

Buddhism level 2

A course prospectus

OVERVIEW OF THE COURSE

This course will provide a firm foundation in Buddhist thought and practice. It is aimed at people with a basic grounding in meditation and Buddhism, who want to discover whether and how to apply Buddhism in their lives.

FORMAT OF THE COURSE

This course runs in six 6-week modules. Each module stands alone, and so you can join and leave the course at any point. You don't need to take the modules in order.

Each session will run from 7.30pm – 10pm. They will usually comprise: a short meditation; a semi-formal presentation by the leader(s); discussion time for participants to relate the material to their own life; experiential workshop aspects.

The course is not intended to be an academic introduction to Buddhism: the emphasis is on the practical application of Buddhist teachings to our own lives.

There will usually be some “practical homework” to do between sessions: this will not usually be study-based. Suggested reading will be given for participants to gain the most from the course, but it will not be integral to the course.

PRE-REQUISITES

It is necessary to have completed:

- the Introduction to Buddhism (Level 1) course, or to have an equivalent knowledge of Buddhism.
- The Introduction to Meditation (Level 1) course, or to be familiar with the Mindfulness of Breathing and Metta Bhavana meditation practices.

COURSE AIMS

By the end of the course, it is hoped the participants will:

- Be able to relate Buddhist teachings to their own experience, and practise them in their daily life.
- Have an appreciation of the breadth and living spirit of the Buddhist tradition, while bringing a critical faculty to their understanding of it.
- See the different Buddhist practices (ethics, meditation, study, friendship, ritual) as an integrated system of development.
- Develop relationships with other participants by sharing experiences and ideas, in order to support practice and stimulate understanding.
- Understand what it means to “be a Buddhist”, and have a sense whether or not they consider themselves to be one.

COURSE OUTLINE – THE SIX MODULES

The six modules are listed below, together with their proposed content — the actual content may vary slightly according to the judgement of the leader.

What makes you a Buddhist?

What does it mean to Go for Refuge to Buddha, Dharma and Sangha?

Going for Refuge
Enlightenment as the goal of Buddhism – working with goals and values
Dharma as truth teaching – approach to doctrine, parable of raft, 3 levels of wisdom
Dharma as method – become a Dharma chef, threefold path
Faith within a Buddhist context
Building a Sangha

Symbolic Dharma

An overview of the whole of life's dynamics in symbolic form.

The wheel of life – knowing our realm
The wheel of life – karma and rebirth
The wheel of life – the chain of conditioning, “staying in the gap”
The spiral path – to Insight and beyond
The mandala of the five Buddhas – Akshobya and Amitabha
The mandala of the five Buddhas – Ratnasambhava, Amoghasiddhi & Vairocana

Dharma Truth Teachings

Some core ideas to gain a new perspective on our lives.

Views – wrong view, right view, perfect view; qualities of Dharma
Conditionality – conditioned co-production as the middle way
Facets of conditionality – impermanence, compoundedness, interconnectedness
Four Noble Truths
Orders of conditionality – reactive and creative; karmic and non-karmic conditionality
Wisdom and compassion – altruistic dimension of Buddhism, Bodhisattva ideal

Buddhist ethics

Seeing the implications of our behaviour for ourselves and others

Ethics as individual choice
Love – the golden rule
Generosity – respecting and contributing
Contentment – weakening the neurotic drives
Honesty – being true about ourselves
Awareness – the working edge for any growth

Ritual and Devotion

Exploring the psychology and meaning of Buddhist ritual through the ‘Sevenfold Puja’

Who/what do Buddhists worship? Commitment to a path of personal development

The practice of openness, disclosure and confession

The importance of developing positive emotion

Receptivity: turning towards what is deepest in ourselves and the universe

The ‘awakening heart’ (*bodhicitta*)

The Heart Sutra: the essence of emptiness. Chanting, and the use of mantras

The Lotus and the Vajra

How can the more “heart” aspects of the Dharma constitute a path that complements the language of “insight”?

Working with the emotions: the divine abodes

Myth and the imaginal faculty

The myth of the Bodhisattva

Spiritual Community

Spiritual Friendship

Arts, Beauty and Creativity

COURSE FEE

There is no set fee for the course modules. They are offered on a “dana” basis, meaning that they are made freely available with no necessity of financial exchange.

Of course, the Centre does have financial needs, so if you appreciate the work of the Centre, you may feel like supporting it. The most helpful way would be to take out a standing order giving a fixed amount monthly. Or you could choose to leave a donation each week, or at the start of each course. Or you could offer time and energy. What you give is entirely up to you.

BOOKING

It is essential to book on a course module – via the website or contact the Centre office. You may have to join a waiting list.