



**University Learning in Schools**

**RE**

**Buddhists in the World**



**Lesson 3 Handouts**

## Sheet 3A NIRVANA, MEDITATION AND BUDDHIST TEACHINGS

1) What is the meaning of Nirvana?

**Extension:** Can you think of any link apparent with Jesus' teaching: 'The Kingdom of Heaven is within you, all around you'?)

2) Why does the eightfold path lead to Nirvana?

3) How do the Four Noble Truths help Buddhists reach Nirvana?

4) How does meditation help Buddhists reach Nirvana?

### ANSWERS

- 1) Nirvana is a state of complete detachment, where we can act without selfishness, without experiencing craving, without being distracted, and with complete generosity of spirit to others.
- 2) Nirvana is the goal of meditation.
- 3) Buddhists teach that when we stop craving/attachment, we can achieve Enlightenment, and can then enter a state of Nirvana.
- 4) Meditation helps us to focus on the essentials, and to stop craving.

## Sheet 3B

<p><b>ANATTA The doctrine of No-Self</b> Although we identify ourselves with thoughts and feelings, the idea that there is ego, a self, a personality is a constructed idea. Individual differences between people are merely illusions in the eyes of those who have gained Enlightenment.</p> <p>In order to find a deeply abiding peace, we need to learn to let go of any attachment to or habit of fixating on self-identity.</p>	<p><b>ANICCA Impermanence</b> The Buddha taught that nothing is permanent. Everything changes. We may experience moments of happiness and joy, and moments of pain and misery, but these will change. Life is fleeting and we should not cling to it.</p>
<p><b>DUKKHA Suffering</b> Painful experience, and the frustration that arises from the impermanence of pleasant experiences. Also, experiences frequently disappoint, and our expectations are not met.</p>	<p>'Greed, I say, is a great flood. It is a whirlpool sucking you down, a constant yearning, seeking a hold, continually in movement; difficult to cross is the swamp of sensual desire.'</p> <p>Attadanda Sutta (Access to Insight) Quotation from <i>Milarepa and the chariot</i></p>
<p>When asked to sum the Buddha's teachings up in one phrase, Suzuki Roshi simply said, "Everything changes."</p>	<p>Just as a line drawn in the water with a stick quickly vanishes and does not stay long, in the same way the life of a human being is like a line drawn in the water with a stick – limited, trifling, of much stress and many despairs.</p> <p>Anguttara Nikaya, 7.70 <i>Access to Insight</i></p>
<p>All that we are is the result of our mind; it is founded on the results of our actions and experiences; our life is the creation of our mind. If a person speaks or acts with an impure mind, pain follows that person, as the wheel</p>	<p>As the blade of a plough slices through any roots in the ground, so if you properly understand impermanence – that will remove all desire and delusion of 'I am'.</p> <p>Adapted from <i>Samyutta Nikaya, 22:102</i></p>

<p>follows the foot of the ox that draws the carriage. Adapted from <i>Dhammapada</i></p>	
<p>The earliest reference to Anatta in Buddhist teachings comes in the Sermon of Benares where Buddha explains how attachment to the five skandhas leads to suffering.</p> <p>“The Noble Truth of suffering (Dukkha) is this: Birth is suffering; ageing is suffering; sickness is suffering; death is suffering; sorrow and lamentation is suffering; association with the unpleasant is suffering; disassociation with the pleasant is suffering; not to get what one wants is suffering - in brief, the five aggregates of attachment are suffering.” <i>Samyutta Nikaya</i> LVI, 11 in <i>What the Buddha Taught</i> (p92)</p> <p>In other words the misperception of the Skandhas as a permanent Self and the selfish desires that are encouraged through this misperception lead to suffering.</p>	<p>In <i>The Questions of King Milinda</i>, Nagasena explains the concept of Anatta by using the metaphor of a chariot to explain how the skandhas make the appearance of a Self but are not a Self. He asks the king to explain what part is the actual chariot, and when he cannot do this, he claims that there is no chariot. King Milinda explains that the concept of a chariot depends on all the parts, and not just each individual part.</p> <p>“Your Majesty has spoken well about the chariot. It is just so with me. In dependence on the thirty-two parts of the body and the five Skandhas there takes place this denomination: “Nagasena”, this designation, this conceptual term, a current appellation and a mere name. In ultimate reality, however, this person cannot be apprehended.” Chapter 3 Wisdom: <i>Buddhist Scriptures</i> (p149).</p>

**The Dhammapada says:**

'All is transient.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path.

'All is sorrow.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path.

'All is unreal.' When one sees this, he is above sorrow. This is the clear path."

*The Dhammapada XX 277-279 (p75)*

**Story of the Raft**

Now on that occasion a monk called Arittha, formerly of the vulture killers, had conceived this pernicious view:

"There are things called 'obstructions' by the Blessed One. As I understand his teaching, those things are not necessarily obstructive for one who pursues them."

"Suppose, monks, there is a man journeying on a road and he sees a vast expanse of water of which this shore is perilous and fearful, while the other shore is safe and free from danger. But there is no boat for crossing nor is there a bridge for going over from this side to the other. So the man thinks: 'This is a vast expanse of water; and this shore is perilous and fearful, but the other shore is safe and free from danger. There is, however, no boat here for crossing, nor a bridge for going over from this side to the other. Suppose I gather reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, and bind them into a raft.' Now that man collects reeds, sticks, branches and foliage, and binds them into a raft. Carried by that raft, laboring with hands and feet, he safely crosses over to the other shore. Having crossed and arrived at the other shore, he thinks: 'This raft, indeed, has been very helpful to me. Carried by it, laboring with hands and feet, I got safely across to the other shore. Should I not lift this raft on my head or put it on my shoulders, and go where I like? No. He should wisely set the raft down and be unburdened.

By acting thus, monks, would that man do what should be done with a raft.

## Sheet 3C

How does MEDITATION help one to gain insight into the three marks of conditioned existence?

The three marks of conditioned existence are:

Read the following poem from David Brazier, and answer the questions below.

### WHERE WERE YOU LAST YEAR BY DAVID BRAZIER

Breath deep  
Breath deep

The air fills my lungs and then?  
My blood receives  
This grace by which  
I live a few moments more  
My every cell replenished.  
With every breath  
A part of me departs  
And something new  
Is put in place.

The rice I ate yesterday,  
Where is it now?  
In my muscle, in my bone.  
The juice we shared,  
Where has it gone?  
In our arms and legs and all.

Last month  
The rice waved in the sunshine  
In other lands:  
In the low flood plains  
Of the Mississippi  
Or Irrawaddy;  
And the fruit hung  
On trees in Cyprus  
Sicily or Spain.

And before that?  
Before that their substance  
Was in the soil,  
Was in the air,  
Was in the seas.  
Was in the seas  
Waiting to be gathered up  
Waiting to soar up into the highest reaches of the sky,  
Waiting to become rain.

You and I  
Are mostly water.  
Last year  
Most of each of us  
Was in the ocean.  
We circulated together  
In the Atlantic  
Or Pacific perhaps,  
For we are mostly water.

And that water was lifted  
By sunshine heat  
By the impact of photons  
Cascading down  
Beating upon the ocean's face.

And every photon  
Comes from the sun,  
From the belly of the star;  
You and I were stars last year.  
We chased each other  
In the turbulent heart of the sun.

So who was it that lived in your house last year?  
And where will you be next week?  
Who is your true friend and who your foe?  
And who will you be next year?  
Breath deep  
Breath deep.

This air is me.  
This air is you.  
This air we share.  
I give my substance to you and  
You yours to me.

**With each breath I am linked  
In a single orbit  
With the great forests.  
My out breath is their food.  
Their's fills my lungs.  
Last year  
I was a tree  
And the tree was me.**

**Each day  
We gather up substance  
And continue the task  
Of endlessly  
Remaking ourselves  
From one another.**

**Each day  
We discard a portion  
And continue the cycle  
Of endlessly  
Returning ourselves  
To others.**

**Day by day we change  
And become one another,  
The substance of the universe,  
Stardust and all,  
Passing through us each  
And we through it.**

**Where were you last year?  
Breath deep,  
Breath deep.**

Anatta means that people are connected to all that lives because...

Anicca means that people are connected to all that lives because...

Dhukka means that people are connected to all that lives because...(if you need help in answering, read story of Buddha's response to Kisa Gotami)



**What is common to all meditation?** (*Clue: What is the goal of meditation?*)

How does meditation help one to gain insight into Anatta?

How does meditation help one to gain insight into Anicca?

How does meditation help one to gain insight into Dhukka?

**Why do the three marks mean that people have to take responsibility for themselves?**

Because unless we understand the ever changing nature of life, we will cause suffering for ourselves and others by trying to make permanent what can never be so.