

Introduction to Buddhism, Session One

Suggested Text: *Buddhism: A Very Short Introduction*, by Damien Keown.

Oxford University Press. 2013 edition*. (All page references are to the text.

*The font size of the Kindle version is larger and much easier to read.)

Additional Resource: *UUA Religion Education (RE) Workshop 9: Buddhism 1:*

“Waking Up”; *Workshop 10: “Right Living”*.

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop9>

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/youth/bridges/workshop10>

I. **Introduction**

Session #1: (pp 1-60, 128-145); UUA RE Workshop Outlines at above links; Discussion Quotes)

Life of the Buddha: (pp 17-31);

- No written tradition for 400 years---
- Images of the Buddha—Top knot added after Alexander’s invasion and introduction of Apollo statues. Third eye was added subsequently. (Joseph Campbell, *Historical Atlas of World Mythology*.)
- Variations / Inconsistencies / Inaccuracies.

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Fallen Idols: (Trungpa, Watts, monastery scandals...“There are no enlightened people, only enlightened moments.” Shunryu Suzuki)

II. **Four Noble Truths** (pp 48-60);

A. Life is filled with pain/suffering: (pp 22-23, 48-52);

- Pain (birth, sickness, old age, death) vs. suffering (our reaction to pain, etc.)
- Pain is inevitable. Suffering is optional.

B. Suffering is caused by selfish desire: (Craving, attachment)

(pp 53-56);

- Why?
- All things pass away. We suffer if we don't get what we want. We suffer if we have what we want, but it disappears. We suffer if we can't rid ourselves of what we despise.
- Buddha's dying words: "Decay is inherent in all things: be sure to strive with clarity of mind (for nirvana)." (p. 31)

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- Another version: "All 'conditioned' things are impermanent. Work out your salvation with diligence."
- "Nothing exists, but momentarily, in its present form and color. One thing flows into another and cannot be grasped." Shunryu Suzuki
- "A flower falls even though we love it and a weed grows, even though we do not love it." Dogen

C. If we eliminate selfish desires, we end our suffering: (pp 56-58)

- Some desires are beneficial...the desire to end suffering, the desire to be compassionate, etc.
- How does elimination of selfish desire remove suffering?
- For some who believe in reincarnation, the only way to eliminate suffering is to enter "nirvana" and end the cycle of rebirth in future lives. (pp 25, 32-47)

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Discussion quotes:

- "He is richest who is content with least." Socrates. He would "window shop" at the market just to appreciate all the things he could do without.
- Emerson on Thoreau..."He made himself rich by making his wants few."
- "What need have I of gold. The whole world is gold for me." Naropa
- "It is not our preferences, but our attachment to our preferences that cause problems...Renunciation is not giving up things of the world but accepting they must go away." Shunryu Suzuki
- "There are only two afflictions, not getting and getting that to which you are attached." Anthony DeMello
- "You are no bigger than the things that annoy you." Jerry Bundsen
- "When everything is lost, you have only lost a toy...Understand its true value and it drops from your hands." Anthony DeMello.
- "Let go of those things that do not serve you but force you to serve them." (If I own a cow, the cow owns me.)
- The "if only" syndrome...

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- Cartoon of heaven..."Who cares if their cloud is bigger?"
- "Disappointment is always a reminder that you're still attached." Ezra Bayda
- "Desire consumes energy and takes us out of the moment." Joseph Goldstein
- "Success is getting what you want. Happiness is liking what you get." H. Jackson Browne
- "Here is my secret: I don't mind what happens." Krishnamurti

****Discussion...What are symptoms that you are attached to something?

(Last revised 8/29/19)