible.

1. Why Vegetarianism & Veganism?
2. The place of sex in spiritual life.
3. One should be useful but only within the context of complete uselessness.
4. The Buddhist view of Death & Rebirth

SESSION FIVE

The object of this exercise is like the previous two sessions to develop confidence. In addition a chance to briefly make a plan and use notes is introduced.

Exercise One is an eight minute impromptu talk in the established style of proceedings.

Exercise Two: Apportion the titles between the participants. Then during a five minute period all the participants should make brief outline plans, which may be used as notes during the ensuing round of 10 minute talks which should follow immediately after the preparation period. Outline plans will be more helpful if you initially concentrate on a structure e.g.: Between two to four main points briefly outlined in sequence, with a beginning and conclusion. Then if there is time left, some reminders for subsidiary points, anecdotes, red herrings etc.

As in previous sessions, two hand signals should be given, the first 30 seconds before time is up, and one at time up. The speaker should sit down as soon after the second hand has gone up as possible. Speakers should try to get used to using a watch, and finishing within the time period.

Exercise One: To be given as to Newcomers; watch out for using terms that will be unfamiliar to such people - make sure you give simple clear definitions. Try to find an image or set of images which will convey your central message. Keep it simple.

1. What meditation can do for you
2. Is Buddhism a religion ?
3. What is the FWBO?
4. An introduction to Buddhist Ethics

Exercise Two: To be given as to people who are familiar with the subject. There is no need to be 'original', but on the other hand try to speak from your own experience, make real genuine contact with your audience and don't jargonise.

1. Conditions for the stability of the Order
2. Relationships
3. The Taking of Initiative and the FWBO
4. Breadth & Depth

SESSION SIX

This session is in outline a repeat of the previous session. Please ensure that you are working with your watches - give people feedback on this as well as generally taking notes on each others talks and feeding back your comments to them. As before use the 30 second before time up hand signal convention. This is the last exercise we will be using this.

Exercise One: 8 minute Impromptu talks: Speakers should take the statements at their face value, and do all they can to convince their listeners of the 'truth' of the statements. Try to imagine you are a disaffected Friend who is getting something of his chest. This will require a little 'acting': avoid downright unskilful states of mind, and speech, and yet at the same time get 'inside' the psychology of your 'role', giving expression to their point of view.

1. All religions aim at the same goal: giving people an excuse to not face up to life.
2. People in the FWBO are arrogantly intolerant of other Buddhists - they should address themselves to cooperating with the larger Buddhist Sangha.
3. The fact that there are fewer Women Order members than Male Order Members demonstrates the innate misogyny of the WBO's approach e.g. single sex activities.
4. The FWBO is far too urban-orientated. Meditation is the real heart of spiritual practice. If people really want to make progress then they should spend their time living in a place like Vajraloka.

Exercise Two: - Ten minute prepared talks: Everyone now has a five minute period to prepare the case against the statements they have just heard in Exercise 1. It is not necessary to imagine that you are ONLY replying to the particular argument used in Ex.1. As far as possible you should try to get to the real truth of the matter; avoid pure rhetoric, ensure that you stick with facts, and eschew 'emotive' language. Each participant should move on one place so that they are 'replying' to a different topic to the one they 'argued' in Ex.1. As before in preparing your notes concentrate on the outline structure: An introduction, 3-4 main points and conclusion. If there is any time left over you can flesh out each of these with examples, preferably personal, images, metaphors etc.

SESSION SEVEN

The object of this session is to build on the preceding two.

Exercise One: 5 minute impromptu: Concentrate on using images, metaphors, preferably illustrating your points from your own experience.

1. Regular & Irregular steps
2. Dukkha
3. Prajna
4. Karuna

Exercise Two: 13 minute prepared talks: Everyone has a 5 minute period to make notes. Remember you are still just talking to each other in this current situation. Concentrate on developing a good introduction and conclusion to your talk. You will not be given a warning signal for time up, but simply told that your time is up. Also concentrate on making just a few key points, and making sure that you illustrate them with as many examples as possible from your own experience and by way of images.

1. Virya
2. Kshanti
3. Samadhi
4. Sila

SESSION 8

The object of this session is to consolidate on the last.

Exercise One: Group story telling: each speaker has 3 minutes in which to continue the story below, as received from the previous speaker. Concentrate as before in keeping your audience's attention by conveying the images, painting a picture, creating an atmosphere. The story line is unimportant - just let it emerge naturally from the images. The story should pass round the group twice so that each speaker has had two turns.

The Story: "Once upon a time there were a pair of Nike Trainers....."

Exercise Two: Imagine you are about to take a a discussion group of 'intermediate' Friends on their first 'mixed' week-end retreat. There has been some rumblings in the corridors, and you hope by giving a small talk before the group starts to bringing some of the issues (see subject below) out into the open for debate to clear the air. You have 5 minutes to prepare just during the tea-break. Each talk should be between 12-13 minutes. [no hand signals - just tell them to "get off!"]

1. 'Come on be realistic! What's the point in loving your enemies?'
2. 'Puja is mumbo-jumbo - even a dangerous manipulation of the gullible. Why does an otherwise sensible FWBO do it?'
3. 'Everyone is equal. What's all this business about spiritual hierarchy? Is the FWBO a cult?'
4. 'Community living looks like a refusal to take responsibility for one's life'

SESSION NINE

This session will continue to extend our ability to speak from quickly prepared notes, using the example of working in the context of a symposia. This will require a degree of cooperation, adaptability and listening skills between speakers. The symposia is to be given to a young audience (16-18 yrs.) which will require an approach of straightforwardness, clarity, simple language and sentence construction with the minimum of jargon and lack of assumptions of previous knowledge. Concentrate on making a few key points, emphasising them, using everyday examples from your personal experience and providing a 'way-in' to your theme that will generate interest.

The exercise consists sharing with your fellow participants the taking of a class for a sixth form Religious Studies Class on Buddhism at the local grammar school just around the corner from the new Cardiff Buddhist Centre. The 3/4 of you find yourself in this position at short notice by virtue of the Chairman, who was originally going to take the Class on his own, being taken ill on the same morning. As you all happen to be free that morning you decide to collectively give a series of short talks - a symposia. You have 15 minutes, before the Class starts, to discuss your approach amongst each other, bringing to mind as clearly as possible the nature of your audience, and for each to make his own individual notes for his 15 minute slot in the symposia. Obviously continuity of material is important, and the first speaker must provide a suitable introduction and the last a fitting conclusion. You have 50 minutes* - and no longer! to give the Symposia in because the Class is only 55 [*70] minutes long, and the students will have to go onto their next lesson of studies. [*:65 minutes for groups of 4]

1. What do Buddhists believe?
2. What do Buddhists do?
3. What is meditation?
- 4*.How do Buddhists make a living?

HOMEWORK!

Outside of the class, prepare a '20 minute talk' with NO MORE THAN 20 minutes preparation, to be given at the next speakers' class. The talk is to be given to a Open class of Newcomers at your own Centre.

Each one of you should take a different title.

1. The Five Hindrances
2. Puja?
3. Where Buddhism begins & Why?
4. Why go on Retreat?

SESSION TEN

Exercise One: Give the prepared talks from your homework sessions:

A 20 minute talk, prepared in NO MORE THAN 20 minutes

The talk is to be given to a Open class of Newcomers.

1. The Five Hindrances
2. Puja?
3. Where Buddhism begins & Why?
4. Why go on Retreat?

SESSION 11

From now on for until the end of the Speakers Classes, I would like you to concentrate even more particularly on developing your capacity to convey images successfully. Use the opportunity of these next sessions to concentrate on this. Take risks, and do not worry if you run dry. The point is to try to stretch yourself in an area which is all too easily not developed in the actual class situation because this being usually most people's weakness, we are not confident enough to explore it in public.

Exercise One: 3 minute impromptu - 2 times around the group. Employ your descriptive powers to their highest capacity, eschew the conceptual:

1. Thunderstorm
2. Guhyaloka
3. Sunsets
4. London Rush-hour
5. My idea of a Pureland
6. Wishing-lamp with Genii
7. Flying
8. My favourite sport

Exercise Two: 5 minute preparation period for following topics in 10 minute talks. No prizes for abstract conceptual material - concentrate on description, story-telling & where possible personal anecdote to underline particular points:

1. The Parable of the Burning House
2. Milarepa & the Towers
3. Siddhartha's Going Forth
4. Padmasambhava meets the King of Tibet

HOMEWORK for Session 12:

Please prepare a 20 minute talk for the next session in the following manner - the writing of actual notes used during the talk should be done within **no more** than a quarter of an hour's preparation period. The title of your talk is to take one incident from the life of the Buddha or some other Buddhist figure. Outside of the preparation time, preferably before you write the notes, spend your spare time reflecting, contemplating on the incident. Especially try to bring to mind the incident in pictorial terms, imagining as vividly as possible the various scenes, complete with fine detail; the object being to experience as strongly as possible the incident for yourself in imagination so that you can use this as a basis to convey the incident in the talk. The main point of your talk in the next session should be on creating images that hold your audience's attention, creating an atmosphere within which those images can live. Again, no gold stars for brilliant abstract conceptual analysis - in fact as little of that as possible please.

SESSION 12

Give the 20 minute talk which you have prepared on an incident from the life of the Buddha or some other Buddhist figure. Especially try to bring to your audience's minds the incident in pictorial terms so that they can imagine the scene as vividly as possible, complete with fine detail. The main point of your talk being through creating images to hold your audience's attention, creating an atmosphere within which those images can live. Remember there are no gold stars for brilliant conceptual analysis - in fact as little of that as possible please.