



University Learning in Schools

RE

Buddhists in the World



Lesson 7 Handouts

Sheet 7A

Buddhist Samsara, No-self, Impermanence



Keywords:

Samsara:	the continual round of birth, death and rebirth
Impermanence (anicca):	the idea that everything changes and that nothing is permanent or unchanging
No-self (anatta):	the belief that we don't have a permanent personal self or soul

Tasks:

Using the keywords above and your teacher's explanation, answer the following questions.

1. What do Buddhists think happens when they die?
2. Why did the Buddha use candle flames as an analogy for samsara?
3. Other religions often talk about a permanent self or soul – why is this not possible in Buddhism?

Sheet 7B

Assu Sutta: Tears

At Savatthi. There the Blessed One said: "From an inconstruable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating and wandering on. What do you think, monks: Which is greater, the tears you have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time — crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — or the water in the four great oceans?"

"As we understand the Dhamma taught to us by the Blessed One, this is the greater: the tears we have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time — crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — not the water in the four great oceans."

"Excellent, monks. Excellent. It is excellent that you thus understand the Dhamma taught by me.

"This is the greater: the tears you have shed while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time — crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — not the water in the four great oceans.

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a mother. The tears you have shed over the death of a mother while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time — crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

"Long have you (repeatedly) experienced the death of a father... the death of a brother... the death of a sister... the death of a son... the death of a daughter... loss with regard to relatives... loss with regard to wealth... loss with regard to disease. The tears you have shed over loss with regard to disease while transmigrating and wandering this long, long time — crying and weeping from being joined with what is displeasing, being separated from what is pleasing — are greater than the water in the four great oceans.

"Why is that? From an inconstruable beginning comes transmigration. A beginning point is not evident, though beings hindered by ignorance and fettered by craving are transmigrating and wandering on. Long have you thus experienced stress, experienced pain, experienced loss, swelling the cemeteries — enough to become disenchanted with all fabricated things, enough to become dispassionate, enough to be released."

Source: translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu
(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn15/sn15.003.than.html>)

Assu Sutta: Tears – Questions

Keywords in text

Transmigration: another word for reincarnation and the process of death and new life. Linked to samsara and explained by the Buddha as a candle flame passing from one candle to the next.

Read through the text and then answer the questions below – try to include quotes in your answer.

1. What does the Buddha say there is more of; water from the tears resulting from suffering, or water in the four great oceans? (see paragraph 2).
2. According to this sutta, what causes the suffering and the tears?
3. Why do we repeatedly experience the deaths of mothers and fathers?

Sheet 7C

KQ: Do Buddhists believe that death is the end?

Use the resources and learning from today's lesson and your learning in earlier lessons to answer the key question above. You should aim to use at least 8 of the sentence starters below to help you. (You can edit them if necessary.)

Buddhists believe that when they die...	The concept of no-self (anatta) means...	The concept of impermanence (anicca) means	Buddhists don't believe in permanent souls because...
We all suffer because...	A quote from a sutta that helps us understand this is...	The Buddha compared samsara to...	The concept of samsara means....
Buddhist rebirth is different to Hindu reincarnation because	The reason for the difference between Buddhist and Hindu belief is because of the Buddhist belief in...	These ideas all link back to the Four Noble Truths because...	Meditation can help a Buddhist understand this because...