

Course Code: MABS 01

Course Title: Buddhist Doctrines of Pāli Nikāyas: Analysis and Interpretation

Aim: To give the students a critical and comprehensive knowledge of Buddhist doctrines of Pali Nikāyas

Contents: Fundamental Teachings of early Buddhism, questions raised and solutions offered by the modern scholars on the interpretation of early Buddhist doctrines, the diverse trends discernible in the early Buddhist discourses as to the nature of the world of sensory experience and the reasons that could be adduced in grasping their significance within the context of the religion and philosophy. Philosophical system of early Buddhism will form an Integral part of this course. The course will be based on Suttapiṭaka and supplemented, where necessary, with the Abhidhammic and commentarial expositions. It is in the interests of the student to gain an ability to read the Pali suttas in the original texts.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures, discussions and assignments

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Two Short Essays (40%) and Final Examination (50%)

Expected Learning Outcome: Ability to elaborate critically the fundamental teachings of *Suttapiṭaka* and to read and understand relevant discourses in original sources

Recommended for Reference:

- Conze, E. (1967). *Buddhist Thought in India*, London: George Allen Unwin.
- Davids, Rhys (1978). *Sakya or Buddhist Origins*, New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation.
- Grimm, George (1994). *The Doctrine of the Buddha: The Religion of Reason and Meditation*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Jayatilleke, K. N. (1980). *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Jennings, J. G. (Eds.). (1974). *The Vedantic Buddhism of the Buddha*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Johansson, E. A. Rune (1970). *The Psychology of Nirvāṇa*, London: George Allen Unwin.
- Keith, A. B. (1931). *The Doctrine of the Buddha. Bulletin of the school of Oriental Studies*, Vol. VI.
- Ling, Trevor (1973). *The Buddha*, England: Penguin.
- Murti, T. R. V. (2008). *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, London: Routledge.
- Pande, G. C. (1983). *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Radhakrishnan, S. (1941). *Indian Philosophy*, London: George Allen Unwin.
- Robinson, R. (1970). *The Buddhist Religion*, California: Wadsworth Pub Co. Beyer, S.
- Stcherbatsky, Th. (2005). *The Central Conception of Buddhism*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Warder, A. K. (1980). *Indian Buddhism*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Winternitz, M. (1936). *Problems of Buddhism*, Visva-Bharati Quarterly, Vol. II.
- _____ (1965). *The Conception of the Buddhist Nirvana*, The Hague: Mouton and Co.
- _____ (1979). *The Dynamic Psychology of Early Buddhism*, London: Curzon press.

Course Code: MABS 21

Course Title: Buddhist Aesthetic Concepts: Analysis and Evaluation

Aim: To examine the Buddhist teachings and observation on beauty

Contents: As a religio-philosophical system embracing the multiplex dimensions of human life, Buddhism's teachings and observations on beauty and its appreciation will constitute the main body of this study. It will take into consideration the following aspects in order to identify the Buddhist aesthetic concepts: the Buddhist teaching on compassionate kindness and love for all forms of life; art and artistic creativity in Buddhist perspectives; poetry (*kāvya*); analysis and appreciation; the *udāna* form of poetry; the early Buddhist literature and the concept of *aucitya* and *anaucitya*; Buddhist observations on *rasa*, *hāsa*, *pīti*, *pamoda* and *kāma*; the concept of *sukha* in Buddhist perspectives; how the Buddha and the earliest disciples saw the mundane beauty of life and nature; the supra-mundane experience and the highest level of harmony. This study will be concluded with an evaluation of the Buddhist contributions in the field of painting, sculpture, iconography, architecture and other forms of artistic creation, together with an examination of their theoretical background.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures, discussions and assignments

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Recommended for Reference:

- Agrawala, P. K. (1980). *Aesthetic Principles of Indian Art*, Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan.
- Aryan, K. C. (1981). *Basis of Decorative Elements in Indian Art*, New Delhi.
- Conze, E. (1995), *The Buddha's Law Among the Birds*, Oxford.
- Coomaraswamy, A. K. (2004). *The Transformation of Nature in Art*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Davids, Rhys (Mrs.) (1941). *Poems of Cloister and Jungle - A Buddhist Anthology*, London.
- Dhadphale, M. G. (1975). *Aspects of (Buddhist) Literary Criticism as Gleaned from Pali Sources*, Poona.
- Dhirasekera, J. D. (1980). *Buddhism and Beauty, Bodhi Leaves A II*, Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
- Ridley, M. (1980). *The Art of World Religions, Buddhism*, New York: Indian Edition
- Seckel, Dietrich (1964). *The Art of Buddhism*, New York: Crown Publishers.
- Zimmer, H. (1972). *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, New York: Princeton University Press.

Course Code: MABS 52

Course Title: History of Indian Buddhism: From its Origins to the Emergence of Mahayana

Aim: To give an objective understanding of the development of Indian Buddhist traditions that pre-suppose a proper historical perspective

Contents: The course is designed to provide students with a foundational and general, but not superficial, survey of Indian Buddhism from a historical perspective highlighting all the important developments up to the emergence of Mahayana. The main themes for the course include: the origins of Buddhism and the Indian Background; process of the compilation of the Canon; the classification of the Buddha's teachings; the Councils; the popularisation of Buddhism; the emergence and development of the major Buddhist sects; Emperor Asoka and his contribution to the Buddhist cause; spread of Buddhism outside India; rise of Mahayana Buddhism and other related topics.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures, discussions and assignments

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcome: Ability to: (i) gain a foundation knowledge of the history of Indian Buddhism up to the emergence of the Mahayana movement; (ii) critically examine different views and theories related to the history of Buddhism in India; and (iii) apply the knowledge derived from this foundation course to examine and appreciate the subsequent developments of Buddhism in India and beyond

Recommended for Reference:

- Bapat, P. V. (1959). *2500 Years of Buddhism*, New Delhi: Government of India.
- Dutta, Nalinaksha (1998). *Buddhist Sects in India*, Wilsele: Peters Publishers.
- Hazara, K. L. (1995). *The Rise and Decline of Buddhism in India*, New Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal.
- Hirakawa, Akira. (Tr. & Ed. by Groner, Paul) (1990). *A History of Indian Buddhism*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Lamotte, E. (1988). *History of Indian Buddhism: from the Origins to the Saka Era Sakyamuni to Early Mahayana*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Nakamura, Hajime (1980). *Indian Buddhism: A Survey with Bibliographical Notes*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Pande, G. C. (1995). *Studies in the Origins of Buddhism*. New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Thapar, Romila (2012). *Asoka and the Decline of the Maurya*, India: Oxford University Press.
- Warder, A. K. (2000). *Indian Buddhism*, New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Zhi Lian Jing Yuan (2008). *The First and Second Buddhist Councils: Five Versions* (English Tr. Anuruddha, K. et al.), Hong Kong: Chi Lin Nunnery.

Course Code: MABS 71

Course Title: Buddhist Ethics: Concepts and Philosophical Interpretations

Aim: To provide knowledge of the basic concepts in ethics, the ethics of Buddhism, the role of ethics in the Buddhist scheme of liberation and to provide familiarity with the interpretations of Buddhist ethics from the modern Western philosophical standpoint.

Contents: The course aims primarily at examining the fundamental ethical teachings in the Pali canonical texts such as precepts pertaining to virtuous conduct (*sīla*), the noble eightfold path and *pāramitā*. Secondly, an attempt will be made to identify the role of ethics in the path of liberation in Buddhism. Thirdly, the relation between concepts belonging to the Buddhist world view such as kamma, rebirth, dependent arising and no-self and Buddhist ethics will be examined. And an attempt will also be made to understand contentious views among modern interpreters on certain contents such as *puñña-kusala* dichotomy and ethical transcendentalism. Finally, attention will be paid to understand the philosophical interpretations of Buddhist ethics presented in terms of western ethical systems such as Kantian ethics, Deontological ethics, virtue ethics, utilitarianism and consequentialism.

Methods of Teaching and Learning: Lectures, discussions and assignments

Assessment Method: In-class Participation (10%), Short Essay (30%) and Long Essay (60%)

Learning Outcome: Ability to understand the ethical significance of Buddhist teachings, discussions on Buddhist ethical concepts open to disagreement, and interpretations given in terms of western ethical traditions

Recommended for Reference:

- Goodman, Charles (2009). *Consequences of Compassion: A References Interpretation and Defense of Buddhist Ethics*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kalupahana, D. J. (1995). *Ethics in Early Buddhism*, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press.
- Keown, Damien (1996). *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Macintyre, Alisdair (1996). *A Short History of Ethics*, New York: Touchstone.
- McDermott, P. (2003). *Development in the Early Buddhist Concept of Kamma/Karma*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Mill, John Stuart (1986). *Utilitarianism*, Mary Warnock (Ed.), Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd.
- Misra, G. S. P. (1984). *Development of Buddhist Ethics*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal.
- Prasad, Hari Sankar (2007). *The Centrality of Ethics in Buddhism: Exploratory Essays*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass.
- Premasiri, P. D. (1991). *Ethics Encyclopedia of Buddhism Offprint No. 1*, Colombo: Department of Buddhist Affairs.
- Rorty, Amelie Oksenberg (Ed.) (1980). *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
- Saddhatissa, Hammalawa (1997). *Buddhist Ethics*, Boston: Wisdom Publications.

The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong Limited
2025/26 Master of Arts in Buddhist Studies (Chinese Medium) Programme - Course Syllabus

- Swanton, Christine (2003). *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Winston, King L. (1964). *In the Hope of Nibbana: An Essay on Theravada Buddhist Ethics*, La Salle, Ill.: Open Court.
- Wood, Allen W. (1999). *Kant's Ethical Thought*, Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- _____ (1976). *Interpretation of Two Principle Ethical Terms in Early Buddhism*, Sri Lanka: Journal of the Humanities 2:2, pp. 63-74.
- _____ (1975). *Moral Evaluation in Early Buddhism*, Sri Lanka: Journal of the Humanities 2, pp. 63-74.
- _____ (2001). *The Nature of Buddhist Ethics*, Hampshire: Palgrave.

The Buddha-Dharma Centre of Hong Kong
July 2025