

# **Buddhism 101: Introduction to Buddhism**

## **Lecture 3 – Four Noble Truths**

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# Buddhism 101: Introduction to Buddhism

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### ❑ A quick review

#### ➤ Topic One : General Introduction

- ➔ Buddhism is an **education**, not a religion or a philosophy
  - An education on how to recover our wisdom and Buddha nature
  - An education on how to solve our problems by wisdom – an art of living
- ➔ The **law of causality** governs everything in the universe, including the universe itself. Buddhas cannot be away from the it, either
- ➔ All sentient beings possess the **same Buddha nature**
  - Our Buddha nature is temporarily lost due to delusion
  - Our lost Buddha nature can be recovered only via cultivation
- ➔ Karma refers to an action and its retribution under the law of causality
  - Good and bad karmas **do not offset** – prevailing ones function first
  - Karmas accumulate over time, good or bad, and **do not disappear**
  - **When bad karma retributions come together, they form disasters**
- ➔ **Cultivation** means to stop planting the bad seeds and conditions and to begin planting the good seeds and nurturing good conditions, and finally recover our ultimate wisdom and attain Buddha-hood

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### □ A quick review

#### ➤ Topic Two : The Three Refuges, the Four Reliance Principles, and the Three Dharma Seals

➔ We formally accept the Buddha's education and set our goals by Taking the Three Refuges; they are within ourselves.

- Buddha – Awakening
- Dharma – Proper understanding
- Sangha – Purity, clarity, & harmony

➔ We apply the Four Reliance Principles to guide our own cultivation:

- Authenticate a Dharma teaching and the person who expounds the teaching
- To reflect our own cultivation and to make sure we are on the right path

➔ We use the Dharma Seals to authenticate a teaching

- All dharma are impermanent in Nature
- All dharma are void of self-existence
- Nirvana is the ultimate liberation from sufferings, including samsara

➔ The Four Reliance Principles are what Buddha left for us as a useful tool to guide us on the cultivation path

➔ The Dharma Seals are what Buddha left for us and the patriarchs elaborated for us to guide ourselves on the cultivation path

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### ❑ Where do we start our cultivation?

#### ➤ A few words about cultivation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary)

- ➔ Prepare and use for the raising of crops
- ➔ Loosen or break up the soil about (growing plants)
- ➔ Foster the growth of <*cultivate* vegetables>

#### ➤ When we cultivate a crop,

- ➔ We dig, we weed, and we seed
- ➔ We fertilize and nourish conditions
- ➔ Then we harvest at the harvest time

#### ➤ When we cultivate Buddha-hood,

- ➔ We discover and recognize our delusion — digging
- ➔ We drop our delusion & afflictions — weeding
- ➔ We vow to reach Buddha-hood and begin to practice good deeds — seeding
- ➔ We practice with longevity — fertilizing and nourishing conditions
- ➔ We attain Buddha-hood or enlightenment — harvest

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- ❑ So, where do we begin to recognize our delusion ( Avidya 無明 )?
- Buddha Sakyamuni explained four basic truths to his first five disciples recorded in *Dharma-Cakra Pravartana Sutra* (轉法輪經).
- The Four Noble Truths (四聖諦)
  - ➔ There is “suffering” in our lives – Dukka (苦諦)
  - ➔ There is a cause or origin of sufferings – Samudaya (集諦)
  - ➔ There is a cessation of sufferings – Nirodha (滅諦)
  - ➔ There is a path leading to the cessation of sufferings – Magga (道諦)

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- ❑ There is “suffering” in our lives – Dukkha (苦諦).
  - Talks about the reality: we experience sufferings everyday
  - Represents the ordinary meaning of suffering.
  - Also implies a deeper sense of imperfection, impermanence, dissatisfaction, etc.
  - Includes happy or pleasant feelings because they are impermanent.
  - Reflects the conditioned results of our delusion or wrongdoing. (苦果)
  - It has three aspects
    - ➔ Dukkha-Dukkata (苦苦)
    - ➔ Samkhara-Dukkata (壞苦)
    - ➔ Viparinama-Dukkata (行苦)

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### ❑ What is Dukkha-Dukkhata (苦苦)?

- Four observations/reflections (四念處):
  - ➔ Our body and all its components are not clean (觀身不淨)
  - ➔ Our sensations are full of suffering (觀受是苦)
  - ➔ Our mindset is ever changing (觀心無常)
  - ➔ Self is non-existent in any dharma (觀法無我)
- Birth, Aging, Illness, Death (生、老、病、死苦)
- Separation from loved ones (愛別離苦)
- Association with those we dislike (怨憎會苦)
- Not getting what is wanted (求不得苦)

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### ❑ What is Dukkha-Dukkhata (苦苦)? (cont'd)

#### ➤ Five Clinging-Aggregates (五陰熾盛苦)

- ➔ Our being is a conditioned result of **matter** (色), **sensation** (受), **perception** (想), **mental formation** (行), and **consciousness** (識)
- ➔ Discord of the five aggregates causes sufferings
- ➔ This is actually the cause of all of the above sufferings
- ➔ Laozi (老子) said: “The biggest concern I have is that I have a physical body”  
老子說：『吾之大患，在吾有身』。



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### ❑ What is Samkhara-Dukkata (壞苦)?

#### ➤ The Five Aggregates are conditioned:

- ➔ By numerous causes and conditions; they are ever-changing
- ➔ Inevitably the five aggregates will undergo change
- ➔ Changing the state causes sufferings

#### ➤ The first Aggregate – matter

- ➔ Is a conditioned result of the **four great elements** (四大): **solidity** (地大), **fluidity** (水大), **heat or energy** (火大), and **motion** (風大)
- ➔ Our sense organs are derivatives of the Four Great Elements: **eye** (眼), **ear** (耳), **nose** (鼻), **tongue** (舌), **body** (身), and **mind** (意)
  - They are also called the Six Spheres (六入)
  - The functions along with the Six Spheres are called the Six Faculties or Six Roots (六根)
  - The objects to which these functions apply are called Six Domains (六界)
  - The sensations these functions produce is called the Six Perceptions (六識)
  - You will also hear the term Eighteen Domains (十八界) for all the above

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### ❑ What is Samkhara-Dukkata? (Cont'd)

#### ➤ The second Aggregate – sensations

- ➔ The faculties of our sense organs receive the external objects and produce the senses of: **color** (色), **sound** (聲), **odor** (香), **taste** (味), **tangible items** (觸), and **mind objects** (法)
- ➔ Our sense organs, by receiving the external objects, also produce the feelings of: **sadness** (苦), **happiness** (樂), **depression** (憂), **joy** (喜), and **equanimity** (捨)

#### ➤ The third Aggregate – perceptions

- ➔ There are six kinds of perceptions corresponding to our six internal faculties and external objects
- ➔ **It is the perceptions that recognize objects**, physical or mental

#### ➤ The fourth Aggregate – mental formations

- ➔ It refers to volitional actions, mental or physical, that produce karmic results, either good or bad

#### ➤ The fifth Aggregate – consciousness

- ➔ It recognizes the existence of an object, but does not recognize what the object is

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- ❑ **What is Viparinama-Dukkha (行苦)?**
  - It refers to sufferings of decay or destruction
  - These sufferings are caused by change or transience
    - ➔ Nothing is permanent
  - These are mental sufferings

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- ❑ **There is a cause/origin of sufferings – Samudaya (集)**
  - **Samudaya means Collection; that is, all Sufferings are Collective Results**
  - **The concept of karma (業) revisited**
    - ➔ It is based on the natural Law of Causality.
    - ➔ Being a natural law, there is no judge, jury, or ruling body that determines the consequences of what we do
    - ➔ The consequences (retribution) of what we do are determined by our past body actions (身), speeches (語), and thoughts (意)
    - ➔ The consequences are what we are receiving today
    - ➔ Karma refers to an action and its retribution
  - **There are innumerable causes and conditions of sufferings**
    - ➔ We are committing to innumerable karmas every moment
  - **They are driven by the **three poisons** (三毒煩惱):**
    - ➔ **Greed or craving (貪)**
      - Endless desires, severe attachments, ceaseless discontent, etc.
    - ➔ **Anger (瞋), and**
      - When our greed is not satisfied, we become angry

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### □ There is a cause or origin of sufferings (Cont'd)

#### ➤ Three Poisons (Cont'd):

##### ➔ Ignorance (癡)

- Fundamentally, greed and anger arises from our **ignorance – delusion**
- Our delusion prevents us from seeing the true reality of dharma
- All dharma are conditioned and are empty, null, and void of self-existence

#### ➤ Greed, Anger, and Ignorance are also called Mind Karma (意業) that drives our Body Karma (身業) and Verbal Karma (口業)

##### ➔ Body Karma: killing (殺), stealing (盜), and sexual misconduct (淫)

##### ➔ Verbal Karma: divisive speech (兩舌), harsh speech (惡口), deceitful speech (妄言), and enticing speech (綺語).

#### ➤ The Body Karma, Verbal Karma, and Mind Karma together

##### ➔ Seeded and is seeding the causes of all sufferings of past, present, and future

##### ➔ Conditioned and is conditioning all sufferings of past, present, and future

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- ❑ There is a cessation of sufferings – Nirodha (滅)
  - Also known as **Nirvana** (涅槃) which is the absolute truth or ultimate reality
  - It is beyond duality or relativity – **One-Truth Dharma Realm** (一真法界)
    - ➔ Dharmakaya is recovered – the ultimate body (法身)
    - ➔ Prajna is recovered – the ultimate wisdom (般若)
    - ➔ Ultimate bliss – total liberation of all sufferings (Moksha) (解脫)
  - At this point, it is beyond our intellectual abilities or faculties to understand
  - It is unimaginable, but it does exist.
  - It can only be attained ONLY when we attain Buddha-hood
  - Therefore, we must cultivate continuously with diligence and focus

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- ❑ There is a path leading to the cessation of Dukkha – Magga (道)
  - It is the Noble Eightfold Path (八正道)
    - ➔ Right **understanding** (正見): of oneself and the world
    - ➔ Right **thought** (正思維): free of greed and anger
    - ➔ Right **speech** (正語): truthful, meaningful, and with good will
    - ➔ Right **action** (正業): proper behavioral conduct in every respect
    - ➔ Right **livelihood** (正命): proper lifestyle that is pure and simple
    - ➔ Right **effort** (正勤): being diligent and focused
    - ➔ Right **mindfulness** (正念): always being aware of and attentive to our own conduct
    - ➔ Right **concentration** (正定): pure, clear, and tranquil mind
  - Regardless of Theravada or Mahayana Buddhism, the Noble Eightfold Path is a **must**.
    - ➔ Criteria may be different
    - ➔ Criteria differences exist even among different Mahayana Schools