



## Summary of my notes regarding Virya Sept 30<sup>th</sup> 2013

From the same linguistic root as vigour, Shantideva (8th-century Indian Buddhist scholar) translates the term as energy for the good, i.e. energy in pursuit of Enlightenment for the benefit of all beings, energy to engage with the Buddhist path, with the Dharma.

Not just energy and busyness per se as we can be very busy in the world and engaging with myriad distractions, and in doing so neglect (consciously or subconsciously) the Dharma life, neglect to be aware of and engage with our own experience, e.g. the current trend to be permanently engaged with some electronics device, social networks and so on (note that these things are not bad in themselves but we need space to feel, be aware and reflect).

Virya can be associated with Perfect Effort step of the Eightfold Noble Path, i.e. the energy to be aware of our experience, preventing the arising of unskillful mental states and eradicating those that have already arisen, cultivating skillful mental states and sustaining those that are present. This could be seen as the crux of our practice, cultivating a mind that is increasingly free of greed, hatred and delusion and possessing instead the qualities of generosity, love and wisdom.

Of course we work on this in meditation but our practice needs a broad base of engagement so we also need to be active in areas such as studying the Dharma, service to others, friendship, ethics (the Precepts), devotional activity (puja) and to add another element to this set that I heard some years back from Padmavajra (thanks!), creativity.

Perhaps the key to unlocking this energy, this Virya, is inspiration and for each of us there will be different areas of the Dharma life that inspire us most and that we enjoy most at different times. So go with this inspiration, follow it, use it as your doorway into the Dharma and take good care of it, inspiration is a very precious thing.

We probably all lead very busy lives, I suspect we might even think of them as too busy so when we do have energy (and time) to engage with the Dharma we need to cherish it and guard it. Look for ways that we might simplify our lives a little and so open up more space for meditation, reflection and so on. Reduce input from the media in all its forms and consider carefully what you do watch, listen to, read etc. is it a good use of your time, do you feel better for it or maybe just anxious and overwhelmed? Avoid what is unskillful, let go of anger and resentment where possible, don't engage in pointless, point scoring arguments and debates, avoid gossip, look instead for the truth in what is in front of you, what needs to be done and what realistically can be done.

The quality of Virya, of this energy to engage with the Dharma life (which is in fact the whole of life lived with awareness, loving-kindness and with a direction and goal in heart/mind) ideally should have something of a natural flow about it, even it is said something of playfulness and delight as opposed to a reluctant workmanlike slog which in the end is going to be unsustainable. The former may seem a little unrealistic as 6 a.m. on a winter's

morning when it is time to get up and meditate and this is why it is so important to discover those sources of inspiration, of enjoyment and of faith in the path that fuel our efforts and stay connected to them. Bring mindfulness and loving-kindness (metta) to as much of your life as you can, activity needs to be balanced with the stillness of meditation so that one's clarity of purpose remains strong.

Finally a note about consistency, it is better to engage in a consistent and sustainable way over time than to dive in head first for short bursts and in between disengage from meditation, contact with other Buddhists and so on for long periods. So set yourself realistic goals for say frequency and duration of meditation at home and do your best to stick with them

Saddhabhaya

October 5th 2013

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<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/conze/wheel065.html>