

UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE MORNINGTON
'INTRODUCING BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS' COURSE TERM 3 2021

Via Zoom. 13 July to 31 August, Tuesdays 11.30am – 1.30pm

Tutor: Pip Ransome

'There is just one thing I teach: suffering, and its end to reach' - Buddha

Dear Friends,

Looked at from one point of view, there's SO MUCH I want to share with you in this course.

From another point of view, though, what we're going to share together is incredibly simple: the Buddha discovered a sure way for each of us to gradually relieve the suffering inherent in a human life. From wherever we are, in whatever situation, we can free our minds by training them to SEE THINGS AS THEY REALLY ARE.

What the Buddha is saying is: what will make us happy, what will bring ease and evenness to our lives is ALREADY INSIDE US. We simply need to uncover it – rediscover it, if you will. Then he gives us the tools to do that.

Basically, it's about simply shifting some misconceptions we've inherited; freeing our minds from them. The Buddha's teachings are not a religion, they're a science – of living naturally, with more ease. This can only be done by each one of us for ourselves. In his talk to the Kalama people the Buddha said "Do not go on tradition ... rumour ... another's seeming ability, nor on the consideration 'this monk is our teacher'. [But] When you yourselves know 'These things are good ... undertaken and observed these things lead to benefit and happiness' enter on and abide in them."

We need to nut life out for ourselves.

So how do we gradually rediscover our true nature? What are these tools? There are 3 aspects:

1 The path of wisdom / Insight –

- We release our minds from unexamined concepts and open them to possibilities we may not have thought about – or not deeply; we allow our minds to think outside the square. We come with a glass not already overflowing so there's no room for more, or different, but half full so there's room for new ideas. We're ready to explore ... in a word, we're curious!
- We make a commitment, a determination, to give this adventure our very best

2 The path of wholesome living –

- We live from a heart full of natural values like loving-kindness, compassion, joy and evenness
- We express these values in what we think, say and do

3 The path of calm –

- We bring energy to our search
- We practise mindfulness
- We practise meditation.

THAT'S IT. I've just described the 4 Noble Truths and the Noble 8-fold Path – the core of the Buddha's teaching.

SESSION CONTENT

Broadly, each session, before our 10-minute break we'll practise mindfulness and meditation, from the path of calm, based on the 4 Foundations of Mindfulness discourse (Mahasatipatthana Sutta). After the break we'll explore the Buddha's tools for the path of wholesome living, based on the Loving-kindness discourse (Metta Sutta) and the path of wisdom – based on various discourses including the Mahasatipatthana Sutta. There will be time for questions in each of the 8 sessions:

- 1 Mindfulness of sound
Sitting relaxation
Introduction to Calm meditation – subject: the in and out breath
Overview of course
Relationship between the 4 Noble Truths, Noble 8-fold Path, 3 paths and '30 Tools'.
- 2 Mindfulness of 4 elements: earth, air, fire, water
Calm meditation – 3 labels: 'sound', 'thinking', 'unpleasant feeling'
Life of the Buddha
3 paths within the Noble 8-fold Path: wholesome living, calm, wisdom/insight
3 characteristics of the universe: impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, inter-relatedness
Investigation/contemplation
- 3 Clear Awareness of everyday actions
Loving-kindness/unconditional love meditation
Loving-kindness/unconditional love discourse entire
- 4 Mindfulness of body
Calm meditation – 4 support methods: counting, a word, visualising, following whole breath
4 Foundations of Mindfulness discourse entire – overview
- 5 Mindfulness of feelings: pleasant, unpleasant, neutral
Calm meditation – 5 hindrances: sense desire, ill-will, sloth-&-torpor, distraction, doubt
4 Foundations of Mindfulness discourse – 6 sense bases, including mind and mind-objects
4 Foundations of Mindfulness discourse – 5 aggregates we cling to, thinking of them as 'self'
- 6 Mindfulness of mind-states (the mind)
Walking Calm meditation
Meditative absorptions
Worldly Dependent Arising/ 'Wheel of Birth and Death'
- 7 Mindfulness of perception
Sweeping meditation
Transcendental Dependent Arising: the stages of transcendence
7 Factors of Enlightenment
- 8 Mindfulness of thoughts (mental formations)
16-step meditation
4 Noble Truths/Noble 8-fold Path – overview and conclusions.

Each session's content builds on the previous sessions, so for a full understanding it's important that you attend all sessions.

What to bring – notebook and pen, rug / blanket for meditating, webcam / earbuds if they improve your vision / sound.

My aspiration for this course is to give you a clear, complete, down-to-earth summary of the Buddha's teaching, based on his own words. What's your aspiration for the course?

May you be well and happy!

Pip