

# What is this?

A secular dharma study course using talks given by Stephen Batchelor

• PART 8 OF 8 •

## THE FOUR GREAT VOWS

AND

## INSTRUCTION – WAITING AND LISTENING

Recorded at the April 2016 Son Buddhist Retreat in Gaia House, Devon

### The four great vows

1. How do the verses preceding support Deshang's assertion that 'what is known as realising the mystery is nothing but breaking through to grab an ordinary person's life. Bodhi and nirvana are just a donkey's tethering post'?
2. Give an example from your tradition of a teaching method has become domesticated, losing its power to shock, to transform.
3. What do you think characterises those practitioners for whom such mind-turning methods have the power to bring dukkha into stark relief, i.e. the poignant, unreliable, tragic dimension of experience?
4. Why does Batchelor claim that the Four Noble Truths are *metaphysical* truth claims? What is an alternative to the view Batchelor advances?
5. What in practice, is to be gained by taking the view advanced by Batchelor?

6. What is the first task? The second task? The third task? The fourth task?
7. How does reflection on the question ‘What is this?’ fulfil the first, second and third tasks?
8. Remarking that the four vows approximate roughly to the four truths and subsequently, the four tasks, identify each of the four correspondences that Batchelor proposes.

### **Instruction – waiting and listening**

1. In this dharma talk, for the purposes of our contemplation of ‘What is this?’, how does Batchelor define *vipassanā* and *samatha*?
2. Again in the context of the contemplation of ‘What is this?’, how is the integration of *samatha* and *vipassanā* described?
3. In the discussion of ‘waiting’ as an aspect of ‘don’t know mind’, how is ‘waiting’ contrasted with ‘expecting’?
4. What is it to valorise ‘waiting without expecting’?
5. How is listening a metaphor for meditative awareness? How does this meditative awareness likened to listening differ from an observant awareness of mind likened to ‘seeing’?
6. According to the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, what is the most effective way to enter into meditation? How does Batchelor interpret this instruction from the Śūraṅgama Sūtra?
7. Carry the metaphor of listening as meditative awareness into the metaphor of listening as compassion, being attuned to suffering of life. What factors do meditative awareness and compassion share?