

# ZANDTAO MEDITATION

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**Zandtaomed**

**Viveka Zandtao**

## Investigating Faith

*"We walked up the steep bank of the river and took a path that skirted the green wheat-fields. This path was a very ancient way; many thousands had trodden it, and it was rich in tradition and silence. It wandered among fields*

*and mangoes, tamarinds and deserted shrines. There were large patches of garden, sweet peas deliciously scenting the air. The birds were settling down for the night, and a large pond was beginning to reflect the stars. Nature was not communicative that evening. The trees were aloof; they had withdrawn into their silence and darkness. A few chattering villagers passed by on their bicycles, and once again there was deep silence and that peace which comes when all things are alone.*

*"This aloneness is not aching, fearsome loneliness. It is the aloneness of being; it is uncorrupted, rich, complete. That tamarind tree has no existence other than being itself. So is the aloneness. One is alone, like the fire, like the flower, but one is not aware of its purity and of its immensity, One can truly communicate only when there is aloneness. Being alone is not the outcome of denial, of self-enclosure. Aloneness is the purgation of all motives, of all pursuits of desire, of all ends Aloneness is not an end product of the mind. You cannot wish to be alone. Such a wish is merely an escape from the pain of not being able to commune.*

*"Loneliness, with its fear and ache, is isolation, the inevitable action of the self. This process of isolation, whether expansive or narrow, is productive of confusion, conflict and sorrow. Isolation can never give birth to aloneness; the one has to cease for the other to be. Aloneness is indivisible and loneliness is separation. That which is alone is pliable and so enduring. Only the alone can commune with that which is causeless, the immeasurable. To the alone, life is eternal; to the alone there is no death. The alone can never cease to be."* This quote is from [Krishnamurti](#) discussed in [Exploring Quest](#).

From looking at solitude in Viveka-Zandtao, aloneness that is not isolation, there came a quest for the unknown discussed [in the last section](#). This quest led to faith; it led to this investigation of faith. Throughout this Viveka a process has been happening. Firstly using the excellent books by Stephen Batchelor and Bob Kull there was an examination of solitude in my life, then using Bob's own quest I explored quest for myself. These are processes of going inner and questioning, through these types of process we uncover our paths. Now this process has moved to investigating faith. Questions that arise early on in the investigation have answers later, and in some ways not in the

direction earlier enquiries indicate. There is nothing contradictory in the earlier formative enquiry but the summative view is crystallised and clarified. It is the process of enquiry that is so important, it is that questing - state of satta - that helps us understand our paths. It is not the words of the suttas, or of the 4NT, or of Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada, it is the process of enquiry that leads to our understanding; we can learn a doctrine or dogma or we can follow the path and develop Dhamma. Investigating faith is a quest into the unknown of faith - not a consideration of doctrines, beliefs or an individual "inclusive faith".

Before beginning to investigate faith there needs to be a clearing of the contents of mind, and as faith is new to me collect together what has already been written. Faith is powerful. In the past faith was avoided – avoiding is defilement – because of the gross behaviour associated with some people who claim faith. My conditioning associates faith (not all of those with faith) with the Christian right, and that means to me people like the tele-evangelists who are exploiting their faith getting huge donations and wasting it on materialism. For the pathivist materialism has nothing to do with the path -



sustainable living and the money necessary for this is part of the path. At the same time the Christian right in the US supports the Republican party, and now many on the Christian right support Trump; is that Christian support of compassion and decency - #NatureCompassionDecency (see later)?

Remember this clearing of mind is talking about conditioning so within this investigation of faith I have to remove conditioning, and that means having to understand that when Christians support a lack of compassion and decency is this support coming from faith? It also means getting beyond conditioning concerning Christian right, discerning truth, and determining a more complete view of faith in this world.

Since I have started from solitude in Viveka-Zandtao the investigation of faith will focus on solitude; faith arose after quest into the unknown and has become faith in the path. For pathivism faith in the path and faith in the Dhamma are interchangeable discussed in the next part – following the path. Faith in solitude has my conditioning to contend with as has already been pointed out, but its main advantage is that it has no institutional basis. That might seem a strange thing to say because I am clearly Buddhist –

Buddhadasist – but pathtivism does not include the institutionalism of Buddhism. For pathtivists the Buddhist institution involves attendance at wats and taking orders - perhaps more if I were not studying mostly Theravadan.

Do I have faith in the Buddha or Buddhadasa? Not clear. My faith is in the Dhamma, in nature, in Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada. Do I have faith that the Buddha was enlightened? Not clear, I initially answered yes because I trust Buddhadasa's own servitude to the Buddha. Buddhadasa is anglicised and his Thai name means "slave to the Buddha". He spent a lifetime understanding what has been written about the Buddha, he has looked into the veracity of the suttas which were oral testimony and which were not put into writing for many years, and he has interpreted those suttas. His world was Buddhism, he had understandings of Mahayana and Vajrayana, and made assessments accordingly. Buddhadasa is known as revolutionary. To me he is non-institutional although I have concerns that there is an institution now being built around him after his death. What matters is the teachings and whether I have understood them, as Buddhadasa is dead I don't know who can answer or verify. As his teachings have led me to develop Dhamma, isn't

that their purpose?

This examination of faith in the Buddha is not complete, it needs developing. There are the 3 refuges – Buddha, Dhamma, Sangha. I have faith in the Dhamma, have talked about my refuge in Venerable Buddhadasa and the Lord Buddha, and have introduced Viveka-Sangha which is purely conceptual. Sangha solitaires unite!!! It is up to them but they are in solitude for a reason and uniting is not that reason.

Part of investigating faith means investigating faith in the Dhamma, and what that faith means. Initially faith appears to be power and conviction, a powerful commitment to the Dhamma. As a pathivist this power says only the path matters because the path will solve all. As Buddhadasa said “The Dhamma itself will bring about a revolution in our hearts, and then through that inner spiritual revolution one will practice, one will live and work, not only for one’s own benefit, but for the benefits of society,” discussed [here](#).

What is the meaning of this faith as power? Is there more to faith than this

power? Faith is non-denominational, all religious people have some level of faith. I have faith in nature and its laws ([here](#)) and although this schema looks dogmatic it is not for me - I observe, investigate and accept. I concede it must look like dogma from the outside, but to me it is just nature and nature's laws. My personal faith is a faith in nature, not a faith in a religious dogma, but it would be myopic to say that is what faith is for all people - for pathivism could it be the power of nature to have faith in itself?

In this section I will investigate faith, and perhaps draw conclusions about differing religions. But here I question the following. Some religious institutions apply conditions to their faithful. When people say that because of their religious faith they have consequent faith in a system, a country, an individual I deeply question this. Referring back to nature it has its laws but no system, nature is all the planet, and nature is all individuals – nature made all individuals.

If you condition faith you lessen its power. And faith as power is important in helping us follow our paths. Surprisingly enough I suggest that faith asks us



not to believe anything, belief is a clinging, ditthupadana, that diminishes the power and if there is also clinging to rites and rituals, silabattupadana, that power is lessened even more. Pure faith in the path has the greatest power - power is discussed in the [section summary](#).

There is a good word connected to faith – surrender. Can you surrender all upadana – surrender all clinging to kama, ditthi, silabatta and attavada – so that all you are is Dhamma? Can you surrender attachment to the defilements of greed, aversion and delusion? And then have faith that Dhamma can carry you through life? In [exploring quest](#) I arrived at this:-

"SHOULD I surrender? If I am following the path, no. If I am clinging to ego, yes. Is my path telling me to surrender? No. Am I avoiding a need to surrender? Not intentionally." Now that I am investigating faith, there is a need to investigate surrender - have I resisted surrender by compromising with warts&all?

How interesting that based on a search I start with a Christian [blog](#) when

investigating surrender “He who can risk himself wholly to it finds himself directly in the hands of God, and is there confronted with a situation which makes “simple faith” a vital necessity; in other words, the situation becomes so full of risk or overtly dangerous that the deepest instincts are aroused.” Completely in the hands of God – in the hands of Dhamma, there is no belief. To live like this requires faith.

What is the risk the situation is full of? Faith tells you there are none but the ego sees this process as full of risk because the very survival of ego is under threat. Faith knows there are no risks but the ego is afraid because with the Dhamma there is no need of ego. In Buddhist terms consider the khandhas again – rupa – body, vedana – feelings, sanna – memories and perception, sankhara – mental processes, and the activating consciousness of vinnana. Remember what Buddhadasa said “Remove the I and mine from the 5 khandhas”; he did not say “remove the 5 khandhas”. One way of describing this is that removing I and mine leaves skeletal khandhas which is all that is needed to live, but instead of having I and mine padding out the skeleton, in surrender it is the Dhamma. Faith knows the Dhamma is enough.

As a Buddhist I also baulk at the use of “deepest instincts”, there is nothing deep about instinct. At birth instinct is what conditioning builds the ego and identity from. Whilst these shallow instincts are needed to survive childhood, in adulthood they are meant to be let go in order to mature and follow the path. When we surrender upadana, end clinging to the egos of conditioning, we need to rely on the Dhamma. This reliance is faith but it is not a new deeper instinct that can become ego through conditioning; it is a faculty of the Dhamma such as the 4 Dhamma comrades. I don’t know how this works from an external God, where does the faith in God come from? It could be a supramundane state within us such as the 4 brahma-viharas. However if God is immanent then that faith can be part of God - as can the 4 brahma-viharas be a part of God. Faith could be a grace of God if we surrender to God, in much the same way as the 4 Dhamma comrades and faith are graces of the Dhamma. That works for me, but does it work for Christians?

Could faith be seen as an abode - we live in faith or we live in upadana (remember [review note on faith](#)). Surrender means letting go of conditioning,

ending clinging to ego, and once we stop clinging to ego where do we go? Faith, the abode of the Dhamma. Through surrender we have faith in God and in return we are given God's grace. Buddhism looks at this and gives us details. Buddhism teaches us about what to surrender by ending conditioning – kilesa and upadana, and teaches us about God's grace – the Dhamma. There is an important caveat (I was going to use the word distinction but I don't know enough about Christianity); the Dhamma is always present in us, it is just that conditioning hides the Dhamma from us. In Christianity, is God's grace always present in us and we just have to find it through surrender?

“One day a friend called to ask if we could meet for tea. Knowing that I was writing a book on faith from the Buddhist perspective, she was confused and wanted to talk. “How can you possibly be writing a book on faith without focusing on God?” she demanded. “Isn't that the whole point?” Her concern spoke to the common understanding we have of faith — that it is synonymous with religious adherence.

"But the tendency to equate faith with doctrine, and then argue about

terminology and concepts, distracts us from what faith is actually about. In my understanding, whether faith is connected to a deity or not, its essence lies in trusting ourselves to discover the deepest truths on which we can rely” [SS p14 of 194]. Reading this from Sharon Salzberg's book "Faith: Trusting your own Deepest Experience", I knew that this book is where I was going to begin investigating faith. For me dogma is often a distraction, what is the path actually about? Is faith related to this distraction?

[Computer note - my pdf reader says that Sharon's book has 194 pages].

I have introduced faith as an abode more and more into my meditation. The structure of my meditation is MwB, and this structure has 4 tetrads – kaya, vedana, citta, dhamma; each meditation you go through the 16 stages and then .... To begin with I especially noticed that the 4 stages of vedana were similar to the chakra meditation I use in which I move up through the body with the 7 chakras. In MwB I visualise piti and then sukha moving up the body which when fully conditioned leads to calmness and coolness; starting from the tantien moving up to a place that is just above my head where I



connect to sunnata – note the word visualise I am not saying it happens.

In stage 9 the first stage of citta tetrad I focus on the supramundane states of the brahma-viharas, moving compassion from the tantien up through the body to a place of compassionate unity just above the head. I had thought of the viharas as vehicles moving up through the body to connect to sunnata but vihara is usually translated as abode – interesting.

And in the 4th tetrad there are the 3 characteristics of Buddhism and giving back – this is Dhamma and is carried out just above the head. This place above the head I now think of as an abode, could the name of that abode be faith? For the 1st 3 tetrads I move up to this abode – faith, and for the 4th tetrad in faith I develop the Dhamma. This is all a visualisation, and I am talking about it as my meditation; we all have our own meditations as our own paths to work out. But I like faith as an abode. (Remember [review note on faith](#))

So far reading Sharon on Faith is about her journey - great and interesting,

but it might not give me faith deliberations. No problem I am interested and will finish. When she began **discussing 4NT [SS p23]**, I thought how different the interpretation. And then I thought how different the paths on **Batgap** are. Of course they should be different it is part of the diversity of nature; it is conditioning that is the same - **defilement**. Ego is complicated and yet not that different, it appears so different because the world is so conditioned by defilement. But path diversity is fascinating, these are the differences to engage with - not the mire that is defilement.

It is also worth recording how faith has affected writing, when writing I need to start in the abode of faith to avoid potential mistakes. I introduced review during **exploring quest** because of mistakes and future potential mistakes, but now I must start writing from the abode of faith - essential for Zandtaomed Advice - less necessary for **Wai Zandtao Scifi** because they are stories in the world of ego. During writing I will move out of the abode but there will be less mistakes and there will always be review before putting online. There will still be mistakes .... but less!

Faith is an abode but it is an abode for what – awareness or consciousness. There is khandha-vinnana, consciousness that is intended to enable the 4 other khandhas when appropriate. But nature intends consciousness for the Dhamma – being aware of the path - being the path; consciousness abides in faith connecting to the Dhamma. This fits in with the Christian concept of faith bringing closeness to God. But upadana is an abode, when we are clinging to kama, ditthi, silabatta and attavada we are abiding in these upadanas. Faith and upadanas are abodes, where do we choose to live – where does our consciousness choose to live? In faith following the path or Dhamma, or in upadana, the 4 upadanas, the defiled world. Understanding this helps us understand faith, faith is an abode that we can cling to. Rather than clinging to the upadanas we can cling to faith. (Remember [review note on faith](#)).

Faith can help us understand the quest, specifically the quest there is in the West. In the West there is a distinction drawn between spirituality and religion, in fact many people on a quest, searching for the spiritual, have rejected religion. In my own case I rejected religion and faith, what I rejected

was the way I was brought up as a catholic. Roman catholicism was the family religion, on both sides of my family there were strong grandparents who were catholic. However that religious commitment in my parents was not so strong, and it felt as if their commitment was to the strong religious parent rather than the religion itself. Religion very much reached me as a token, there were certain rituals, doctrines and dogmas I followed but I lacked the commitment to any deeper meaning of the religion. In Buddhism following a ritual without commitment is following silabatta, following doctrines and dogmas is following ditthi. I had no commitment to any deeper meaning for Catholicism so there was no clinging to Catholic silabatta or ditthi; it was easy for me to let go.

Here's the rub; I say I had no faith but also my Catholic grandparents would say I had no faith. But from my personal history faith is neither in the silabatta nor in the ditthi, however I suspect my Catholic grandparents would disagree with that. Faith is an abiding, we can choose to abide in silabatta or ditthi – the upadanas of silabattupadana or ditthupadana, or we can choose to abide in the Dhamma – following the path. (Remember [review note on faith](#))

Westerners are brought up in societies where there is Christian faith but that faith could be considered blind. That is a faith that clings to silabatta and ditthi, there is conditioning that clings to attavada in order to survive childhood, and they live in a society that is strongly attracted to money and lust – kama. Westerners are very much brought up in the clinging of the 4 upadanas, so it is not surprising that they turn to spirituality. It is equally not surprising that they turn away from the established Christianity, however there is an abiding in Christianity which is neither silabatta nor ditthi; following the path does not exclude being Christian but does exclude clinging to silabatta and ditthi.

Seekers can go East but in eastern countries clinging to silabatta and ditthi can be found; in Thailand Buddhist practice very much revolves around silabatta and ditthi. By travelling westerners start to live a more solitary life stepping out of the restrictions of their society's conditioning. By seeking the spirituality in other traditions they are also throwing off the conditioning of their established religion but that does not mean westerners do not exclude



silabatta and ditthi; they can of course cling to the upadanas of silabatta and ditthi in new religions. In fact it can be harder to discern the path from upadana in a religion you know less about. In finding a new religion there is a “born-again” feel that the seeker gains – dhammajati phala, but is this a replacement of one set of silabatta and ditthi with another? In solitude, and with the rejection of conditioning that accompanies the seeker’s quest there must be phala, but to associate those phala with new silabatta and ditthi causes clinging. Good teaching is required to prevent this new clinging – silabattupadana and ditthupadana. Hopefully the seeker will find faith without belief.

The path without ritual and belief (silabatta and ditthi) can be found in all religions. There is always the attraction of the other, the new, whether we stay within our own society’s conditioning or not. Travel as solitude can be such a key factor in learning to uproot this conditioning, the solitude of travel that helps to move us beyond the ongoing conditioning of our society; travellers still carry with them the conditioning of their upbringing but solitude helps question this. If the travellers are also seeking – in quest, then they are likely

to be questioning the conditioning of their upbringing. In Buddhadasa's teaching of Buddhism I found a process that helped me question conditioning, I am now convinced in what he taught as Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada and the method for developing the Dhamma – MwB; is that faith? As already stated for me this contains no silabatta and no ditthi. If it is a conviction without belief or ritual, I also don't see any contradiction with any other religion but other religious advocates might disagree. Review note - as I began to understand faith more there was a clarity about this conviction (silabatta and ditthi) described in the section summary.

People often question what is spiritual and what is religious. In the past my answer to what makes them distinct has been institutionalism. Whilst that is still partially true investigating faith brings a more complete answer. The spiritual has faith in the path, faith in the path without ritual or belief (faith in the path is discussed in the section summary). The spiritual path is without the 4 upadanas. If a religion does not cling to silabatta and ditthi, then by letting go of the upadanas religion is left with the spirituality of the path without ritual or belief. At the same time the individual seeker cleans

themselves of the defilements of greed aversion and delusion. Spirituality is the religious path that lacks upadana, has no attachment to kilesa, and does not cling to institutionalism – for all religions.

Here is where I began to clarify the distinction between faith and lokutarra (not faith) as the abode of the Dhamma - transcendence.

Initially this was far from clear and began with a feeling of "stretch" in exploring quest - unsure enquiry, but as this is an investigation of faith the stretch was allowed as investigating. Something powerful happened with the faith-revelation, trying to make sense of it was proving difficult. Sharon's first quote above held out hope but her book on faith is diverse, and as yet I don't have clarity. Matching the first 3 fetters of sotapanna as discussed during the exploring of quest opened up the possibility of stream-entry but it is not a route I want to go because it requires talk of enlightenment and reincarnation. Yet in the Handbook for Mankind [p168 of 203], Buddhadasa talks of emancipation, and mentions entering a supramundane plane - lokutarra-bhumi. I see faith as an abode so is there a connection?


This emancipation is discussed in a section of the Handbook about emancipation and the 4 stages of enlightenment - sotapanna being the first, all 4 stages occurring in lokutarra. Through meditation "the mind breaks free from suffering by virtue of the clear knowledge that nothing is worth grasping at or clinging to" [Handbook for Mankind \[p168 of 203\]](#), and this sort of fits because I am working in the solitude of viveka-zandtao after [complete disenchantment](#) - a state of mind arrived at after working through the Manual. But it feels a stretch. And what is worse is that the 4 stages of enlightenment are all described in terms of reincarnation - sotapanna 7 lifetimes, once-returner (sakadagami), never-returner (anagami), and arahant. And arahant is described as perfected individual, it goes without saying I am no arahant; [here](#) Buddhadasa describes arahant without reference to reincarnation - Buddhadasa was not about reincarnation. It is possible this faith has jumped me to lokutarra-bhumi but the rest just makes me go agggghhhh! I am going round in circles with this stream-entry. It's like people want this stream-entry as a goal so they can pat each other on the back - stream entry but there is no clarity - just desire. And faith in Buddhism is all

about faith in the 3 refuges; I'm not there either. Confusing.

As usual out of confusion the path brings clarity. In the faith-revelation two things were happening at once, and I put them both together calling them faith; this is why I became confused. Sharon started her book on faith with it being the strength and confidence that took her into the unknown – took her on her quest of meditation in India. Her discussion on faith has so much more that I will get into in “investigating faith”. But faith was happening for me as I was “exploring quest” so that indicates faith gave me strength and confidence going into the unknown.

But the unknown I went into was partially known – lokutarra. When I first read Buddhadasa above, lokutarra was all mixed up with the 4 stages of enlightenment – and I didn't like it. However lokutarra is an integral part of the path of pathivism coming across it before many times; I am happy to embrace lokutarra – discussed [here](#) 18 months ago. Basically lokutarra is transcendence, and transcendence is important. When you look at my description of the path:-



	The Path to End Suffering
	The Path that goes beyond Conditioning
	The Path of Compassion Insight & Creativity

moving beyond conditionality is simply transcendence. This is living in the abode of lokutarra, above I described faith as the abode of the Dhamma whereas that abode is not faith but lokutarra – transcendence.

I see transcendence as “going beyond” so although it is Beatles-mystical it need not be feared as mystical and unattainable. When we look at MwB, the 9th stage is concerned with discerning the mundane and the supramundane. For me that meant focussing on the 4 brahma-viharas of compassion – karuna, loving kindness – metta, muditha – empathic joy, and upekkha –

equanimity. These are part of my practice – a practice that was developing lokutarra although at the time I was not using the term, nor was I conscious that the practice was so closely concerned with transcendence. In the meditation approach I described earlier in [Investigating Faith](#), there was an emphasis on the importance of finding supramundane states - above I even called my faith a supramundane state. Now that I have recognised that this faith revelation included faith and lokutarra, I am quite comfortable with seeing the revelation as moving beyond into lokutarra - transcending, and then asking how faith helped quest do that.

With the same comfort I can say that through my quest into the unknown I have moved further into lokutarra. So that is also like saying I have further entered the stream – sotapanna, words that I was not happy saying, but which mean the same thing. Transcending is part of the path, it has to be, the path has to take us beyond the world of conditioning. And the path is the path of compassion – a supramundane state and one of the 4 brahma-viharas. From a writing point-of-view, if this were not an investigation into faith I would go back to where I first described faith as an abode; at that point I would change

all references to faith as an abode into the abode of lokutarra. Instead because I was investigating and because the process of enquiry is so important I wrote the [review note](#), and gave people a choice whether they read it or not. I had discussed faith as an abode - now this abode is changed to lokutarra; this discerning clarity is an important part of enquiry - clearing away confusion.

Where is lokutarra? It sounds spacey, is it another dimension – beyond Pleiades – Alpha Centauri? Do we transcend to avoid responsibilities on this world? On [Buddhadasa BIA Bkk page](#) Buddhadasa is quoted as saying “The Dhamma itself will bring about a revolution in our hearts, and then through that inner spiritual revolution one will practice, one will live and work, not only for one’s own benefit, but for the benefits of society” in a Q&A. This understanding of Dhamma and its purpose has not changed because we have climate catastrophe, Trump, BLM etc., no matter how much our compassion looks at these things and cries.

When we transcend to lokutarra we don’t leave the earth, find a cave or a desert island, we move to a mental state that is beyond conditioning. When

we see climate catastrophe, Trump and BLM we want to react emotionally, there is compassion and then anger; there is possible reaction and violence. Once there is violence we have lost because those who own a little will become afraid and vote for the law & order of oppression. When you look at what is happening with activism now, there is no obvious progress; there is polarisation and the likelihood of increased violence. It requires voices from the Dhamma – spirit, and it requires listening to the voices of Dhamma and spirit. Reacting with emotion there is neither of these. No matter how defiled the conditioned world becomes the answer still lies in moving beyond conditioning – transcendence. Intellectuals who have dabbled in spirit might perceive transcendence as spiritual bypassing - sadly for some meditators transcendence does mean that bypassing; but the state of mind that is lokutarra is the “Dhamma revolution in our hearts” and not spiritual or meditational escapism. Following the path is still revolution in life, no matter how much our emotion gets charged and attached by the conditioned world and its defilement.

Let me examine again the meditation process I described earlier, in which

through MwB I found faith as an abode above my head. Now that I have discerned lokutarra from faith, in meditation the abode above my head would initially have been called lokutarra. But once realised this abode of lokutarra became my whole body, my whole body had transcended - not just a meditation to a space above my head. It could be considered a transcended integration in which body, energy and mind were integrated in lokutarra moving forward in an integrated path. There was however nothing ethereal about this transcendence, sad really I would have liked some of that; but I have never seen such as part of my path - no Stephen Strange.

Clarifying this confusion of terminologies allows me to continue to investigate faith using the understanding of lokutarra. Whatever your view of transcendence it is claimed to be a powerful experience. At the time of the revelation faith and lokutarra were just one powerful experience that I called faith; the quest for the unknown led me to this faith revelation. I called this faith the abode of the Dhamma, and through living in this abode of faith developed the Dhamma and tried to end living in the abode of upadana and end being attached to defilement. Slowly the confusion cleared leaving me



aware that this abode was the abode of lokutarra - after transcendence. But faith was not separate to finding lokutarra, initially it was the abode and then with clarity it became the faith that took my quest to lokutarra. Faith was part of what helped me transcend - along with quest.

This morning (next day) I thought "faith is where the need is", it is what the path needs to motivate you; it is a phala - fruit of dhammajati. In the finding of lokutarra faith led my quest there. Previously I have had faith that Buddhism would provide answers. For Sharon faith helped her to travel to India at 18 to learn meditation. The path wanted these things so it provided what was needed to do them - faith; because of the clarity of solitude - with its lack of commitments, faith can arise in solitude giving conviction to following the path.

Now that I have discerned the faith revelation as transcendence with faith enabling quest to transcend, I want to examine earlier references to the faith revelation and remove any confusion that I have previously indicated with the review note. Faith is not the abode; lokutarra is the abode - supramundane

state eg 4 brahma-viharas - faith enabled me to enter and stay in this abode - lokutarra. We can use our faith to move to the abode of lokutarra, or we can allow our egos to cling to the abodes of upadana. But faith can be blind - controlled by ego and cling to silabatta and ditthi. We have to be careful, even though the path gives us faith ego can delude us into thinking that the upadanas of silabatta and ditthi are what the path intends; this is blind faith. No inconsistencies. This is an investigation and there might have been confusion; now understanding that the faith revelation was transcendence and that faith enabled that transcendence there need be no confusion.

Faith and religion are used by some synonymously - catholic faith, catholic religion. In investigating faith I want to clear away the contents concerning religion that has filled my consciousness; this is a similar process that I started this section with regards to faith where I discussed my conditioning concerning faith and the Christian right. Religious upbringing began with an ill-fated connection to Catholicism; as mentioned there were two devoted grandparents (one on either side) creating a catholic duty within my parents, a token duty that lacked deeper motivation. But it did mean a catholic primary

school. I remember a dowager of a teacher in my final year, and she pushed the religion - no criticism it was a catholic school. For a while I used to go to church before school at her encouragement, then there was the big shame when I announced that my parents had decided for me to go to the local grammar school as opposed to a more distant catholic grammar – a decision I am very much grateful for. It was shame because of the pressure from the dowager and peer pressure from all the class choosing catholic secondaries. There was nothing from me in that shame.

I cannot recall exactly when I stopped going to church – maybe it stopped with going to the grammar. My church attendance was ludicrous at the end. The church was at least 15 minutes from my house, and to go to church I would leave past 10 for the 10 o'clock mass. It was up to me whether I went. I remember an outburst when I finally stopped in which my parents pointed out strongly that it was up to me, and that my younger brother had stopped a year ago. I was frustrated, it was all true, why had I still continued the sham? My answer now is that there was some small spiritual connection that pulled me to church, is that a total fabrication - wish of nascent spirituality?

Upheaval, discussed in the Treatise, was life-forming but had limited connection to religion. Especially with the arts people verifying upheaval there was no attraction to church or religion – especially with the negative childhood experience. After upheaval I would read about spirituality avoiding recognised religions including Buddhism.

The nearest I came to religion was my theosophical year but there was a theosophy but not religion feel to that year. I began meditating and limited yoga but it was theosophical not Hindu – although there was much about it in theosophy that came from India and Hinduism. However theosophy required a leap of faith even though they spoke of there being “no religion higher than truth”. They were essentially looking for a common core of religion but were diverted by clairvoyance and the occult – East and West. Many great people fed into theosophy. Essentially they were trying to remove silabattupadana – clinging to rite and ritual in religion, but then they developed their own clinging to different ideals – ditthupadana often associated with occult. But the great seekers amongst theosophy were a good place to go to question

religion as there is much knowledge amongst these people. But to be honest going there was like going to church. There were a few leaders and most people who followed, retired old ladies gushing because I was practically spiritual being a teacher. However my attendance stopped for a very bad reason – the theosophical year was a sober interlude and the drink dragged me back. I had found Krishnamurti, and as a friend with a car had also found him I attended Brockwood Park for a few years before his death – before I fell in love and left London.

10-plus years later, in Africa I began the mid-life review that contains some of my history in Buddhism, I have not really tried to update the review - did some work on it in retreat later on at Harnham. On leaving Africa and parting the ways with academia and “Hindu-Buddhist inclusivism”, I went to Thailand and converted to Buddhism in Wat Phra Keau – the temple of the Emerald Buddha. I sat on the floor of the temple with tourists and faithful milling around, and decided I was Buddhist. It was a quiet revelation - no bells and banjos, but a strong conviction. I assess this was faith from the path working; the path needed me to accept I was Buddhist so that I would



meditate and begin studying Buddhism - after separating from the study in academia.

Then began the visits to [Harnham](#). To stay there you normally write and request a stay from the Guest Monk. My first year I didn't do that, I don't recall why. I rolled up and asked to stay overnight. The guest monk said yes although he was not happy; some form of institutional tolerance, I don't know? I remember that night lying there unable to sleep until the guys came, the same presence that I had when writing [Kirramura](#); that was enough validation for me. The next day I was gushing and grateful telling the guest monk about the guys. But he didn't understand what I was talking about, however he was pleased for my gushing. Monks change and I went back there a few times through the proper protocol before I finally left the UK in 2004, two years in Nigeria and retirement here in Thailand. Harnham meant a lot to me but I am not sure the abbot would be overjoyed at [Zandtao](#) or even [Zandtaomed](#).

My Wat Phra Keau conviction sent me to Harnham, and my studies

connected to those visits meant that when I retired I focussed on Theravada Buddhism. Deep focus was important, I recognised that through eclecticism my spirituality had been diluted by intellectual proliferation. I found that Buddhism became true. Studying Buddhism I then found that in daily life it worked, thus developing a faith in Theravada Buddhism. I mean the use of the word faith as enabling. I believed what I was studying was true - believed the dogma, and it became true. This was not self-fulfilling although the boundaries are vague – and now not important because now I evaluate everything. Once I had some sort of depth in Theravada I looked at other Buddhisms whilst focussing in Theravada through Buddhadasa. The phrase proliferations of sankhara comes from him, and with my writing I became less and less interested in studying more Buddhism and more and more interested in my own experience. As with the recent lokutarra and faith within Viveka-Zandtao I start with accepting the experience and seek explanation and understanding - usually searching Buddhadasa's teachings first.

This is not the faith usually associated with Buddhism – the faith in the 3 Refuges; I do however have a deep and meaningful relationship with each of

the refuges in my own way. Buddhadasa capitalises the word Dhamma to draw a distinction between the teachings, dhamma, and a connection to the Dhamma. I have absolute faith in that connection to Dhamma which begins in lokutarra. It is this transcendent connection to Dhamma that I call path:-

	The Path to End Suffering
	The Path that goes beyond Conditioning
	The Path of Compassion Insight & Creativity

To be clear about my faith it is the Dhamma I connect to and not the teachings – faith in the Dhamma and not faith in the teachings necessarily. Over time many/some of the teachings have helped me reach the connection but I do not believe all the teachings of Buddhism (whatever that is). It is also the case that there are many teachings outside Buddhism that help with

connecting to the Dhamma but it is hard enough discerning fruitful teachings within Buddhism let alone to start an exposition of the fruitful teachings outside. But the essence of those teachings is that they connect to the Dhamma/path, I would have faith in those teachings that lead to the spiritual path whether Buddhist or not. Whilst I hope I would recognise such teachings, in no way do I know what they all are. Listening to [Batgap](#) can show you the diversity and similarities of the path.

Taking refuge in the Buddha is less clear for me. Over the years (as described above) I have developed a “faith” in Buddhadasa. There is not reading and accepting what he has said per se, but questioning his teachings has led to understanding; there is nothing I cannot accept so far. But there are many of his teachings that have not been studied, and whilst there is faith that I would accept them there is not a conviction in, and understanding for, all his teachings.

In a sense I leech off his study. As [Zandtaomed](#) the basis of my meditation teaching is [MwB](#). Now Buddhadasa’s teaching of MwB comes from the four

foundations of mindfulness which are found in the Satipatthana Sutta and the Mahasatipatthana Sutta. But there is a vast distance in understanding between what can be read from the 2 suttas and Buddhadasa's MwB, and that understanding has come from his own journey grappling with all the suttas. It comes from his faith in the refuge of the Buddha. This is where my faith lies – it is not faith in the Buddha because I don't know the suttas, it is not faith in Buddhadasa because I don't know all his work. It is however a faith in my experience of the Dhamma/path that has been backed up by the study of Buddhadasa who has studied the Buddha. Above I said "I am now convinced in what he taught as Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada and the method for developing the Dhamma – MwB". But in truth there is no belief - this is not ditthi, I observe the nature and its laws of Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada with MwB meditation helping me develop Dhamma. (There is some confusion here about conviction and ditthi clarified in section summary). It would be dishonest for me to say I have faith in the Buddha but if there was an experience that could not be understood through Buddhadasa I would seek help from people such as Thay (Buddhists) and or help from the Buddha's suttas – avoiding so many of the proliferations. There is a need to further



investigate what faith in the Buddha means for me - especially the meaning for the potential for all people accepting his enlightenment.


Taking refuge in the Sangha is the hardest for me to have faith in, I accept Sangha-ness. I completely accept that in this world there are people following the path and I trust those people. This comes back to having faith in the path, if someone is truly following their path then I accept that they are Sangha. This would enable me to consider their teachings as leading to the path so I would grapple with those teachings in order to understand. What if I grappled with false teachings? This is possible and I might convince myself those false teachings were true. Here faith in the Sangha-ness is truly enabling because I trust with appropriate determination there will be learning - the enabling of faith.

But I do not have faith in all the people who claim they are following the path nor do I have faith in all the people in the institutions that claim they are Sangha. In Thailand out of respect for their mothers (tamboon for their mothers) young men join monasteries as buai - temporary young monks. This

is an excellent teaching practice but for a pathivist those young men are not Sangha. Repeating that this is a good practice this is not the only example where the Sangha-ness of monasteries can be questioned - even though I am very much in favour of monasteries as places of teaching and places of refuge from daily life.

It is my understanding that the Buddha asked for the formation of the Sangha to pass on what he taught. As a pathivist Sangha means people on their paths who would then pass on the Dhamma, and that the dhamma these Sangha teach would help people learn to connect to the Dhamma. These people have Sangha-ness and I have faith in them. But do these people with Sangha-ness wear orange robes or purple robes or robes? Can people who join an institution automatically have this Sangha-ness? Teachings can help but does it mean they have Sangha-ness? Does it mean they have transcended?

And what of people outside monastic institutions? Do they have Sangha-ness? Do people like Stephen Batchelor, Bob Kull and Sharon Salzberg have Sangha-ness? Inasmuch as they assess they are following their paths, and

inasmuch as what of themselves they assess as following the path, I would say they have Sangha-ness and I would have faith in that Sangha-ness - their assessment. Institutions serve a tremendous purpose. They provide places for the teaching and teachers who choose that path, and they provide a refuge for people who want to stay to escape daily life. Both of these functions are tremendously valuable. I am happy to call this Sangha but I cannot have faith in this Sangha; I can have faith in Sangha-ness. In this Viveka-Zandtao I put forward a notion of Viveka-Sangha. This Viveka-Sangha exists but not in daily life. It exists as a Unity (that is disjoint ) of people who through Viveka in solitude have connected to the Dhamma. They recognise their own Sangha-ness, they have faith in the Sangha-ness of others, and are a spiritual community of Viveka-Sangha; it is just this community does not exist in daily life – they do not know each other. Is there any future for something called Viveka-Sangha?

I woke up thinking about the last unwritten section of Viveka-Zandtao on following the path (thinking out of sequence), and then found myself writing this that turned out to be about faith. Following the path and developing the

Dhamma mean the same thing to me. For a pathivist, key to both is the recognition that the path has an inner guide, the inner guide is part of the path, the inner guide is part of the Dhamma that arises out of meditation. On your path you develop a relationship to your inner guide so that you can trust and rely on it. This guide takes you through life and you give it faith so that it has the strength to take you through. Knowing your inner guide means that you know there will always be this guide to tell you how to get through daily life. Coming to this understanding in a roundabout out-of-sequence way when starting the writing of [following the path](#), I learned that faith is there to enable the inner guide – have faith in the inner guide.

I have conditioning about Christian faith - as discussed at the beginning of this section when emptying the contents of consciousness; now let's examine this conditioning. Supposition - when Christians talk of faith in God this faith translates into daily life, God is guiding actions in daily life through faith. By developing faith in God Christians are, using my terminology, trusting an inner guide (from God) to help them through daily life - again reasonable supposition. Here's the rub. If this is true how can Christians be sure that in

daily life their actions are governed by faith in God? How can they be sure their actions are not governed by ego?

I have faith in the Dhamma, faith that the inner guide of the Dhamma will guide me through daily life. But I am conscious of the ego, of the kilesa and upadanas that are always there to trick me. Maybe this compares with Christians being conscious that the devil will distract them. For myself what arises is the understanding that through hard work I am *doing the best I can* ([4 Agreements](#)) to follow the path. Through meditation and working to let go of defilement and remove clinging, trusting my inner guide to take me through daily life without egoic action, trusting my inner guide to help me fight against the enemy of conditioning, trusting my inner guide to follow the path. Does faith in God do all of this? Can faith in God do all of this without a Christian consciously working on defilement and clinging? Is faith in God alone actually meant to do all this?

Maybe.



Faith in God can do all of this if the person concerned engages with each and every action and ensures that these actions are “approved by God” - again supposition. My apologies if this phraseology “approved by God” causes offence but I don’t know how Christian faith works. When I am following my path my inner guide ensures that in every action I am following my path – or *doing the best I can*. My inner guide knows that defilement and clinging can arise, is mindful of both the kilesa and upadana thus minimising the suffering caused by both. Do all actions of Christians which by my supposition come from faith in God alone have compassion and decency? What are the mechanisms of faith in God that ensure actions in daily life have compassion and decency? What are the mechanisms of faith in God that ensure there is no attachment or clinging? No ego? Or is it the other way round? If the actions lack compassion or decency, has the Christian lacked faith? For the Buddhist and the Christian actions in daily life can have compassion and decency or can be as a result of attaching to kilesa or clinging to upadana. Does faith in God ensure compassion when attention is not given to conditionality that creates kilesa and upadana? My faith in the inner guide came from working for years to fight the enemy of conditionality, maybe faith in God fights the

devil for years, but is there the attention to detail concerning kilesa and upadana?

The faith that I have developed as a result of meditation, developing the Dhamma and following the path, reinforces my trust in the inner guide. But I question. I question my actions, I question whether those actions have kilesa and upadana or not, I deliberate on how to improve my actions. I do not question kamma, I do not question dhammajati - I do not question what I cannot know; I accept that it is my duty to follow the path and improve my actions in daily life. Does faith in God do this? From outside I observe crises of Christian faith asking where is the God that allows children to die etc. These sad inexplicable deaths (suffering) are the way life is – I do the best I can; this is also the way that God has created. Isn't faith in God concerned with actions in daily life rather than questioning “God’s plan”?

There is no reason why faith in God cannot end kilesa and upadana, fight the enemy of conditioning, use sampajanna in daily life; but if there is not attention to detail will those happen? Is having faith in God enough without

the attention to detail? If there is the attention to detail for Christian as well as Buddhist, then is there any effective difference to having faith in the inner guide and having faith in God?

There is Dhammajati. Christians have faith that God created nature and its laws; I don't ask about nature's creations – it is not for me to know. My concern is whether I follow nature and its laws:-

Dhammajati/Idappaccayata	Paticcasamuppada
1) Nature itself	(1). With ignorance as a condition, mental concocting arises;
2) The law of nature	(2). With mental concocting as a condition, consciousness arises;
3) The duties that must be performed according to that law of nature	(3). With consciousness as a condition, mentality/materiality arises; (4). With mentality/materiality as a condition, the six sense bases arise; (5). With the six sense bases as a condition, contact arises; (6). With contact as a condition, feeling arises;
4) The fruits or benefits that arise from the performance of that duty - <u>phala</u>	(7). With feeling as a condition, craving arises; (8). With craving as a condition, attachment arises; (9). With attachment as a condition, becoming arises; (10). With becoming as a condition, birth arises; (11). With birth as a condition, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and tribulation arise. Thus the mass of suffering arises.

Do I follow the duty that nature has assigned me, do I follow nature's laws? This question is the same, does faith in God mean that the faithful follow nature's laws and do their duty? Does faith in God mean there is the same confidence in the detail? Need there be any difference?

As with every Buddhist isn't it the duty of every Christian to ask whether they have confidence in the detail? As a Christian aside I wonder whether God's grace and using God's grace in our actions in daily life answers these questions. Is God's grace what is required to have confidence in the detail?

What is the objective of considering the detail? To be certain that we are following the path in all our actions. Now that is a tall order because of all the conditioning and all the kilesa and upadana in our upbringings and daily life. To follow the path *we do the best we can* ([4 Agreements](#)) through our efforts in trying to end our kilesa and upadana, but being realistic there are times when it is not possible to be attentive to all aspects of our behaviour. In a sense there are aspects of our behaviour that cannot be known - known to be right and true. It would be good to rely on all our actions as true, but for most

humans that is not possible. But we can have faith that our inner guide will ensure that unknown actions will follow the path. There is nature's trade-off, do the best you can and the inner guide will help with the rest; you can have faith in that. “We might (and often must) hope and plan and arrange and try, but faith enables us to be fully engaged while also realizing that we are not in control, and that no strategy can ever put us in control, of the unfolding of events” [SS\_p103]. For me this is not an exercise in control - control feels egoic, it is an exercise in following the path - actions being true. Through mindfulness we can do the best we can – “We might (and often must) hope and plan and arrange and try,”, but in the end the unfolding of events means that we cannot ensure that our actions will follow our paths through concentration on detail. But we can rely on our inner guide – faith in the inner guide to ensure the unknown will also follow the path. Because of this dual approach of mindfulness and faith we can follow our paths 100%. “Faith gives us a willingness to engage life, which means the unknown, and not to shrink back from it” [SS\_p104], we can engage both the known and the unknown.



The earlier faith revelation grew out of quest for the unknown, and the path gave me power to transcend to the place of the Dhamma – lokutarra. There is a sense of power and place in this revelation. Both require consciousness, consciousness for the power to connect to the Dhamma and consciousness to be in the place of the Dhamma – power and place. Where does that consciousness go if it is not being used in “power and place”? Kilesa and upadana. If we withdraw consciousness from kilesa by letting go of attachment we have more power for faith to connect to the Dhamma. If we withdraw the consciousness that abides in the upadana then we can use that consciousness to abide in lokutarra. This is a pattern, the mathematician in me likes patterns. Let go of kilesa to increase faith, end clinging to upadana so we can abide in lokutarra. When I am meditating using MwB I can consider the consciousness that is attaching to kilesa and clinging to upadana. This consideration can occur at stage 9 where I am developing understanding of lokutarra – supramundane states. The ego of the mundane contains kilesa and upadana, let go of attachment to kilesa so that I have faith, end clinging to upadana so that faith can help me transcend to the supramundane. Works for me but we are all different. Our paths are different and are concerned with

our relationship to the inner guide. Our meditations that we use to maintain our relationship with the path/inner guide (or what we use instead of meditation) are also different; this is the diversity of the paths of nature.

It is time for a little consolidation. I altered my writing process as I was concerned about ego entering into my spiritual writing, now I meditate to try to ensure I am writing from lokutarra. This change in writing process meant that part of my mind was continuing on the journey of Viveka-Zandtao whilst another part was consolidating through review. At the same time I was continuing to read Sharon's book and finding faith means a great deal to her, what it means to me I am not sure - hence investigating. However clarifying and discerning faith from transcendence has led to some clarity of faith, the path providing the strength of faith so that the path can be followed in the unknown. I didn't finish Sharon's book before continuing this investigation – I had thought at one stage I would want a complete overview of her faith through finishing the book. Now having emptied the contents of my consciousness concerning faith, I will continue this investigation by bouncing off Sharon from the beginning.

After introducing the book with a history of the suffering she went through as a child because of the pain that came with deaths and illness in her family – described as “unbearable sequence of sheer happenings” [SS p28], Sharon said this “Like a subliminal message being played under the predominant music, a sense of possibility, no matter how faint, drives a wedge between the suffering we may wake up with each day and the hopelessness that can try to move in with us on a permanent basis. It inspires us to envision a better life for ourselves. It is this glimmer of possibility that is the beginning of faith” [SS p27]. Using pathivist terminology this is the path sending an indicator (“glimmer of possibility”) that says there is faith available if you want to follow the path into the unknown.

“Once someone remarked, “You must have been such a clear thinker,” and I had to reply, in all honesty, “No, in fact I only had one clear thought,” which was that I could solve the “problem” that was me if I learned how to meditate. That one clear thought was enough. It would set me on a journey that would remake my life” [SS p28]. I also find it amazing that at 18 she

could go on this meditation journey, however I can recognise the power and strength that faith can give to Sharon to go on her journey to solve the “problem”. I could envisage faith focusing on the problem, providing a solution and clearing away sufficient doubt or insecurity – a simple and clear way. Mind you at 18, I had no idea what meditation was; let alone having any awareness that it was a solution to problems. The path is diverse.

“The promise of happiness had touched a place within me so deep and unknown that what it had awakened there was wild, inchoate, primal. I recognize that now as the stirring of faith” [SS p28]. This promise of happiness is a promise that studies of Buddhism in school had given Sharon, a promise that had given her a light beyond the suffering of her “unbearable sequence”. To pathivism this “stirring of faith” was showing Sharon that all that mattered was the path, and this radical path experience came to her as “wild, inchoate and primal”.

These first 3 examples I quoted from Sharon's book support the contention that the path will try to find itself - faith in the path. In many cases path

because of conditioning is shut off by ego, but if people are open to the path then through the inner guide the path will help them overcome their conditioning in order to find it. Firstgrace is a clear example of this, other examples include the innumerable insights that happen on the journey. Through meditation faith grows through developing Dhamma, there is an ongoing cycle of Dhamma increasing faith enabling further development of the Dhamma.

"Saddha is the willingness to take the next step, to see the unknown as an adventure, to launch a journey" [SS p28]. The faith-revelation grew out of my quest for the unknown so this quote is interesting. Now saddha is the Pali for faith, confidence and trust, and "literally means "to place the heart upon"" [SS p28]. But I wonder whether for all people faith is a "willingness to launch a journey". For Sharon at 18 taking a journey East to start meditation broke her conditioning and required great power and faith to do so; think of yourself at 18 and think whether you would have had the strength to go East to meditate. But let's also be clear. The ego shuns the path because the path ends ego's survival, so the quest of the path provides power to break out of



conditioning; power is needed to end ego's survival instinct. Is faith connected to the travel bug? Is faith connected to solitude? How much was faith connected to Stephen and Bob's decision-making concerning their solitude? Only they can know this but it is conceivable they are actions that were empowered by their paths.

I would never have had confidence to travel, go East or whatever at 18 or 28; this is so impressive - "the breakout moment of faith was my decision to travel to India without knowing where to go once I got there" [SS p33]. By 40 I had the personal strength to take a contract in Africa although there were personal reasons for leaving the UK at the time. There was no conscious understanding of path in those reasons although in retrospect that contract got me out of ruts, and getting off the plane in Botswana gave me a great sense of freedom – and no fear. The path knew I was in a rut so breaking away was a positive step on my journey, but at the time the path was not associated with the decision – at least I was not conscious of the decision being path-related. Could it have been an aspect of faith that was unknown (not conscious) at the time? Actions that come from the path are not necessarily conscious – I

accept this. Faith comes from the path so there is no inconsistency in faith having this trait. My trip to Botswana was very much a decision made in conditioned-world with reasoning from that world, but that does not stop path being a hidden hand directing the rationales. In retrospect it was clearly important for the finding of my path that I leave the UK – travel in solitude - willingness to launch a journey.

“With faith we move into the unknown, openly meeting whatever the next moment brings. Faith is what gets us out of bed, gets us on an airplane to an unknown land, opens us to the possibility that our lives can be different” [SS p29]. Paths are diverse, and I don’t consider faith to be consciously that strong on my path. But that doesn’t mean faith is not this way for others – certainly for Sharon, and perhaps the many others who went East when young. Before upheaval fear dominated, after upheaval my UK spiritual journey had some fulfilment even though drink and others were creating ruts. Faith, the power of the path, was driving me spiritually to some extent but it never drove East until I was 50.

In retrospect throughout life prior to retirement (called my second childhood) experience was sought and that means experiencing unknown. Leaving the UK at 40 there was a confidence in myself however, confidence in my path. So this was not a rapacious seeking, there was no apparent spiritual motivation. Even though in retrospect so little was known, I thought I knew who I was. Because of this supposed self-awareness, I was not looking for different – remember I was 40. It felt right to travel and teach no more than that, no faith waking me up daily. Paths are diverse.

I want to stop saying that, *paths are diverse*, so let me explain why I have been saying it. Because Sharon says faith is such-and-such, and because faith did ABC for her path does not mean it has to be the same for everyone - me. Diverse paths have different experiences of faith, truth and whatever. There is no judgement saying that Sharon got it wrong, that she doesn't understand faith; in fact if there is any judgement it is to say that Sharon completely understands her own faith – faith of someone with Sangha-ness. But paths are different. Bouncing off what she says to learn about faith is investigating my path; faith for Sharon is how she describes it, I am learning about my faith.

“The first step on the journey of faith is to recognize that everything is moving onward to something else, inside us and outside. Seeing this truth is the foundation of faith. Life is transition, movement, and growth” [SS\_p29]. This is anicca – impermanence, one of the 3 marks of existence, and they are described by Buddhadasa as arising from MwB:-

Now, observe that in the realization of impermanence there is the simultaneous realization of many other aspects. When impermanence is truly seen, it also has the characteristic of *dukkham*, namely, it is painful and unbearable. We can also find the characteristic of not-self (*anattā*) in it. As these things are always changing, impermanent, unsatisfactory, and beyond our control, we realize *anattā* as well. Then we see that they are void of selfhood, which is *suññatā*. We see that they are just thus, just like that. Impermanence is just thus, just like that, thusness. And so, *tathatā* is seen as well.

Recognising anicca for me means understanding coming from developing Dhamma through MwB. It is not faith but understanding, and that is a distinction I wish to draw – a distinction between faith and understanding.

Reading “moving onward to something else, inside us and outside”, I immediately thought of the inner guide. What do we do next on the path? There is faith that the inner guide will know, and if unsure meditation will help the inner guide to know what to do next.

As for outside it happens, accept what happens, deal with it, and get on with following the path. The more there is of study and meditation the more there is a focus on following the path of meditating, writing and studying. What happens outside, what happens to health – heart – sleep, just accept and move on. This is commitment to the path, is faith commitment? *Because there is faith in the path there is commitment to following it* is a perfectly reasonable statement, commitment follows from faith but is not necessarily faith itself. The Dhamma brings commitment – it brings faith as well, two different but



related aspects of the Dhamma.

Let's look at this quote “With faith we can draw near to the truth of the present moment, which is dissolving into the unknown even as we meet it. We open up to what is happening right now in all its mutability and evanescence. A pain in our body, a heartache, an unjust treatment may seem inert, impermeable, unchanging. It may appear to be all that is, all that ever will be. But when we look closely, instead of solidity, we see porousness, fluidity, motion. We begin to see gaps between the moments of suffering. We see the small changes that are happening all the time in the texture, the intensity, the contours of our pain” [SS p30]. Take away “With faith” and the quote still makes sense – it is true. Replace “with faith” by “understanding anicca” the quote is true because we understand anicca. So what does “with faith” bring to the table? Enabling. What if we are unsure about the contents of the quote? What if we don't understand anicca? Then we won't make sense of the quote. But with the enabling of faith we examine the quote knowing it is true, the path through the Dhamma comrades has given us mindfulness to understand and grapple with the meaning of the quote. Using

mindfulness we grapple until we understand the quote, because through faith we have sufficient conviction in the truth of the teaching to warrant the use of mindfulness to grapple and understand.

This also highlights the failing of faith as belief. What if we believe this quote? What if we accept the quote because dhamma teachers have told us? Then we do not grapple using our mindfulness to understand. It is just a belief, it is just there – a collection of words floating as an idea but not internalised because we haven't grappled with it. Through the enabling of faith we recognise that this is an unknown with which we can grapple and understand - to internalise, belief is just an upadana that we add to the contents of consciousness. This reminds me of K at Brockwood Park. Every other sentence was an appeal “Do you understand this? Can you grasp the meaning?” He wasn't interested in people believing him, he wanted people to engage with what he said, grapple and understand, and internalise. The enabling of faith energises this process, belief kills it.

In this situation I choose to restrict the meaning of faith to enabling as we

quest into the unknown. What happens if we broaden faith to include accepting the dhamma teachings – by teachings I do not mean the developed Dhamma. Then what we have is a set of teachings that we accept as ideas but those ideas are not “ours”. We have not internalised those ideas by grappling with them using mindfulness. Once we have grappled those teachings are Dhamma, before grappling they are like words on a page of a book that hasn’t been read – and reading the book doesn’t make those words “ours” either we have to grapple and understand whilst reading. Only then is it Dhamma. If teachings are broadly included in faith, then understanding has to have occurred already, otherwise that is not faith for me; but if understanding has occurred why not simply call it understanding, accepting teachings as faith is not precise. Understanding differs in us all even if we call ourselves Buddhists, Christians etc. The path brings power and conviction so we can understand not so we can believe. And that understanding is different – diverse paths for a different reason.

“Life is not likely to deliver only pleasant events. Faith entails the understanding that we don’t know how things will unfold. Even so, faith

allows us to claim the possibility that we ourselves might change in ways that will allow us to recognize and trust the helping hands stretched toward us. It enables us to aspire to a better life than the one we have inherited” [SS p31]. This is the faith that the path is true even if the understanding is not yet known. With upheaval came the conviction that the path was true. what the path was could not be defined or put into words, but it was true. In daily life it meant that if I felt it was the path I did it, if I felt it was the path I was doing the right thing.

In a trivial way this was brought into teaching. In a school where so much is happening you cannot plan for every event especially as a new teacher. For most teachers behaviour is conditioned, you do what other older teachers tell you to do because it is safer. When I started teaching I relied on the path and reacted to situations based on the path. I was not conditioned by experienced teachers but learned by what the path told me. There was not much difference in practice but the approach was significantly different internally and the learning was personal. Career-wise this was not the best, careerism means towing the line of the more experienced, but I do remember engaging with

experienced teachers as part of the learning - listening and arguing. But the path made me learn. I made mistakes; it wasn't until my 3rd teaching year that I marked books weekly (I and the kids assessed by testing only) – I learnt for myself you had to mark books even though most of the time kids didn't look at all the work that was done.

What is there if you don't have the path and faith in it? Conditioning. In the same way as teachers were expected to follow the experienced, this is what is done in daily life without the path. As children our upbringing teaches following, then as adults we follow older adults - it is all just conditioning unless we engage with what we do. When we engage we grapple, we develop understanding; this is the path or Dhamma. Because of upheaval I always had the path. The process was also slow initially because of immaturity - having limited conditioning because of the fragmentation meant there was little ego/self that had been built up. While I did have some wisdom from the path, the agreements of my fragmented conditioning were very limited so my behaviour was poor – immature. But this did not matter because of the path although I did lose the arts people because of this immaturity. There was



learning.

Change was and is a permanent process. Because of upheaval and fragmentation there was only a limited I – self – that was clinging and holding on. There was no aspiring to a better life because this was the life the path had chosen – the path of compassion that started as a houseparent and went into teaching that eventually became a writer in solitude. Of course this went hand-in-hand with spiritual enquiry and activism as life developed. When engaging in this way it was more about personal development than a better life - the only bettering was me not material or social; once on the path better is only concerned with personal development, with your relationship with the path - closeness to the path. Prior to upheaval there was no conscious consideration of a better life – just conforming to the conditioned fragmentally-agreed middle-class way.

Faith in the path has always been in my life, faith that means trust in the path, and faith that means commitment and dedication in following the path - getting back to the path. This was not a set of teachings, dhamma or dogma, it

was path, trusting there was an inner guide in my life after upheaval – after much conditioning had been removed so that the guide was not blocked by natural and societal upbringing.

“Faith is the animation of the heart that says, “I choose life, I align myself with the potential inherent in life, I give myself over to that potential.” This spark of faith is ignited the moment we think, I'm going to go for it. I'm going to try” [SS p32]. After upheaval there was path; there was no desire to socially better myself, no dreams of travel and trips East – even though that is what happened in the end. There was only the path and whether it was followed. Maybe the first grace that was upheaval had used up more than my fair share of faith, there was no seeker to find – just seeking to a greater or lesser extent depending on how close to the path I was. Because of immaturity experience was needed – called second childhood. But that experience was always close to the path as there was no need for radical solitude to overthrow conditioning and complete fragmentation – upheaval had done that already.

Path was the inherent potential in life. No decisions were needed except to follow the path as *best I could* ([4 Agreements](#)). That is the nature of path – true potential – what nature intended. Was a spark of faith needed to follow the path? This is hard to answer because how is a spark of faith recognised – not all faith has the strength of transcendence (the faith revelation). In a sense there is always a spark of faith because in following the path there is always the quest into the unknown and the need for enabling new understanding. But there does not have to be awareness of that spark. Sparks can arise into consciousness because we need to apply vinnana to overcome ego - conditioning, and then apply mindfulness and vinnana to new understanding; this can be done without awareness of any enabling. Without this need for conscious awareness to overcome conditioning, it is natural to follow the path - it is what we are meant to do. There is also the phala of [dhammajati](#), rewards for following the path, rewards that provide motivation - power. Is it necessary to delineate between the motivation that comes from the phala or faith as motivation? Following the path is what matters. Do we call upon faith to follow the path in times of weakness? Maybe so, but for pathtivism that happens in meditation - faith coming in with the developed Dhamma

although not necessarily consciously.

“The therapist’s love can nurture healing, but it is our own faith in that possibility that impels us to show up and take each new step into the darkness” [SS p32]. Sharon was considering the healing situation with a psychotherapist who had said that the transforming power of love was the most compelling force for healing. Showing up implies some sort of a desire for healing, and faith or hope that the healer can heal. There has to be some motivation that crosses the line from possible to actual as there are probably many healing scenarios considered. This actualising can come from trusting word of mouth to trusting the healing power of the profession in general. But how many times does coincidence play a part? Towards the end of my teaching sleep was lost due to reflux, as it didn’t happen every night I accepted it having sufficient overall vitality that I could lose sleep and teach – with a nap!! I associated the reflux with stress and thought that on retirement it would go. But it didn’t. A year into retirement I was due western shopping in Bangkok, and my first night in the hotel there was reflux and a migraine. I was walking the next day and passed a naturopath in Ari, went in and began

my limited macrobiotics because the doctor said both symptoms were GERD and I needed to change diet. My weight went down, reflux and migraines went. Unfortunately the symptoms are also a product of my ageing heart and they are a recurring possibility I now have to accept in daily life.

The possibility of a healing visit was not a conscious part of the trip, I previously did not know of that naturopathic centre - nor naturopathy and macrobiotics; if there hadn't been such an uncomfortable night I would not have entertained going in yet it was life-changing. Coincidence or synchronicity – either word; Trungpa Rinpoche's “pretense of accident” [SS p34]. I consider this coincidence as nature telling me through my path to do this. I do trust my path on these things but unfortunately have not developed sufficient path intuition to always recognise the signs. Maybe there are elements of faith in this but would not describe it solely as faith. Perhaps if I made a conscious effort to develop more faith, I would have that path intuition to know signs and react – path intuition from the heart? “I stepped onto the spiritual path moved by an inner sense that I might find greatness of heart, that I might find profound belonging, that I might find a hidden source



of love and compassion. Like a homing instinct for freedom, my intuitive sense that this was possible was the faint, flickering, yet undeniable expression of faith” [SS p33]. Faith – path intuition from the heart? Time for meditation!!

.... in a way meditation didn't work. Potential breakthrough here, let it percolate – maybe something else will trigger it. The Arts people said I was too rational – black-and-white, maybe I still am. Yet Wai Zandtao has some creativity!

It has percolated, there is clarity on this but no breakthrough. Intuition is an aspect of wisdom – panna. Panna is one of the 4 Dhamma comrades, and the 4DC can be developed through MwB. At the same time the path intuition I was looking for was sampajanna - wisdom-in-action; it was not simply wisdom as intuition but the ability to recognise signs and act on such intuition. Sharon suggested faith makes people "show up for the therapist", because for Sharon faith is broad. Her breadth of faith does not fit in with my delineations or verbal descriptions. Initially her breadth causes confusion as

my conviction of her Sangha-ness makes me want to fit in, but then I come to clarity so bouncing off her broad view of faith is constructive.

I have faith in the path, this is the faith that comes from the path to help me follow the path. In addition there is the conviction of pathivism that following the path – developing the Dhamma – is the only way forward for activism. For me faith is not the place of transcendence – lokutarra. Where does faith come from? It comes from the path. Is it a Dhamma comrade? Yes, because it comes from the path. Yet no, because the Dhamma with Its comrades abide in lokutarra and faith is an enabling power - not an abiding. When I develop the Dhamma through meditation then I connect to these Dhamma comrades in lokutarra; faith empowers this connection. This is the faith that I have in meditation, faith that meditation will help me follow the path, faith enables the process of meditation, I know that meditation has worked in the past and the path gives me faith to follow the process of meditation in the future as part of my quest into the unknown.

In a similar way I have faith in the process of enquiry – exemplified by this

Viveka-Zandtao. I have developed a process of study that enables my path to teach me. Prior to working on the Viveka I meditate so that my mind is in lokutarra (hopefully), clear of kilesa and upadana – at least clearer. Then I bounce off the author's thoughts. I have developed a process of review which also involves an attempt to be in lokutarra when reviewing. With the writing I check it to see whether it expresses what was wanted. Then I leave it so that what has been written has a chance to percolate before the final review where I am looking more at overview. With these checking procedures I get deeper into the writing hopefully removing errors.

I would note another aspect of faith in this process of writing Viveka-Zandtao, faith in developing clarity. I reached the question “was faith – path intuition of the heart?” Now I have clearly for myself classified intuition as wisdom but when I initially arrived at "path intuition of the heart?" I was unsure, maybe there was some tiredness in the confusion. I immediately meditated .... but I now assess the immediacy was too soon. Later I meditated and there was the clarity of intuition as wisdom and path intuition as the application of sampajanna; in overcoming the confusion there was a greater

clarity. I have faith that this process of enquiry will be effective and bring clarity; enquiry will work.

There is an aspect of faith that I did come to realise before Viveka-Zandtao - dedication to the path. In [this blog](#) I first discussed 100% dedication. This 100% had two components – 100% integration (including shadows) of mind energy and body in the path and 100% dedication of time to the path, a 100% dedication I now recognise as solitude although that was not recognised when the blog was written. Dedication and faith are close; there is an understanding of the need to be 100%-dedicated, and there is the power that dedication needs. 100%-dedicated is a way of saying right determination of the Noble 8-Fold path (from [4NT](#)), I am happy with right determination being considered part of faith but there is also right understanding/mindfulness in knowing to be dedicated to the path.

“With bright faith we feel exalted as we are lifted out of our normal sense of insignificance, thrilled as we no longer feel lost and alone. The enthusiasm, energy, and courage we need in order to leave the safe path, to stop aligning

ourselves with the familiar or the convenient, arises with bright faith. It enables us to step out, step away, and see what we can make of our lives. With bright faith we act on our potential to transform our suffering and live in a different way” [SS p44]. This bright faith was what I experienced during and immediately after my upheaval of firstgrace. It lasted from the time I arrived in the Chiswick loft until I returned from Baissy-Thy – approx. 8 months. What I did was not courage – I just did it, but the effect was the same as Sharon is describing with bright faith. There was the path and that was all that mattered - no conditioning, no conformity, no middle-class plan; just the path. Life from before upheaval didn’t matter, all that mattered was the path and the arts people who understood and helped me understand path.

Firstgrace was path including motivation – power, but the brightness of that power was not there for a lifetime for me. From firstgrace I chose compassion that led to teaching. In that teaching there was alcohol, and after the alcohol there was compromise until retirement. Throughout this second childhood there was experience, all of which has come together in this current time of path and writing. Paths are diverse.



“However, in Buddhism, bright faith is seen simply as a beginning, and not a beginning in which we surrender discriminating intelligence, but rather one in which we surrender cynicism and apathy. Its abundant energy propels us forward into the unknown” [SS p46]. What Sharon describes as bright faith in the beginning is exactly what upheaval did for me but upheaval came from inside - not from an outside teacher.

Passions were observed in me that were bright faith. Above I mentioned theosophy which for a year took over my life – study and meetings for a year. Pirsig was a passion. Fritjov Capra with his Tao of Physics and then Turning point was a passion. K was a passion. Castaneda and the Ardennes walk was a passion. Eckhart with Power of Now and New Earth was a passion. The Summer of Doris Lessing was a passion. And of course now Buddhadasa. But these passions were bright not blind, I was full of them at the time; at the time they were my life. I had such a faith in these passions that my life at the time meant I had to totally grapple and understand. Passions were observed in me because I had to share my passion obsessively. These passions were

bright, held absolute conviction, and then I moved on either to daily life or a new passion – these passions often occurring during my Summer breaks in solitude, Summers I did not write. Bright faith bringing bright passion.

I note here what Sharon says of blind faith:- “But blind faith has a pejorative connotation: It is associated with an unthinking devotion to a teacher or teaching that is mistakenly seen as the fulfillment of the journey of faith rather than an early step” [SS p46]. Early steps. If blind faith is fulfilment then there is stagnation and no path, ditthupadana and silabattupadana (blind faith in a teacher is like clinging to religious rites and rituals and dogma just with an attachment to charisma?).

“Finding a spiritual refuge is a significant step on the journey of faith” [SS p49]. For reasons of Viveka-Zandtao I want to discuss “Finding a spiritual refuge is a significant step”. This book is about that refuge – solitude. Let me explain how I see solitude as my refuge. Please think back as to how solitude was used – holidays and walking, both of these are solitude. Now think about what refuge means, Sharon said this “A trustworthy refuge enables us to go

against the misleading promises of an unexamined world, to move beyond conditioned attitudes and responses, to eschew superficial or heartless answers to our deepest questions” [SS p49]. During those times of solitude what was I doing? Centring. Typically there would be a year of teaching in which the teaching and drink, for the early years, were sucking me into conditioning away from the path. I would become immersed in daily life during the year, and then over the holiday centre – take refuge in solitude centring myself on the path to whatever extent I was capable of at the time. Because I had connected to the path during upheaval those solitudes were my spiritual refuge – but without the same intensity of connection as firstgrace. I have mentioned walking before but I want to mention an aspect of walking that I felt was significant in centring. From reading Castaneda I had learnt how to walk “spiritually” – it was a form of what I now know as “walking meditation”. On a number of occasions I can remember starting a walking holiday, get out onto the pathway, and my mind would be wandering everywhere – I had not centred as yet. For each hand I would curl my fingers and touch 3 of them with my thumb. With my mind wandering I was not looking at where I was going; that would change and I would focus on where

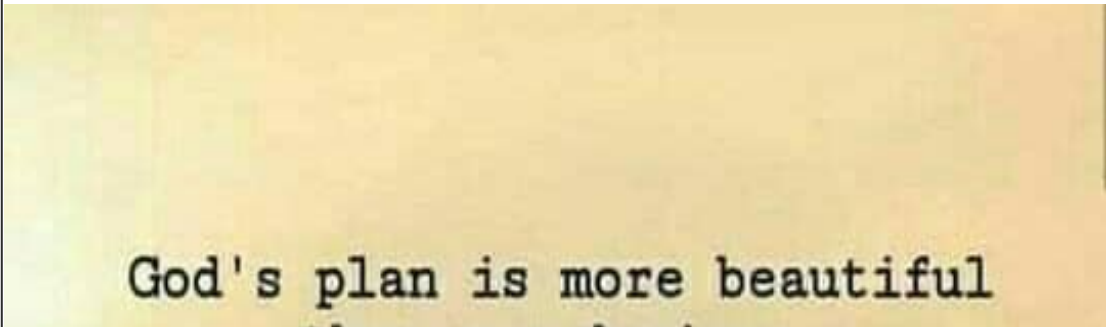
I was putting my feet, mind touching the earth as the foot did. Once I walked for a while like this, my mind stopped wandering, and to some extent I was centred.

When I read this quote of Sharon's I thought back to the time when I most needed a refuge – during the turbulent relationship I frequently call Peyton Place. I was living near the South Downs at the time, and I would escape to walking there trying to centre myself – I can recall it didn't always work. At the end I took a holiday to France – I think Dieppe, and walked along the beaches – holiday and walking; by the end I had a solution that I found acceptable – didn't work out that way but it had integrity. The refuge I took was solitude. During Peyton Place I know the solitude was spiritual. Out on the Downs I would lament to myself, she had so many problems to do with people, how could she possibly see the spiritual destruction I was going through? How could I measure my spirituality against her baggage? In the end I did, and the moral solution I offered was dismissed, this dismissal later showing me that I was not loved; at the time it was just another episode of Peyton Place. When I think of how the Dieppe holiday worked, I deeply

understand solitude as spiritual refuge.

I don't see this spiritual refuge of solitude as a “step on the journey of faith” because I don't see faith as a journey; it was a step on my path. Solitude as spiritual refuge or just part of my spiritual journey is part of the path; if Sharon's abiding faith is path then faith would be a journey - see how the discussion develops in following the path. In good times I centred myself, I had the faith that going into solitude I would work it out based on conviction of past success and enabling the unknown for the future.

For reasons of daily life work on this investigation stalled for a while – week or so, then I began thinking about faith and there was a feeling of something missing. Then seeing this triggered a train of thought:-



God's plan is more beautiful



than our desires.

Have faith !



Have faith in God's plan. As a Buddhist I don't talk about God or his plan so this becomes faith in nature – have faith to follow the path that nature has

given you. Have faith in dhammajati:-

1. nature itself;
2. the law of nature;
3. the duties that must be performed according to that law of nature; and
4. the fruits or benefits that arise from the performance of that duty.

So what is the function of this *faith in faith in nature*, what is the function of

faith in the natural design that our path is part of? In transcendence Dhamma gives us the 4 comrades of which wisdom gives us the understanding of the path. With wisdom there is no need of faith but without wisdom we still need to know to follow the path; that is faith in our paths, faith in path as part of nature. When we don't have wisdom about the path, we have faith until we do know; then faith becomes obsolete. Faith is that which tells us to follow the path when we don't yet have the understanding of the path.

How does this faith work? If we don't know there is a problem because of that ignorance – avijja. First there is sila. When we don't know we can let sila dictate our actions. Sila is concerned with behaviour but on our paths we need to develop Dhamma – the 4 Dhamma comrades, that need comes from faith in the path, the path as Dhamma finding itself.

Now that there is the understanding of this functional aspect of faith, we need to examine where faith tells us what to do. Faith comes from the path so our paths know what to do. But our paths are covered up by conditioning. At the beginning of the Four Agreements there is discussion of the meaning of

agreement, how through love and upbringing we agree to what society requires of us. But it is not our path that agrees it is our conditioned egos. Where is our path in this agreeing process? Hopefully it is closely aligned to this process of conditioning but in some cases agreement requires complete dissociation from the path and we have fragmentation. The more defiled our world is the greater the lack of alignment and the greater the fragmentation.

The conditioning process is natural so the path has faith in that process. There is faith that when we reach the adult stage of maturity conditioning falls away and we follow our paths. But in our defiled world this does not happen for most, faith is then lost, because conditioned ego is in the way - blocking the path. But satta as part of the path searches trying to break through the ego, satta as quest has faith that the path will find wisdom - connect to the Dhamma. As quest builds that knowledge satta continues with faith that knowledge will increase, with the faith that the path will turn knowledge into wisdom – into the Dhamma. Satta is the search, faith is the trust in the path, that is the faith that we have that the path will find itself.

Let us go back to the problem of faith, there can be misplaced faith in ignorance. Satta is searching with faith, and its search can be defiled by conditioning leading to delusion. We can have faith in delusion as faith tries to find its path. The conditioning of kilesa offers us greed, aversion (hatred) and delusion as false egoic paths. It is the duty of our elders or teachers to show us where the path is but in our defiled world it is hard to find such teachers. Faith through conditioning takes us to religion, but the paths that were once the basis of those religions have become institutionalised and their institutions defiled by the conditioning of this world. We are asked to have faith in those institutions rather than faith in the path or Dhamma.

Often spirituality is offered as an alternative to mainstream religions. False charismatic spirits arise offering themselves as objects of faith, and because faith is such a powerful force we can latch onto the ignorance of such false spirituality. So misplaced faith is potentially dangerous in a defiled world where egos can exploit this fundamental nature of the path to find itself. But there are certain flags that we can use to avoid blind faith being exploited, the path begins with sila. Sila is the force that brings order to the chaos of egoic



conditioning. From sila the path develops compassion so faith can begin its search in sila/decency and then compassion. In our education that is secular we can teach compassion and decency as benchmarks for our faith but even that is too much for our defiled world at the moment.

And in a practical context we have to know that so much of our society is disconnected from nature. Living in harmony with nature is a socio-political requirement that teachings need to include. Nature, sila and compassion are the basis of any education system - the core curriculum - #NatureCompassionDecency.

It is frightening that the forces of quest and faith can be manipulated by kilesa. Rather than promoting blind faith in any religion we need to marshal this force recognising what it is and seeking means to control it. And the benchmarks of this control are the core religious curriculum of nature sila and compassion - #NatureCompassionDecency. No religion would ask of its faithful not to be moral and compassionate, it will ask us to recognise that we have our duties in nature however our religion decides on creation. If quest

and faith are given the protections of nature, sila and compassion then no cult can exploit faith for defiled purposes. But faith (quest and faith) is powerful, society needs to recognise this. Satta, the search for the path, can be buried by conditioning, and the kilesa can then take faith, manipulate it, and delude that faith into believing that materialism or other false phala are what is being sought. When we see the defiled world and we see the vehemence with which some people pursue the delusions of this world, we can recognise the power of faith and hopefully show these people the path in the hope that their faith will recognise that path and follow it. Doesn't happen much. Faith is powerful, knowing what faith is and how we can work with it is important in fighting defiled egos. Understanding this faith has been the purpose of this investigating – the quest for the path has been more or less central to my life but I have never seen that quest works with faith. I am a person of faith.

Society has a faith vacuum – a power vacuum. Nature's fundamental desire is to follow the path, there is always this drive - satta. In our upbringing there is instinctive conditioning, and at some point it is possible to mature and overcome this conditioning. At this point the drive kicks in and we can follow

our paths. If we have not reached the stage of following our paths if we choose not to follow our paths what does this drive consciousness or energy do? It attaches. Traditionally this attachment has been to a set of beliefs that is religion – religion has traditionally filled the faith vacuum. For Buddhists following the path is developing Dhamma, before Buddhists develop Dhamma they attach to the dhamma teachings (as distinct from the Dhamma) – this is part of faith in Buddhism, a faith which includes the 3 Refuges. Attaching to ideas is ditthupadana, so unless Dhamma is developed Buddhist faith is ditthupadana – the measure is developing Dhamma. Unless the path is followed, attaching the fundamental path drive to a religious ideology to fill the faith vacuum is not the true way. Religion that leads to authentically following your path is filling the faith vacuum in a way that nature might intend, remaining static by holding to that faith and not attempting to follow the path is ego misusing the drive.

With the lessening interest in religion this faith vacuum has sometimes been filled with spirituality. This spirituality can take many forms of alternative beliefs; but apart from being different these beliefs can just be filling the faith

vacuum and are not part of following the path. Because the path is compassion this faith vacuum has also been filled by isms – political ideologies for the betterment of humanity. This fundamental drive can be seen in the vehement way some people pursue these ideologies. But no matter how well intentioned a set of ideals might be, holding to fixed ideals is not following the path. Placing an idea before the compassion of the path leads to injustice, and this is a weakness of this ideology form of filling the faith vacuum.

The strength of this fundamental drive can be seen by the way the faith vacuum can so easily be filled by cults. This is why society needs to recognise this fundamental drive, and in our upbringings prepare our children for the emergence of this drive. Unfortunately the traditional way of preparing children has been the filling of the faith vacuum with religion. If the faith vacuum is filled with religious ideals but without the fundamental drive to follow the path, the religion becomes a set of ideals and a routine that is practised without heart. Such soulless religion is just a code of conduct that might provide moral rectitude but will give none of the phala of following the

path. When the religious practice is soulless satta will arise within the faith vacuum leaving people vulnerable to cults - false faith.

Whilst many teachers in education are vocational and that vocation can be the fundamental drive of the path, education as a whole fails to recognise quest (satta) and the resulting faith vacuum. As a consequence children when they enter adulthood are not prepared to cope with this. Instead they are vulnerable to the filling of this vacuum with ideologies including cults. Education needs to prepare children by developing sila and karuna, decency and compassion in each child, and by recognising that all life follows nature's laws such as the Buddhist [dhammajati](#). With these pillars of nature, sila and compassion no matter what fills the faith vacuum it cannot be harmful - #NatureCompassionDecency. And of course nature sila and compassion are on everyone's path.

For the pathivist faith is best understood as an intermediary stage. There is the drive to find your path (satta) – to be authentic - to come back to your centre – to return to love. When this drive first asserts itself the pathivist is



likely to be immersed in conditioning, there might be a vague understanding of the path but this wisdom will be covered over by the defilement of conditioned ego. So there will be the drive and some vague objective of path, and at this stage the drive attaches to faith to take us into the unknown. This attached faith for the pathivist is intermediary, it is whatever series of teachings gives sufficient structure for mindfulness to grapple with that then enables the pathivist to transcend and follow the path. For me this intermediary stage would best be described as spiritual teachings that eventually led to Buddhist teachings. Even though firstgrace had shown me the path, I was too immature to understand and follow the path with sufficient conviction. Once I had lived through my second childhood there was sufficient experience that gave me a basis for following the path. But it required acceptance of Buddhist teachings for a while – faith in Buddhism – to enable me to go on and develop the Dhamma, follow my path. In the same way as we let go of the attachment of ego, we let go of the attachment to ditthi – teachings – ditthupadana; letting go of the intermediary of faith enables us to follow the path – see the light? Without that faith there would not have been the path, but the path is beyond faith and the faith is the

conduit of the drive of satta to lead to the path. The path uses faith but then becomes beyond faith. But the search continues, search, faith, path of understanding, search, faith, path of understanding, ....

I have just listened to Eckhart talk of Awakening the Inner Light. At the moment this feels like the basis of the last section of Viveka-Zandtao.

My path has included faith in Buddhism. One of the driving forces behind early retirement was a need to study Buddhism, that study was faith in Buddhism. It recognised that Buddhism could teach me, and then over time I discerned a relationship with the teachings that was primarily the teachings of Buddhadasa and the practice of his interpretation of the Buddha's meditation, MwB. That is not now a faith because through those teachings and practice I have developed pathtivism – my own understanding of following the path, and my own practice which is solitude – Viveka-Zandtao. This understanding is of course not finished, because in Viveka-Zandtao I have come to a greater understanding of permanent enquiry and how I enquire through writing in solitude.

Faith in Buddhism usually includes faith in the 3 Refuges – understanding of my meaning of faith in the 3 Refuges is the next part of the investigation. To begin with there is an understanding that following the path is developing the Dhamma, and my path is to develop the Dhamma. Through my method of enquiry in solitude I will continue to develop the Dhamma through whatever teachings my inner guide takes me to. I have complete faith in the Dhamma as a Refuge. I will examine that in the next chapter on following the path.

I have considered faith in the Sangha, and spoke of my relationship with Sangha-ness. At the moment there is no wish to revisit that. But I have not examined my faith in the Buddha or my understanding of what that means. My relationship with the Buddha is second-hand, through my understanding of Buddhadasa's slavery to the Buddha. At the start of her journey Sharon was listening to Goenka talk of the 3 refuges. I will begin there.

“The first refuge, the Buddha, refers to begin with to the historical person Siddhartha Gautama, the man who once ate a meal across the road from the

Burmese temple and then got enlightened a few blocks away. While he is variously depicted as a mystic, a legendary figure, a historical teacher, and a leader, he is portrayed foremost as a human being, with human capacities” [SS p50]. He was a human being who became enlightened, having faith in the Refuge of the Buddha means that there is enlightenment and accepting that enlightenment in some way. “The Buddha can be an inspiration because he set out to answer those questions and succeeded” [SS p50]; Siddhartha Gautama was on a quest. “It is taught that the Buddha discovered the answers not through revelation from a supreme being, but through the power of awareness that is inherent in all of us. For some, he is a refuge by virtue of this inspiration” [SS p51]. That is something to have faith in, that enlightenment is possible through our own awareness. I have faith in this as a possibility – not faith in it as actually true for me. What does this mean? I do not have faith that through my own awareness I can become enlightened. Could there be a possibility of enlightenment? Not for me, I think. But I can continue through my ways of learning – through pathivism and Viveka-Zandtao, and these ways will help me do the best I can. If enlightenment is possible for me – something I doubt, then I know these ways would get me

there because that is my path. Dhammajati means that by following my path I will be doing the best I can. Has enlightenment got anything to do with my life? I doubt it but I don't wish for doubt to restrict such a potential. If it were possible for me to go there it would be by following my path, doing the best I can on my path, and that is what I am trying to do.

The Buddha became enlightened through his own awareness. It was meant for the Buddha to become enlightened and leave the dhamma teachings; I have faith in that. I don't understand what this means – it is beyond my understanding because I am not enlightened so I need faith. I have faith in the Buddha's enlightenment, and that he was meant to give us his teachings. This is the purpose of faith – to give us direction where we cannot possibly understand. Because of this faith, does that mean I can become enlightened? No, it depends on whether that is what was meant for me on my path. I will do the best I can, and maybe in the end I will have an answer for that.

In Sharon's quote the Buddha became enlightened through his own awareness, if that is what the path means for you it will happen. I do the best I



can, I cannot know what the path means for me; but I do know that by doing the best I can I will be doing what is meant for me. That is enough. Having faith in the Buddha means that if I follow my path and if it is meant for me (or anyone) to be enlightened then doing the best I can on my path will achieve that. When I think back to my friend in Africa his delusion about enlightenment stopped him from doing the best he could because he said *all or nothing*. He said *I am enlightened or I will stop*. His teachings were wrong or not understood, he was not doing the best he could – especially later on when I met him where he had given up and was drinking to avoid.

I have faith that the Buddha was enlightened. I have faith that he was meant to give us his teachings. And I know that by doing the best I can I can fulfil my path, and I have faith that if it is meant for me to be enlightened then by following my path it will happen. I do not work for enlightenment I work to do the best I can, that is my path. Does that faith help or delude me? The faith helps me as it holds out the possibility of enlightenment. It does not delude me because I do the best I can on my path, there is no delusion of enlightenment that I hold to – no target that could produce failure. Not doing

the best I can is a possible failure but it is not a distant target – it is ongoing mindfulness. In each action of my daily life am I doing the best I can? No that is not it as I know I am not doing the best I can in every action. Such a demand would cause stress. Overall am I doing the best I can? When I ask that I can know there is improvement to be made but overall it is OK. Am I being complacent? Then I have my Warts&All approach:-

1. Humility - humble heart
2. Not attaching to kilesa and ending 4 upadanas
3. Grounded in nature under a tree.

Following on from consideration of the possibility of enlightenment, consideration of the following is also fruitful:-

“Goenka took care to explain that taking refuge in the Buddha doesn't require calling yourself a Buddhist or adopting any dogma or feeling devotion to a particular being. Whether or not we have any interest in Buddhism as a religion, the potential to realize the Buddha's insight, compassion, and

courage is a part of who we already are. The word “buddha” means one who has completely awakened from ignorance, one who has fulfilled his or her vast potential for wisdom and compassion. A buddha resides in each of us as the potential for the awakened mind. Each one of us has the capacity to fully understand our lives, and to be free” [SS p51].

I have faith that I have within “the potential to realize the Buddha’s insight, compassion, and courage”. I have faith that within me there is a “buddha” who has the potential to be “completely awakened from ignorance”, and who has the potential to “fulfil (led) his or her vast potential for wisdom and compassion”. And I have faith that “A buddha resides in each of us as the potential for the awakened mind”. I have faith that “each one of us has the capacity .... to be free.” But in me it is faith in the potential and not understanding, for the Buddha it was understanding. Whether I fulfil that potential and enact the “buddha” within me depends on two things:-

- 1) Whether it is my path to fulfil that potential
- 2) Whether I do the best I can to follow that path.

As I have said already I doubt that it is my path even though I will do the best I can. I just feel that my best is not good enough even though as with all people I have the potential. Somehow my best is a compromise - I don't know why, I accept this as my path.

But the potential is in us all so perhaps your best will be good enough to fulfil your potential – to be completely free.

Goenka began this with saying “that taking refuge in the Buddha doesn't require calling yourself a Buddhist or adopting any dogma or feeling devotion to a particular being”. This refuge is faith without dogma or devotion to a being, that is my faith in the Buddha. My faith happily calls this potential for an awakened mind as a buddha, I have faith that we all have this buddha-nature, I have faith that we all have this potential for awakened mind that nature has given us. It doesn't have to be called a buddha-nature but then again why not? This potential for an awakened mind exists for all people, and is not bound to a particular doctrine eg Buddhism. A Christian path, not

Christian doctrine but path, would have this buddha-nature calling it something else. Following our paths is the best we can do to enable this potential.

“Listening to Goenka, I could almost feel the presence of the women and men who, for centuries, had the faith to walk a spiritual path, to set forth into the unknown, to challenge habit and let go of the convenient and familiar in order to find an end to suffering. .... If they could awaken to the truth of life, Goenka was telling us, we also could” [SS p53]. When I was discussing taking refuge in the Sangha, I spoke of Sangha-ness. What Sharon describes here is perhaps the most important aspect of this Sangha-ness, there are people who have done this and we can follow them. There is an intimidation by the majority, intimidation from family and community, intimidation by employment practices and intimidation against the non-conformist. But in following your path is freedom, a personal freedom that you know inside, and a freedom from these intimidations - a conformed life doesn't compare with the path. And the path has phala – Dhammajati's phala, on the path you know these phala, and on the path you can rely on these phala to sustain you. Our



spiritual ancestors have recounted lives on the path so that we can know its potential. Their testimony can sustain us, hopefully this testimony can contribute to that sustaining.

Sangha-ness is connected to faith. “A herd of cows arrives at the bank of a wide stream. The mature ones see the stream and simply wade across it. The Buddha likened them to fully enlightened beings who have crossed the stream of ignorance and suffering. The younger cows, less mature in their wisdom, stumble apprehensively on the shore, but eventually they go forward and cross the stream.

Last come the calves, trembling with fear, some just learning how to stand. But these vulnerable, tender calves also get to the other side, the Buddha said. They cross the stream just by following the lowing of their mothers. The calves trust their mothers and, anticipating the safety of reunion, follow their voices and cross the stream. That, the Buddha said, is the power of faith to call us forward.” [SS p55]

The cow knows she can get across, nor would she do anything to endanger her calf; this is knowledge and nature. When it comes to the spiritual path, those who have already walked would not endanger anyone starting on the path - nature of the path. Having faith in following someone who is following the path is not a danger – it is natural law. On a quest a seeker cannot initially know their path and needs intermediary help, having faith in a path-follower is perfectly natural. A path-follower has Sangha-ness meriting faith. The teachings of the Buddha merit faith (or they do based on my faith in the Buddha just described). Institutions such as Buddhist monasteries can deliver the teachings of the Buddha because of the disciplines of those institutions, but do the monks have the Sangha-ness of path-followers? Automatically by right of the robes they do not, although we can know they give the correct teachings because those teachings indirectly come from the Buddha. In other religions there are path-followers who have Sangha-ness but in those institutions as with Buddhism not all the clergy/institutional leaders are path-followers. I don't have faith in their teachings but if I recognised Sangha-ness I would trust the teachings of the path-follower. Outside of religions there are even greater risks concerning the dangers of false claims. Within religions

there is a tradition that provides strength and correctness backed up by years of followers including Sangha, but whilst the institution can be restrictive tradition has advantages of secure knowledge. Without tradition, is there such strength and correctness? Without tradition is there more risk? For me there are 3 pillars of assuredness that can guide us in where we direct our faith – #NatureCompassionDecency. If a teacher adopts these pillars they merit initial consideration, as yet not faith, but a start; all spiritual paths have these 3 pillars. Note for certain, charisma is not a requirement of the path; recognition of spirit can exist but will it be confused with charisma? Be careful.

#NatureCompassionDecency are pillars of the teachings but there is a pillar of the teacher – their eventual purpose is for the student to be autonomous and follow their own path. If the student is following the teachings as rites and rituals this is not the path but silabattupadana – clinging to rites and rituals - maybe clinging to an institution or a cult. The path has no clinging – no upadana. So we have 3 pillars of the teachings – nature compassion and decency, and one pillar of the teacher – autonomy. If the seeker can see these

pillars, then maybe their quest has found the intermediary faith to follow.

But faith must be continuously evaluated, there has to be continuous enquiry into the teachings with a view to turning the faith into understanding – a process of consolidation. Following the path might require several “faiths” along the way, through consolidation each faith is let go as the seeker/path-follower gets rid of ignorance – avijja. As there is continuous enquiry the quest goes into the unknown, and will need the intermediate guidance of teachings – faith, but faith is a stepping stone to ending ignorance. Do stepping stones ever end?

In the case of my faith-revelation already discussed, quest took me into the unknown, faith in Buddhadasa’s teachings led me to following MwB into lokutarra (even though I was unaware initially). Buddhadasa’s teachings have the 3 pillars, nature-dhammajati, compassion – supramundane state, and decency - sila. As for autonomy he said this “Nevertheless, we must still use the principle of the Four Criteria (mahapadesa) in the Kalama Sutta and Mahaparinibbana Sutta to safeguard and apply our autonomy so as to protect

ourselves from becoming victims of books, essays, or canons that are prone to the concept of a continuing existence” when discussing nature’s laws in paticcasamuppada; clearly he is promoting autonomy. These 4 criteria (mahapadesa) are Buddhist, much safer and more rigorous, and would require far more knowledge than I have of Buddhist teachings. In the quote Buddhadasa is concerned about the proliferation of teachings, and seeks assurance through Buddhist teachings applying the 4 criteria of mahapadesa. I don’t disagree but seeking is not always amenable to such rigour and such faith in Buddhism, the pillars I describe are more general. We must be aware that faith is not certain; the path is certain, quest and faith are not. On the path we develop certain understanding - wisdom, but seeking and the need for faith does not end. This path of quest, faith then wisdom is not restricted to Buddhism.

“Beyond the first intensity of love and encouragement that is bright faith, we must arrive at an inner faith not dependent on externals, something we can carry with us, that isn’t born only of the compelling mirror held up by another, or the resonant vibrations of a sacred place, or a wonderful feeling of



possibility” [SS p59]. For me this inner faith is faith in the path. I trust the path, I know that if I am following the path my actions are true, I know that one way or another the path will pull me back to itself. This faith in the path has always been there ever since the upheaval of firstgrace. But its strength has varied depending on various levels of egoic immersion in daily life, the faith in the path has been unwavering but conditioning ego in daily life have blocked off the strength of that quest and faith to break through so that path could impact daily life. By the training of MwB less and less has been the conditioned ego, quest for and faith in the path has emerged, so that following the path has been more a practice. Following becomes less based in quest and faith but more in understanding - the Dhamma. Faith in the path when I was not following was connection to the path, it was not the path itself; it was a reminder that the path was there – trying to break through whatever ego was blocking me from following the path. That faith in the path was a comfort even when I was not actively following the path but it was never a replacement. A nag? A reminder to disturb the ego that was blocking the path.

“For our faith to mature, we need to weigh what others tell us against our own experience of the truth. We need to honor ourselves enough to rely on our own experiences more than on the experiences of others” [SS p63].

Sharon started at a young age with bright faith, a situation different to my path. I started with faith in the path after an initial following with firstgrace. Personally ie in terms of conditioning I was immature so the path needed experience; from that experience path gave me wisdom and understanding. So for my faith in the path to mature I needed to start to follow the path – to become 100% dedicated to the path. This dedication had 2 components:–

 100% of my being ie no fragmenting.

 100% of my time.

This of course is difficult when we are compromised by the world of work – the need for money to survive. Even though my firstgrace compassion chose education, education is so compromised – so far from the path and so far from #NatureCompassionDecency – it meant that much of my time and being was spent in compromise. Once retired I slowly moved out of the world of

compromise eventually becoming much closer to 100%-dedication to following my path. Eventually my meditation and experience took my faith in the path into the practice of following the path. There is still compromise – Warts&All – but it is now my choice. Would that my practice were better but being my choice means that it is my control, compromise with the defiled world is not completely my control and autonomy is a path requirement. “What others tell us” can be part of faith, can lead to understanding – intermediary stage, but cannot be understanding. Wisdom is our own, once mindfulness has grappled with the teachings (that faith has taken us to); they become marginally different and our own.

I have already discussed concern about misplaced faith. “When we place our faith entirely in others, rather than remembering the need for faith in our own understanding, we end up caught in the shadow side of surrender and devotion. Whatever relationships we form, whether with a friend or lover or coworker or teacher or doctrine, will be passive and dependent, leaving us afraid to question, afraid of being unable to see clearly for ourselves, afraid of being left out, of being challenging. We may subvert reason, intelligence, and

whatever else we have in order to keep someone as the\*repository of our trust” [SS\_p63]. This is cult amongst others, and is why I suggested as a starting point the 3 pillars of #NatureCompassionDecency as benchmarks.

“For faith to be balanced it is vital that we examine closely the recipient of our heart, because delivered with our heart is our life’s energy” [SS\_p63]. I have never delivered my heart to another in faith, and I question whether this should be recommended even going so far as advising against it. I have discussed above faith in the Buddha, a refuge of Buddhist faith. In the Kalama sutta the Buddha asked disciples to hold to enquiry, not to believe what he said but to deeply question – here is Buddhadasa on Kalama sutta. In Sharon’s words the Buddha is not asking for life’s energy, heart wisdom is arrived at through understanding, faith is a stepping stone. Sharon said that the Pali, Saddha, literally means “**place the heart upon**”; is that the same as delivering the heart? That is a matter of interpretation, but for me the heart should never be delivered to another as faith on our journey and I warn against it. However delivering the heart to the Dhamma is a requirement.

The counter of this is eclecticism that I have been guilty of. In my earlier days on the path there was never a deep commitment to a particular set of teachings. My intellect flitted from one passion to another. It was only when I accepted I was Buddhist and went deeper into meditation and Theravada that I properly connected with my path. I think such deep commitment is essential and would understand the phrase “**deliver the heart**” could mean that.

So this brings me again to surrender. I can surrender to my path, I can surrender to faith in the path, but surrendering to teachings that are not my own is a risk and is ill-advised. I surrender to the Dhamma - deliver my heart to the Dhamma. In lokutarra transcendence surrenders control to the Dhamma as there are no remnants of self. But this is not surrender to another, another's teachings - dhamma; it is surrender to the Dhamma and it is natural law that Dhamma be surrendered to - dhammajati. I can surrender to God but not to the bible, priests, evangelists, Pope, or any teacher; as an intermediary stage I can be strongly committed to an individual's teachings without surrender, the true surrender is to God – no other. Is that what Christians say? (a different discussion)



Similarly Sharon talks of ““verifying faith” .... This is a crucial step of verifying or validating through our own experience what we previously have only heard of or seen outside ourselves. The Buddha likened this process of investigation to the method for analyzing gold. The gold is scorched with fire, then cut and rubbed to test its purity. Likewise, we test the attractive, shiny allure of bright faith by examination, to see if the teachings hold up in our lives” [SS\_p64]. This is the same as taking the teachings and using our own mindfulness to grapple with the teachings and making the wisdom our own. Is there disagreement? To understand teachings requires a deep commitment, eclectic dabbling does not access the path; delivering the heart says to me complete surrender and that is for the path (or God) not for faith at an intermediary stage. Sharon, [SS\_pp64-], continues in a similar vein making me feel more there is agreement – “Buddhism has led me over and over again back to the even more decided challenge of finding out what is true for myself” [SS\_p65].

Sharon then described her state of mind at the time, a state of faith that is a

risk “When it came down to it, maybe I would rather have followed unthinkingly than have investigated and questioned” [SS\_p68]. This is a state of mind that she described Freud as warning against “Freud described religious belief systems as forging “a protection against suffering through a delusional remolding of reality”” [SS\_p68]. “Its the same longing that seduces people into following ego-centered cult leaders without discrimination” [SS\_p68]. This I also warned against, and is why I discussed the 3 pillars - #NatureCompassionDecency, recognising also that a spiritual teacher works towards autonomy; as an organisation ASI takes this ethics and discernment against blind faith further.

Sharon then discussed a workshop in which participants showed the same aversion to faith that until my faith-revelation (discussed earlier) I had. I wasn't hurt but “Many had been hurt by the religious teachings of their childhood, in which their degree of faith was the measure of their belonging; if they did not have enough there was something wrong with them or they would be condemned, maybe forevermore. Separating faith from intelligent inquiry casts it as a practice of the gullible” [SS\_p70]. “Intelligent enquiry”

begins to make the intermediary stage of faith into the understanding or wisdom that is our paths. What these people had experienced in their institutions was religion without path – religion that was not spiritual, a feeling I knew from my early catholicism. Just to note I have no reason to think that there are not people with Sangha-ness in the catholic religion, but they will not be the leaders; I don't know the religion though.

Describing these people Sharon said “They didn't lack faith; they lacked the opportunity to verify their faith by examining their beliefs” [SS\_p71]. What she describes as verifying faith I talk of as taking the teachings that faith had led people to and turning that faith into understanding – wisdom. I interpret Sharon's verifying faith as finding wisdom, but it is the process that matters not the words – through faith we move beyond thoughts and beliefs into wisdom and understanding.

This next is not an issue of faith but something I have learned through this Viveka-Zandtao. I have used this method of detailed bouncing-off of writers as a means of satta – questing into the unknown. I consider this a method of

permanent enquiry but Sharon describes it as skilful doubt “faith is strengthened by doubt when doubt is a sincere, critical questioning combined with deep trust in our own right and ability to discern the truth. In Buddhism this kind of questioning is known as skillful doubt. For doubt to be skillful we have to be close enough to an issue to care about it, yet open enough to let questioning come alive” [SS p73]. This doubt is constructive because it accepts what is known and quests into the unknown. Of course there is unskilful doubt that I associate with the intellect. In an intellectual process all is questioned leading in academia to an inability to formulate core known knowledge. Wisdom is known, mindfulness has grappled with the teachings or other “knowledge” and made the propositions known. From there we move forward. Wisdom can and should be refined through skilful questioning, but that is not to question the wisdom in the original insight. An insight is true, but holding to an insight permanently is clinging. It becomes necessary to understand the truth of the insight and recognise what was temporary at the time of the insight – a process of refining. The true insight is not questioned because that is wisdom that is permanent, but enquiry can end the confusing of the temporary with the permanent – skilful doubt. Intellectual doubt would

go back to the whole insight and question the truth of the insight as a whole. If there is no path there is only intellectual doubt eschewing the insight totally, path gives us conviction in the wisdom we have learnt but at the same time mindfulness uses skilful doubt to question the temporary with a view to refining the wisdom that is permanent.

At my Chiswick firstgrace there was deep insight yet at the same time there was much ignorance and conditioning because of my age and immaturity. Firstgrace gave me faith in the path and over the years with experience and meditation I have been able to understand more of my path by removing some ignorance, recognising and letting go some old conditioning, and preventing some new conditioning from attaching, all through permanent enquiry. Yet the path was true and has never been doubted, details have been refined, and understanding that revolved around the temporary has been lost in time. Intellectual doubt might try to question all of firstgrace but with me that can never happen, primarily because I recognise intellectual ego in that type of unskillful enquiry. As Sharon says “unskillful doubt pulls us farther away” [SS p73] such as with the cynicism she then describes. Unfortunately,



in academia intellectual doubt controls – a great weakness for humanity's learning. Attempting to find a core mind that was beyond the intellectual doubt was what I hoped my Ph D to be, way too ambitious – and of course impossible in academic terms; a nice dream.

Ditthupadana – clinging to ideas and beliefs. I have spent much time trying to separate belief and faith because ditthupadana creates ego. Yet now I have accepted faith as an intermediary stage in which I have temporary faith in beliefs in the hope that in due process I will let go of the faith, let go of the beliefs, as I gain understanding. I say I have no beliefs. I think it is important not to cling to any beliefs especially in this world of manipulation spoken of as fake news. One of the kilesa is delusion, and our delusion is constantly being manipulated. The only way through this delusion is to end avijja – end ignorance. There are the 4 Agreements – be impeccable with the word. In terms of fake news this means for me NEVER writing or saying anything I am not absolutely sure of. Yet I say the problem with society is the 1% and their capitalism. Can I be 100% sure of this? Quite honestly, the answer is no because the only thing I can be sure of is insight, and there are no such things

as spiritual political insights. The nearest we can get to this is tathata when Dhamma is developed:-

We

need to study the secret of the truth that controls life, the truth of *aniccaā*, *dukkhaā*, *anattā*, *suññatā*, and *tathatā*.

*Aniccaā*: know that all conditioned things are impermanent and in endless flux.

*Dukkhaā*: know that all concocted things are inherently unable to satisfy our desires.

*Anattā*: know that all things are not-self.

*Suññatā*: know that everything is void of selfhood, of “I” and “mine.”

*Tathatā*: know the thusness, the suchness, of all things.

Together, these are the one ultimate truth.

But how can I know that the way I see things (suchness) is tathata. I am happy to accept as faith that tathata of the enlightened is truth but I am not enlightened. With the Dhamma I have developed, tathata as I see it is very clear – the 1% are the problem, the 1% are the existential threat, and they are trapped in being this threat because they are addicted to wealth and power. But I am not enlightened therefore this is not truth, and I would not claim it as truth. But I have no doubts.

However because it is not tathata, in describing society in this way I am presenting a view and if I cling to this view it is ditthupadana. So now I very rarely express this view because in expressing views I create division - those who believe my view and those who don't. But there are truths I hold. The one ultimate truth with 5 characteristics – anicca, dukkha, anatta, sunnata and tathata – is true. But on clear reflection, because I am not enlightened I cannot say that I completely understand this truth. I can know that the longer I follow my path the greater I understand this truth but I don't understand it 100% because I am not enlightened. So I have faith that this is true but it is a

faith that includes understanding.

Once I question in this way, every understanding has an element of faith even though I don't like to admit it. The main dogma I describe as truth is idappaccayata-paticcasamuppada:-



## Dhammajati/Idappaccayata

## Paticcasamuppada

1) Nature itself	(1). With ignorance as a condition, mental concocting arises;
2) The law of nature	(2). With mental concocting as a condition, consciousness arises;
3) The duties that must be performed according to that law of nature	(3). With consciousness as a condition, mentality/materiality arises; (4). With mentality/materiality as a condition, the six sense bases arise; (5). With the six sense bases as a condition, contact arises; (6). With contact as a condition, feeling arises;
4) The fruits or benefits that arise from the performance of that duty - <u>phala</u>	(7). With feeling as a condition, craving arises; (8). With craving as a condition, attachment arises; (9). With attachment as a condition, becoming arises; (10). With becoming as a condition, birth arises; (11). With birth as a condition, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief, and tribulation arise. Thus the mass of suffering arises.

But do I know everything there is to know about nature and its laws? To be honest I have to say no - far from it. I have said earlier in this book that this is a fundamental truth because they can be observed, but whilst I have some

understanding of this, even with all my observations verifying this truth I do not know it 100% - and the rest is faith, faith based on understanding.

What about the 4NT? I can observe suffering, know that there is clinging to desire that can be let go to end suffering. But I cannot say that by following the Noble Eightfold Path all suffering will end even though I have every indication that by following the Noble 8-Fold path this is true. But it is still observation, understanding and some faith.

I claim there is path and ego, and that by following our paths we are following nature's laws and do what nature intends. I have claimed this as an understanding but in truth it is also understanding and faith. I observe the 3 kilesa of greed, delusion and aversion, recognise these kilesa in the world, and claim that by removing kilesa there will be no ego and we can follow our paths – again there is understanding and some faith. I observe the 4 upadanas of kama, silabatta, ditthi and attava, and claim that by removing upadanas there will be no ego and we can follow our paths – but yet again being completely honest there is some faith in this understanding. Can I ever get rid

of this faith by completely understanding? The enlightened might know but I can't. With firstgrace I used to go round saying "I knew things", now I know far more and have to be honest and say that there is what I know and also some faith. Even yesterday (before writing this) I could not have said that – we keep learning. Recognising this dual faith and understanding brings greater conviction to what is known because there is not the inner guide having the questioning of skilful doubt where in delusion we have appropriated faith as understanding; with faith there is no need for that so long as there is the ongoing process of turning faith into wisdom. Investigating faith is such an eye-opener and continues to reveal.

"If we had been able to hold our beliefs more skillfully, we might have seen that we can question our beliefs freely without fear of losing our faith. With their assumptions of correctness, beliefs try to make a known out of the unknown" [SS p83].

By being honest I recognise that it is skilful to tinge my firm understanding with faith, because I cannot have 100% understanding. This is a hard one for

me to swallow because I am so absolutely convinced about my path but in reality there is some faith. I am absolutely convinced of the 4 Dhamma Comrades of sati-mindfulness, panna-wisdom, samatha – concentration and sampajanna – wisdom-in-action arising from developing the Dhamma during MwB. But to be truthful I have to say there is understanding with some faith even though every aspect of my being desires to say it is 100%-true.


Yet I have previously lived by this process of asserting conviction. But it is skilful to accept this is understanding and faith, and in discussion not to be adamant creating a confrontation. To be honest I would have to go back through everything I have written amending through this skilful filter but that would be a fruitless exercise. It was true as I knew it then. There is still conviction but it cannot be 100% conviction, and now will be skilfully tinged with faith. Imagine up until this investigation there was so much conviction; learning is fascinating. Skilful doubt – conviction tinged with faith!!


Using skilful doubt there is a recognition of conviction tinged with faith but there is a clear trap of ditthupadana in this. This conviction comes from

understanding, the tinging with faith is because there cannot be 100% understanding because of the lack of enlightenment. But what if there is clinging to this understanding plus faith – clinging that brings belief? Sharon describes how belief can create delusion. “With their assumptions of correctness, beliefs try to make a known out of the unknown. They make presumptions about what is yet to come, how it will be, what it will mean, and how it will affect us” [SS\_p83]. Because of Sharon’s broad view of faith she sees faith as preventing this “Faith, on the other hand, doesn’t carve out reality according to our preconceptions and desires. It doesn’t decide how we are going to perceive something but rather is the ability to move forward even without knowing. Faith, in contrast to belief, is not a definition of reality, not a received answer, but an active, open state that makes us willing to explore. While beliefs come to us from outside— from another person or a tradition or heritage— faith comes from within, from our alive participation in the process of discovery” [SS\_p83]. What is needed with this conviction tinged with faith is an ability not to create delusion. With the conviction in the known there is a desire for conviction in the unknown. But if there is only faith in the unknown then such conviction would be delusion. Conviction



would want to turn the beliefs that are faith into conviction without necessarily using mindfulness to turn these beliefs from the unknown into wisdom. What is needed is to accept insights that gave understanding - conviction, use faith to move into the unknown without fashioning reality, avoid turning faith into delusion by ensuring that mindfulness grapples with faith-directed beliefs turning them into wisdom - accepting belief without using mindfulness creates delusion. In the search into the unknown to make the understanding complete there needs to be a power that helps but does not attach, that is what faith does. The intermediary stage of faith has two attributes:-

 Received wisdom as unattached belief eg believing in 4NT before internalising as wisdom

 The power to prevent consciousness from attaching to this received wisdom as belief, no clinging to create delusion.

As part of practice mindfulness works on not attaching to kilesa and ending upadana. When we move into the unknown faith gives us power not to attach

and cling but to accept the understanding that insight has already given us and continue with satta without attaching to belief and creating the restriction of delusion.

Because of my conviction that previously lacked some skilful doubt I have moved into the unknown without recognising this faith, I have therefore left myself vulnerable to the possibility of delusion. With skilful doubt that tinges the conviction with faith, I can use faith in meditation to recognise the power that does not create delusions based on prior convictions of insight. This faith can be seen as a form of maintaining shapelessness – “active open state”. As we move into the unknown of lokutarra belief would want to hold us back into shape, but faith maintains that shapelessness which enables the formation of new insights. This faith which comes from skilful doubt holds back the restrictions of attachment and clinging to the known enabling the path to quest into the unknown. This understanding of faith needs meditation work to turn it from an insight through study into a more integrated part of practice.

There are two sides to conviction. There is the positive side where insight

creates the understanding, and once created there is no doubt because it came from insight. This means that conditioning and conformity cannot influence this understanding by creating doubt in the insight. The negative side is that understanding only wants conviction so if there is no conviction and no insight then there is no search. On this negative side conviction allows for the creation of delusion as satta enters the unknown accepting the unknown as belief and therefore possibly delusion; faith could enable that satta through skilful doubt whilst ensuring that the search does not attach to egos – maintaining the shapelessness. Satta is a natural process of the path, this negative attribute of conviction can restrict satta; developing faith enables satta – working on removing the restrictions of belief and delusion. In the past I have suffered from this negative aspect of conviction because I have not recognised faith so have not tried to develop faith. I have remained in conviction until insight has come through meditation to add to this understanding. Whilst there has been path there has been no conscious satta, as soon as there was satta there was the faith revelation that included lokutarra. The path is now telling me I need faith so that there is no holding back by negative conviction enabling a movement into the unknown where

faith can protect me. This faith as protection has no belief, it is just a power that enables satta keeping away the kilesa and upadana from clinging to conviction as belief. I have faith in satta, for satta I will develop faith.

“Faith is the capacity of the heart that allows us to draw close to the present and find there the underlying thread connecting the moment’s experience to the fabric of all of life. It opens us to a bigger sense of who we are and what we are capable of doing” [SS\_p96]. Feeling presence (Eckhart), connecting to sunnata, has the bigger sense. The supramundane states including compassion lead to transcendence that gives a bigger sense. We can feel Unity. The path wants us to feel Unity, the path is Unity. The path wants to find itself, wants to move beyond conditioning and find ourselves, live life the way we were meant to. The path is living in the present moment. It is the nature of path to try to be free of ego in order to live in the present moment. “Faith is the capacity of the heart that allows us to draw close to the present”. I was resisting this but then .... How are faith and presence connected? Faith is an intermediary – with satta it is a directed drive of the path. Through MwB there is the development of the supramundane states to a greater or lesser

extent, faith can take those states to lokutarra, and once in lokutarra there can be presence – at the minimal development of Dhamma - with faith perhaps complete presence. As a shapeless intermediary faith draws us closer to the path wherever you are at – improving supramundane states, transcending, even connecting to sunnata or presence. It is the nature of path to do these things, if we allow it faith can help; we do not allow it when we restrict to conviction or cling to belief.

“True hope can open our hearts and remind us of light when we are in darkness” [SS p97]. Hope is something I have avoided as with faith. My first reaction to discussion of hope is to think of the path – the conviction of the path. In darkness the path is my refuge – end-of. There is no ambition or hope because they are targets – “fixated hope” - and therefore creating dukkha. But what if hope was also shapeless, driving in the direction without targets or ditthi - without ego.

Do faith and hope require action? Do we just sit back and hope, just sit back and have faith; is there apathy or complacency because of faith and hope? It



is for each to answer - do we actively use faith and hope? Faith and hope are there to be used constructively. Because of negative possibilities I have avoided both in the past, sampajanna with conviction only but no wise action connected to faith or hope. One reason I have avoided faith and hope is the apathy and complacency that faith especially can bring. Faith as an intermediary for following the path includes removing avijja (ignorance), such avijja would include the blind faith in restricting beliefs and conviction.

This leads to the question, how do we use faith and hope? They are open, I use the word shapeless. If we are meditating at the stage of developing supramundane states, do we ask faith to help us to develop the state? In that case faith becomes fixated. If we give faith a target, isn't it a fixation? How do we keep faith open and yet use it?

Sharon discussed her reactions to Ram Dass's stroke [[SS pp98 – 102](#)]. “As each of us accepted the fact of Ram Dass's stroke and surrendered to our inability to control the situation, tenderness and a tangible peace filled the room. None of us knew what would happen, but faith allowed us to relax into

this vast space of *not knowing*” [SS p102]. If we desire presence we fixate and maybe it doesn't happen, if we desire transcendence we fixate and maybe it happens, if we desire faith to do something we fixate, will it happen? Sharon's lesson on Ram Dass's stroke is surrender, we use faith by surrendering. MwB is a method, follow the method - no objectives, no targets, no fixations (faith or hope). MwB is a sound method, we can have faith in the method, when we follow the method - surrender - we can know that faith will enable. To use faith and hope we surrender; we can consciously follow the method (doing the best we can), surrender and let faith deal with the unknown; this surrender has no beliefs, just conviction in MwB, a method known to work.

There are other known methods, there is no intention at Buddhist or pathivist proselytising. Appropriate known method from tradition, due diligence – best you can, surrender to the path, and let faith do the rest – the unknown.  
Presence!

“Faith enables us, despite our fear, to get as close as possible to the truth of

the present moment, so that we can offer our hearts fully to it, with integrity. We might (and often must) hope and plan and arrange and try, but faith enables us to be fully engaged while also realizing that we are not in control, and that no strategy can ever put us in control, of the unfolding of events. Faith gives us a willingness to engage life, which means the unknown, and not to shrink back from it” [SS\_p103]. To me this says similar, here is how I interpret it. Following the path is living in the now – present moment; I would suggest this is an enlightened understanding, for me it is an understanding tinged with faith. In following our path we do the best we can - “We might (and often must) hope and plan and arrange and try” – to live in the present moment but our understanding can only take us so far; we will be restricted by egos of kilesa and upadana. But if we can manage to surrender these egos faith can take us closer to living in the present moment by offering our hearts fully to it – dedication, faith that is not fixed not an ideal or belief just a faith whose function is to take us close to the present moment if we surrender. We bring a certain level of control through our understanding and by doing the best we can, but control is not the objective because then there is no satta - quest into the unknown. Following our path and living in the present moment

is the way to try to engage with life – dhammajati.

Sharon's description of courage is similar. “With courage we openly acknowledge what we can't control, make wise choices about what we can affect, and move forward into the uncultivated terrain of the next moment” [SS p104]. We can end the restrictions of kilesa and upadana through surrender (nissaggo?) to MwBs, follow our quest - satta - into the uncultivated terrain, and with courage use wisdom to move forward.

“Just as faith brings us to a steadfast love, the power of love allows us to “faith.” Kierkegaard wrote: “Hope becomes faith through love.” By revealing the grace of connection no matter what is happening, love releases us from our efforts to control life. Love opens our hearts wide enough to admit the unknown, the ungovernable. That openness creates the space we need to step outside our restrictive habits and come forward in faith” [SS p104]. This also is similar but includes love opening our hearts. In love – the transcendent state of lokutarra – and loving – connecting to the Dhamma, we “open our hearts wide enough to admit the unknown”. Surrender ends

restriction of kilesa and upadana, and quest into the unknown is enabled by faith.

This next is an excellent description of faith and where it fits into our practice. “Having faith doesn’t mean that we don’t make an effort. When we are trying to create change, we can pour ourselves into the endeavor and do our best to accomplish our goal, doing our absolute best to speak, to heal, to create, to alleviate suffering — our own or others’. The particular gift of faith is that it allows us to make that intensity of effort guided by a more holistic vision of life, with all its mutability, evanescence, dislocations, and unruliness” [SS\_p106]. What it says to me is this. Follow your practice doing the best you can. But your practice is concerned with the known, what about quest into the unknown? Faith is the particular gift of Dhamma, of the path that can take you there (into the unknown) if you surrender your egos of kilesa and upadana thus integrating the known and unknown on the path. Through surrender faith takes us beyond our known practice.

“Whatever takes us to our edge, to our outer limits, leads us to the heart of

life's mystery, and there we find faith" [[SS p108](#)]. Our practice on the path takes us to our edge, to our outer limits. Once we have done the best we can with our practice, we surrender our egos, and faith takes us to the heart of life's mystery – sunnata or presence. Is sunnata an important distinction – it feels like it to me but it could just be the understanding of terminology. But the essence of life's mystery is sunnata not faith.

In chapter 5 [[SS pp90 - 113](#)] Sharon was talking of faith and fear. “We can step out of the hope/fear gyration and give our capacity to love a chance to flower. These possibilities are what hold us. This is where we can place our faith. Even as we fall, fall endlessly, with faith we are held as we open to each moment” [[SS p113](#)]. It is not only fear that conditions us but all the kilesa and upadana. We can work on these doing the best we can. This brings us some element of control to our daily lives – at least we know that practice can make daily life better, but it is a restriction if we get stuck in the known. Following the path quest takes us into the unknown, and we can do this because we have faith in the path that we can learn from the unknown. Quest takes us there and faith enables increased understanding.



“This is the core aspect of despair — the sense of utter isolation and disconnection. When we believe that our circumstances—inner or outer—will never change, and that there is nothing we can ever do to find love or peace again, our faith is consumed by hopelessness” [SS p117]. In the Manual I spoke of despair, not calling it by that name nor associating it with faith. There were two components of despair I spoke of – being dispossessed and complete disenchantment. There was also the pain from Peyton Place that gave rise to my understanding of shadow and integration.

There was never an experience of despair, and I associate that with the strength of my firstgrace experience. During Peyton Place and afterwards there was much pain, perhaps the worst I felt was that during Peyton Place I was still in love but unable to live with my lover. But there was no despair, I internalised the pain, avoided the pain for a number of years, and moved onto a different aspect of my life – keeping buried the shadow of that pain body until I was able to cope. As for being dispossessed and complete disenchantment, these aspects of despair were more a part of my awareness. I

feel sad that my upbringing and personal history mean that I can never be truly possessed by Nature – perhaps faith could alter that? But I also learned the necessary lesson of despair that there is no way that in the world of conditioning there can be the change many desire for harmony and happiness. Whilst I recognise this there was sadness but no despair associated with the recognition. Because of firstgrace I never felt the isolation of being a completely separate human – there was perhaps some despair prior to firstgrace but I was conscious of so little then including not being conscious of possible despair.

At these times of sadness my path automatically sought alternative action avoiding the pain relegating what might have been the beginnings of despair to shadow. However all 3 are part of the process that led to the recognition of pathivism that activism ultimately needs to be to follow the path.

The question of faith never entered into it. Only when I started the quest this year (as part of Viveka-Zandtao), did faith consciously enter into consideration. I have no doubts at all that my path was responsible for the

avoidance (of Peyton Place's pain), for the integration of my pain body initially at Nyanga (Sharon described a similar pain process on SS p129), and for the integration that I have called my Centring Summer. But faith was never a conscious part of redressing these aspects of despair. Promoting faith might well have helped with these aspects of despair, but such is conjecture as it has happened already. So whilst for Sharon developing faith overcame despair it was not part of my experience, but a certain level of despair is essential for the path so that we don't attach to the egos of false hope in the conditioned world. Only this way can we recognise that the only way forward is to go beyond the world of conditioning and follow the path – connecting to Dhamma. Did I ever doubt the path? No. Did I always do the best I could to follow the path? No. I allowed egos arising from daily life – mainly the needs of the world of work – to create a barrier between me and my path. Perhaps (stronger) faith would have enabled me to overcome these egos, pointless speculation. However if I were to go back I would encourage younger me to develop faith; quest was strong, faith was not.

So how do we develop faith? In despair Sharon described how she developed

her faith again “Faith began to grow, saying that if I opened my heart and mind big enough to take in the suffering, then there would be healing— not because the suffering itself is redemptive or healing, but because of the opening I was cultivating in the face of it. One of the meanings of “saddha,” the word for faith in Pali, is hospitality. Faith is about opening up and making room for even the most painful experiences, the ones where we “take apart the chord” of our suffering to find notes of horror, desolation, and piercing fear. If I could be willing to make room for my aching numbness, and the river of grief it covered, allowing it, even trusting it, I would be acting in faith” [SS p134]. Her despair was causing suffering and she saw cultivating openness in the face of suffering as faith. When I think of openness I think of emptying the contents of consciousness. Through conditioning, our minds are filled with egos; instead of letting go of conditioning in the form of kilesa, upadana or even upbringing, we attach building up egos that stop us from following the path. Letting go of egos reclaims openness or emptiness where faith can come in with the Dhamma comrades during meditation. For Sharon faith came in with this presence. “I was practicing being mindful of my steps, when all of a sudden I encountered what I can only call a tremendous sense

of presence, and with it a feeling of release, joy, and love. .... Standing on that staircase, with its shabby wallpaper, worn carpet, and dim lighting, I was rocked by faith in that enormous sense of life” [[SS p136](#)].

“How do we cultivate a faith that enables us to take positive action in the world against even overwhelming odds?” [[SS p141](#)]. My first reaction was to say sampajanna, just wise action irrespective. Sharon’s approach is to address the appalling American attitude “make a difference”, I call it appalling because it is an indoctrination of young Americans especially, eg Peace Corps, who travel the world thinking actions from their good intentions will make a difference. Very egotistical. From personal observation I have watched their egos alienate local peoples (and alienate me). After a while most find they cannot make a difference, go back home, get a job and become part of the problem. Sharon describes this more pleasantly “Yet when we assess the value of our actions, we often do so in terms of whether or not they will produce a certain consequence — doing the good we envisioned, in the time frame we anticipated. If it doesn’t work out that way, we may lose faith in what we do and grow dispirited. Unless we can guarantee the response we

want, we might even decide not to take certain actions at all. Such attachment to achieving results can lead to relentless expectation, burnout, and the desolating habit of feeling we can never do enough” [[SS\\_p158](#)].

Without criticising “make a difference” Sharon addresses the issue. “To see beyond the one small part in front of us and not think that’s all there is, we have to look past our ready conclusions. When we see only the suffering before us and our own actions in response to it, it is no wonder we might conclude that what we do seems inadequate” [[SS\\_p144](#)]. What we do individually is usually inadequate because the problems of kilesa and upadana are so big. We do the best we can. But we have to trust in [dhammajati](#). We follow nature’s laws and accept that by doing so nature will provide the solution in the bigger picture.

What I have just described as dhammajati Sharon describes here “Both the suffering and our efforts to address it are woven into an immense but hidden flow of interaction, a dynamic process of action and consequence that doesn’t stop with us and our particular role” [[SS\\_p144](#)]. The full laws of dhammajati



are hidden to us. “When we stand before a chasm of futility, it is first of all faith in this larger perspective that enables us to go on” [[SS p144](#)]. Sharon’s faith in the larger perspective is my faith in dhammajati, nature and its laws. Through observation and experience I have come to understand that dhammajati is true but it is not possible to know that it is always true – what we don’t know we have faith in. We have faith in dhammajati – the larger perspective.

“Our states of mind emerge out of a matrix of conditions” [[SS p145](#)], she is talking about the natural law of causality – ongoing causality where everything is interconnected. We cannot know where what we do fits in with this interconnectivity so we do the best we can. I see this causality as part of paticcasamuppada, and together with [dhammajati](#) see this basis of life as the wonderfully Pali [idappaccayata-paticcasamuppada](#). Sharon feels the need to go into detail on the intricacy of causality in her chapter on [Faith in Action pp 140 -](#), to be honest I don’t see why and bow to her experience; what I know of nature’s laws and causality together with faith in what I don’t know is sufficient so long as I am doing the best I can to try and learn.

When describing our actions I focus on sampajanna – wise action – one of the Dhamma comrades that comes from MwB. Sharon describes actions as having 2 characteristics (both wise) – intention and skilful. “When our intention is to do good for others, and we nurture that intention, we can have faith that in some way, often unknown to us, it ripples out” [SS p160]. Compassion – intention to do good for others, being moral and fitting in with nature gives us the 3 pillars, #NatureCompassionDecency, that can protect us when we open up to faith even if the consequences of our actions are unknown.

I need more faith in metta – and prayer in general. On [SS pp159-161] she gives examples of possible benefits from prayer and metta. Even if a fraction of this is true we should all do more metta - prayer. With metta there is no real feedback, nor should there be. But faith in the Dhamma brings with it an understanding of the benefits of metta meditation. I am being lazy in not doing more metta. NOT doing the best I can. My meditation is too inner, and whilst that is good it is not enough – METTA.

From MwB comes compassion. In daily life we will see pain “But if that inevitable sorrow is joined with faith in interconnectedness, rather than bitterness at the nature of things, we can more likely get up the next morning and once again do the best we can, knowing that in this interconnected reality, even the smallest action done with good intention is consequential. .... We can, with love and compassion, continue to offer our hearts beyond the hurdle of pain, stirred by faith to act the best we can in the life we all share together. We may not comprehend why there is so much suffering in this world, why some people behave so badly toward others, but we can count on hatred never ceasing by more hatred, but only by love. We can’t predict how our actions will turn out,- but whatever we do will have impact and consequences. There is no knowing what the future holds, or what lies on the horizon, but no matter what happens, the lives we live each day are part of a greater whole. We can place our faith on these certainties.” [SS pp164-5].

“What can any of us place our faith in that endures? According to Buddhist teachings, to discover that is to know the deepest level of faith” [SS p168].

An excellent question, what endures? Does faith endure in the deepest level? I thought this last chapter on faith abiding was going to be about lokutarra. “Then, as we come to deeply know the underlying truths of who we are and what our lives are about, abiding faith, or unwavering faith as it is traditionally called, arises” [SS\_p169]. What endures? Unwavering faith? Abiding faith “is the magnetic force of a bone-deep, lived understanding, one that draws us to realize our ideals, walk our talk, and act in accord with what we know to be true” [SS\_p169]. This sounds like an answer to “what is the path?” That would make sense. What endures in our lives is the path even if we never become conscious of the path. If abiding faith is the path then I am going to use it as the beginning of the next section. That is now the plan - to investigate abiding faith as possible path.

## Section Summary.

Before I examine path beginning with Sharon’s abiding faith, I want to summarise this investigation into faith. Because of the hard work Sharon has done this investigation has been very useful. From dismissing faith because

of my perceptions of US evangelists (amongst others) and an upbringing whose religion had no soul or faith, faith has now become an essential word – faith enabling the quest into the unknown. Now Sharon’s work has given the word “faith” great breadth, nothing wrong with that but it is not my way. I like use of different words for different functions because this highlights different actions required. From Sharon’s faith described in her book there grew in me a feeling of power and conviction associated with faith - including the passions of bright faith. But I then went to break that feeling down perceiving elements of quest with its power, discerning conviction that is not upadana, lokutarra, path, inner guide and the enabling of faith into the unknown through surrender without attachment to kilesa and clinging to upadana - as well as the passions of bright faith. Through recognising what is known/understood as conviction and recognising the need for faith as quest takes you into the unknown, skilful doubt is used to develop conviction from what faith leads us to. With skilful doubt faith can be turned into wisdom through the grappling of mindfulness whilst avoiding delusions that misplaced conviction, faith and belief can bring. This section of my Viveka-Zandtao is based only on her book – I have no idea whether Sharon would

agree, and whilst I would prefer agreement it is not necessarily relevant because this investigation is a way for me to go inner and understand.

This investigation first clarified that faith has nothing to do with attaching to beliefs, faith is beyond attachment; equally faith would dissociate from materialism because it is not sustainable. Faith is not specific to any religion or ideology, it is concerned with the journey into the unknown. But faith is powerful and the faithful can be vulnerable to false paths, hence the need for all from an early age to develop the 3 pillars of #NatureCompassionDecency.

Faith arose for me when I began my quest into the unknown. Quest is the drive from the path that pushes us to go into the unknown. Here is where faith comes in. Even though the journey goes into the unknown we can have faith that we can cope with and learn from the unknown. We can have faith that the inner guide will help us in all actions in our daily life whether in known situations where your inner guide helps you do the best you can or unknown situations where you have faith in the inner guide. The power that I described as faith has two components - the power that comes from the drive of quest,



and the power that comes from faith that in the unknown faith will enable learning. If conditions are placed on faith then it is clinging thus reducing the power of faith - lessening the ability to learn in the unknown.

This recognition of faith enabling learning brings conviction into question. Given the pressures of natural and societal conditioning it is necessary to have conviction in the understandings we have gained from following the path. This conviction has the downside of potential attachment and clinging - accepting only what is known, and because of this clinging the downside being unwilling to go into the unknown even though quest would take us there. Faith counters this negative conviction because through faith we can quest into the unknown knowing that we can learn and then understand; this comes from the path whose nature is to know and find itself. In my own case I have conviction in Idappaccayata-Paticcasamuppada and a conviction in the method for developing Dhamma - MwB. But conviction is not enough or it is clinging. Quest goes beyond this known conviction and needs faith to go into the unknown so that where there is not known conviction faith enables learning; conviction tinged with faith using skilful doubt. Without faith this

known conviction is ditthi, and without faith the known method of MwB would be silabatta. There was confusion early on in this investigation, how can restricting to known conviction not be ditthi? How can a method for developing Dhamma that does not have the capacity to go into the unknown be more than ritual? Conviction has contradiction with other religions but the path doesn't, this will be considered in the next section.

When we journey into the unknown transcendence is possible – even a desired outcome. Part of the path's quest is to move beyond conditioning, at some point that moving can be transcendence – entering lokutarra; only through this investigation was I able to draw the distinction between the enabling ability of the intermediate stage of faith and the transcending itself. Faith arises as a consequence of developing Dhamma whether transcendence or otherwise, it also arises as a consequence of awareness of faith. Quest takes us into the unknown then we become aware that in the unknown we can learn, this arises through the intermediate stage of faith. More quest, more understanding, more faith; it builds itself. With faith there is greater confidence in the path's journey. Not only is there the confidence that is

gained from what is known but there is also the confidence gained that through faith we can journey into the unknown and gain understanding. Being conscious of faith frees up the journey. When I say I have faith in the path it is a recognition of this freedom, I am free to follow the path into the unknown and faith means that freedom of the path will produce learning. Having faith also frees up potential so that we can journey into the unknown and possibly reach enlightenment - buddha-nature; how else can we conceive of buddha-nature except through faith? Faith also brings recognition of Sangha-ness, that others such as the Buddha became enlightened. From an avoidance of faith (as explained at the beginning of the section), my faith in the process of enquiry has led to this understanding of faith - previously path was not understood as having faith; so interesting. By accepting faith my journey has expanded to include potential discussed in the next section.

## Meditation For The Day:-

I cannot ascertain the spiritual with my intellect. I can only do it by my own faith and spiritual faculties. I must think of God more with my heart than with my head. I can breathe in God's very spirit in the life around me. I can keep my eyes turned toward the good things in the world. I am shut up in a box of space and time, but I can open a window in that box by faith. I can empty my mind of all the limitations of material things. I can sense the Eternal.

Courtesy of [Wayne William Snellgrove](#)

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➡ [Next Following Path](#)

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# Theory/Practice/Quest/Faith/Path/Heart



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