

4 – Chairing Council Meetings

Inner level

talk about it in terms of the ethical & psychological aspects

about: training our mind / training our behaviour

meeting with Order members is an aspect of our total training

Think of the meeting as a spiritual practice

think of council meeting as a spiritual practice

think of it as a kind of sadhana

not aware of traditional teachings on this practice

stimulus for this course:

Like sweeping the shrine & arranging the flowers

when preparing for meditation / puja

→ exemplification

one of the means of unification - *Samgrahavastus*

→ *samanarthata*

creating a kindly atmosphere

maitri again!

you as chair have the decisive influence here

your communication will set the tone for the meeting

make sure your heart is in the right place

if it is you don't need to worry too much

you'll naturally want to communicate

others will want to communicate with you!

You could put your council in your metta bhavana when you are doing your morning meditation

Or, all chanting the mantra of your yidam

kindly speech – *priyavadita* – another of the *samgrahavastus*

communication is a two way thing

speaking *and* listening

other side of kindly speech is *sympathetic listening*

demonstrate that you have heard the person

go out of your way

make it explicit

people may have a history of being ignored

or not taken seriously

people need reassurance

e.g. *'Can I just check that I've heard you right?'*

make sure that people have been heard by *other* council members

council members need to hear *each other*

e.g. *'I'm not sure you've heard what she was saying just now!'*

invite people to speak

draw people out

check that everyone's views have been heard

e.g.

'how do you feel about what has been said so far?'

'how does that land with you?'

notice who has been speaking and who hasn't

especially the 'go round'

sometimes the people with the least amount to say make the most relevant points

they might not think much of them themselves

and vice versa!

Some people might need reigning in to make space for others

'I think we've got your point now and we need to move on'

You can summarise what they are saying so they know they've been heard

awareness of your own character

how people hear you

how you come across to others

e.g. I come across much stronger than it feels to me

more bossy

'why is everyone reacting to me?'

I need to preface what I say with qualification e.g. 'just an idea'

awareness of other people's character

e.g. not everyone can think fast

'shouldn't confuse quickness of thought with soundness of thought'

some people need to think out loud

others don't

people have different tolerances for risk

risk is always there

not allowing the risk averse to stymie consensus decision-making

e.g. freedom of Covid

you can't know how it's going to work out

sometimes the conversation is not about what it's about

there is a subtext / undercurrent

listen very deeply

what's the real issue here?

e.g. it might be status

someone wants to be the top dog

interpersonal dynamics

how we relate to each other

brings up all sorts of forces

can become unworkable

name it as such when that is happening

not harmony *at all costs*

the cost might be to you personally!

say: *are you okay?*

don't argue, discuss!

Hear from Bhante

Fifteen Points for Old and New Order Members – 1993

https://youtu.be/-zOd2bff_ko

What's the difference between arguing and discussing?

when you get into an argument, what you are concerned with is to win, whereas the aim of discussion is to find out the truth of the matter cooperatively.

You're not thinking in competitive terms.

You're not trying to beat or confuse or confute the other person.

You're just trying to get at the truth of the matter, or at least trying to understand it.

what starts off as a genuine discussion can become an argument.

Be alert,

especially one about a subject on which you and the other person or people concerned have strong feelings

you might need to referee!

the Power Mode can be Subtle

not necessarily out and out bullying or making threats

i. conquest through argument

we might be clever with words

nothing wrong with that

highly valuable skill

however, we can use that to unfair advantage

over someone who is less articulate but who may have a good point to make

or a reasonable question to ask

ii. emotional manipulation

council members will in most cases be our friends

they might even be our husband or wife!

withdrawal of affection

give someone the cold shoulder if they disagree with your ideas

talking in such a way they it's clear that you will be upset if someone disagrees with you

no one will want to wound you

'We don't want to upset him, so we better do what he wants!'

iii. manipulation of the decision-making process

the chair is usually the one who oversees the decision-making process

e.g.

not allow sufficient time for proper conversations / discussion

rush the process

one could arrange the council meeting at a time when the person who might object to our proposal won't be able to attend

iv. ganging up on someone who disagrees with you

you can go into a meeting having already talked to other members of your council

isolate the person who disagrees with you

make it know that their point of view is not going to be heard

a habit that from comes from the democratic processes that we are familiar with

the more people you have on your side the more able you are to get your proposal through when it comes to a vote

majority rules

try to manoeuvre yourself into the majority position

conflict is inevitable

don't try and *keep it out or keep it down or keep it clean*

create a space where it can be aired

better out than in

there *will* be bust-ups and barneys from time to time!

Often the prelude to some new perspective or strategy emerging

The liberation of energy

the prelude to a deeper engagement with the Dharma life

follow up

check in with people afterwards

Order meetings can be bruising

are you okay after that?

let people know that you care about them personally

make that explicit

might not be possible to communicate in the meeting itself

(you have to care about them personally in order to do this!)

rejoice in people

just wanted to let you know that I really appreciated your maturity and intelligence in the meeting just now

chairing as an act of friendship

Secret level

transcendental

something indefinable happening

Jnanavaca

Q. What do you do to prepare for council meetings?

A. I pray!

establishing faith - *shraddha*

even more fundamental than *love, clarity and determination*

Faith is one's emotional response to something higher than oneself. And because it is higher one cannot possibly understand it.

Seminar on The Door of Liberation
Peace is a Fire p85

allowing there to be space for something *new* to emerge

that you don't know about yet

letting go of the need to know exactly what the outcome will be

start with something aesthetic

an emblem for that indefinable something

something non-utilitarian

e.g.

salute shrine

Refuges & Precepts

a mantra

sit in silence

transference of merits and self-surrender at the end

listen very deeply

stay in touch with what it is all really for!

feel where the energy and life (and inspiration and clarity) is

direct attention to that

might be from anyone in the room

the person themselves might not recognise the importance of their contribution

you might need to highlight it!

Mahamati is very good at this

He says *'That is very important!'*

When done collaboratively it can be intensely creative & intensely enjoyable & intensely energising

something emerges that you could never have come up with on your own

third other of consciousness

spiral conditionality arising in a collective

superficial differences of perspective are of relatively little significance

when it is happening like this you don't want to be anywhere else!

in talking about strategy the coincidence of wills is intensified

The Dharma comes to life → The Order comes to life

Have to reestablish principles each time

Not merely principles & ideas

Liberative force

The principles & ideas are clarified & animated

experienced as a *flow of energy*

the dakinis dance