Early Buddhism

Teachings, readings, meditations
by ***Bhante Sujato & Ajahn Brahmali***
at ***Dhammaloka Buddhist Center***
starting ***February 23, 2013***



This structured course gives an overview of the earliest teachings of the Buddhist tradition. It has been designed by Bhante Sujato and Bhante Brahmali. It is based on the findings of historical scholarship, and explores the contemporary relevance of these ancient teachings. The course consists of six day-long workshops over six months. Each month, readings and meditations will be assigned for the following workshop.

Schedule

8.15	Arrive
8.30	Teachings and meditation
10.30	Break for dana
12.30	Teachings and meditation
2.30	Afternoon tea
3.00	Small group reading & discussion
4.30	Closing talk and meditation
5.00	Finish

On the readings

The readings are essential to the course, and should be completed prior to each workshop. By completing the reading students will acquire a reasonable knowledge of the suttas, as well as the skills to explore and interpret on their own. Reading time is expected to be one or two hours per week.

All texts will be available online, with links given here to available translations. However, the translations by Bhikkhu Bodhi are preferable, so students are recommended to purchase his *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (and other volumes).

Most suttas will be chosen from the Majjhima Nikāya. This is because it is perhaps the most accessible of the Early Buddhist collections. In addition, it is the only collection for which we have detailed comparative studies of each sutta.

While the readings will be translations from the Pali, the classes will refer to these comparative studies, most of which are based on the work of Venerable Anālayo. A list of his publications, many for free download, is at http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/publications.htm.

On the meditations

Each month there is an assigned meditation. These should be practised regularly in addition to your regular meditation practice. Set aside at least 10–20 minutes/day, 5 days/week.

Registration

You must register to attend the course.

How do I register?

You can register through the Buddhist Society website (http://www.courses.bswa.org.au/) or call Dhammaloka on 9345 1711.

How much does the course cost?

Teachings are by donation.

Where is the course held?

Dhammaloka Buddhist Center, 18-20 Nanson Way , Nollamara 6061, Western Australia.

When is it on?

8.30am–5.00pm on the fourth Saturday of each month, starting in February 2013.
February 23, March 23, April 27, May 25, June 22, July 27.

Workshop 1 : **History of Early Buddhism**

The very idea of Buddhism implies an "original" or "pure" teaching that is grounded in the ultimate truth of experience. But such a teaching does not exist in any simple or obvious way, and must be carefully reconstructed from historical sources, with all the uncertainties that this implies. This workshop considers how the search for Early Buddhism was developed in the West, and how Buddhist traditions have responded to it. Our ideals of Buddhist thought and practice have been conditioned by this search, which has been a fruitful source of inspiration and spiritual renewal.

Readings

Suttas

MN 26 Ariyapariyesana (the Buddha's search for Awakening)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.026.than.html
MN 60 Apaṇṇaka (hedging your bets, spiritually speaking)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.060.than.html
MN 82 Raṭṭhapāla (a story of faith and determination)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.082.than.html#fn-7
(compare the story of Sudinna, analyzed by Analayo at
http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/CaseofSudinna.pdf)
AN 3.15 Pacetana (an unusual early story of the Buddha's past life)
http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/17.7-Pacetana-Rathakara-S-a03.15-piya.pdf
(see Bhante Sujato's article at http://sujato.wordpress.com/2012/12/02/the-first-jataka/)
SN 47.12 Nālandā
http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/12.18-Nalanda-S-s47.12-piya.pdf
MN 141 Saccavibhaṅga (the four noble truths and eightfold path)
http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Short-Pieces/Saccavibhangasuttam.htm
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.141.piya.html

Contemporary Writings

Buddhist India, by TW Rhys Davids is a classic study of Buddhism in its historical context by one of the true greats and founders of modern Indology in 1902. While partly outdated, much of the general picture that Rhys Davids paints is still relevant; and many of the mistakes he points out are still made. Available in its entirety at http://fsnow.com/text/buddhist-india/. It's best if you can read the whole book. For this workshop, Chapters 1–6 offer an excellent overview of the social background of the Buddha.

Meditation

To prepare for this workshop, spend some time practising "clear comprehension". By being aware, mindfully and without judgement, of the contents of the mind, the mind becomes clear and open, ready for new ways of seeing. Here is the sutta passage, adapted from SN 47.35.

Be aware of feelings as they arise, as they remain, and as they cease.
Be aware of thoughts as they arise, as they remain, and as they cease.
Be aware of perceptions as they arise, as they remain, and as they cease.

Workshop 2: **Texts of Early Buddhism**

A survey of the Pali Nikāyas, the Chinese Āgamas and other early Buddhist literature. Includes an examination of the grounds by which these texts have been determined as early. Readings focus on crucial passages regarding the preservation and transmission of the Buddha's teachings, as well as some passages from the Sutta Nipāta that have been frequently cited by scholars as among the earliest of all.

Readings

Suttas

MN 95 Caṅkī (how we arrive at knowledge)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.095x.than.html
AN 2.23 Abhāsita (what wasn't spoken by the Buddha)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an02/an02.023.than.html
AN 2.24 Neyyattha (principles of interpretation)
http://dharmafarer.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/12/2.6b_Neyyattha_Nitattha_S_a2.3.4-5_piya1.pdf
AN 2.46 Ukkācita
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an02/an02.046.than.html
DN 16 Mahāparinibbāna
3.59–64 (the Last Admonition)
4.7-13 (the four Great References)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/dn/dn.16.1-6.vaji.html
Sutta Nipāta 1.3 Khaggavisāṇa (a powerful and popular sutta, often regarded as one of the earliest in the canon)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.1.03.than.html
Sutta Nipāta 4.14 Tuvaṭaka (another early verse sutta on the ascetic life)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/snp/snp.4.14.than.html

Contemporary Writings

Buddhist India, by TW Rhys Davids. Chapters 9, 10, and 11.
"Some Pāli Discourses in the Light of Their Chinese Parallels", by Bhikkhu Anālayo.
http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/SomePaliDis1.pdf
http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/SomePaliDis2.pdf

Meditation

Study of Dhamma was never meant as a purely intellectual exercise. While deepening our understanding of the suttas, the Buddha encouraged us to also deepen our emotional connection with the teachings. Here is one way to do this, adapted from the Vimuttāyatana Sutta, AN 5.26.

While reading or reflecting on the suttas, one gains inspiration in the meaning and inspiration in the Dhamma. Being inspired, one allows joy to arise. When the mind is full of joy, the body and mind become peaceful.

Workshop 3: **Ethics**

The core ethical teachings are presented, and their theoretical foundations are explored. Finally we consider the function of ethics within the Buddha's path as a whole.

Readings

MN 41 Sāleyyaka (the ten paths of wholesome action)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.041.nymo.html
(see Analayo's study at http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/SamyuktaAgamaSaleyyaka.pdf)
AN 2.19 Kusala Sutta
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an02/an02.019.than.html
AN 3.54 Paribbājaka (the roots of ethics & non-harming)
https://sites.google.com/site/earlypalisutta/15.8bParibbajakaBrahmanaSuttaa3.54pi.pdf?attredirects=0
MN 61 Ambalaṭṭhikārāhulovāda (right speech and the basis of ethics)
http://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh033-u.html
MN 21 Kakacūpama (metta and right speech)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.021x.budd.html
MN 27 Cūḷahatthipadopama (ethics in the gradual training)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.027.than.html

Meditation

To bring to mind and reflect on the positive strength of one's own virtue is one of the six recollections recommended by the Buddha. Here is the method he taught, adapted from AN 6.25.

> *Recollect one's precepts that are unbroken, unspoilt, spotless, unblemished, liberating, praised by the wise, not misapprehended, leading to samadhi. At such a time, greed, hatred, and delusion do not overwhelm the mind. In this way, some people are purified.*

Workshop 4: **Meditation**

An overview of some of the more common meditation methods, how they fit in the path as a whole, and how to overcome obstacles. The process of meditation is described, along with the jhanas as the outcome of proper meditation.

Readings

Methods of meditation

AN 11.2 (how joy deepens meditation)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an11/an11.002.than.html
(see the related essay by Bhikkhu Bodhi at http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/bodhi/wheel277.html)
MN 118 Ānāpānasati (breath meditation)
http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Anapanasati/index.htm
http://www.bps.lk/olib/bp/bp102s.pdf
MN 62 Mahārāhulovāda (various meditation methods)
http://www.ancient-buddhist-texts.net/Texts-and-Translations/Short-Pieces/MahaRahulovadasuttam.htm
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.062.than.html
Udana 4.1/AN 9.3 Meghiya (the wrong time for meditation)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/ud/ud.4.01.than.html

Overcoming obstacles

MN 19 Dvedhāvitakka (two kinds of thought)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.019.than.html
MN 20 Vitakkasaṇṭhāna (removing thoughts)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.020.than.html
MN 128 Upakkilesa (obstacles to samadhi)
http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Upakkilesa_Sutta
AN 5.161 Āghātapaṭivinaya (overcoming anger)
https://sites.google.com/site/earlypalisutta/12.23AghataPativinaya05.161piya.pdf?attredirects=0
MN 39.12–18 Mahā-Assapura (the four jhanas, with similes, in the gradual training)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.039.than.html
MN 66 Laṭukikopama (the bliss of letting go)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.066.than.html

Meditation

The most popular meditation taught by the Buddha is mindfulness of breathing.

Be aware of
—Breathing in a long breath—breathing out a long breath—
—Breathing in a short breath—breathing out a short breath—
—Breathing in feeling the whole breath—breathing out feeling the whole breath—
—Breathing in the breath becomes calm—breathing out the breath becomes calm—

Workshop 5: **Wisdom**

The four noble truths, not-self, dependent origination, and other teachings where the Buddha lays bare his vision of reality. These are rich and difficult texts that reward repeated reflection. We consider the process by which such profound visions are assimilated through reading, discussion, reflection, meditation, and ultimately through penetrative insight.

Readings

MN 44 Cūḷavedalla
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.044.than.html
(see Anālayo's study at http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/ChosSbyin.pdf)
MN 152 Indriyabhāvanā
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.152.than.html
MN 22 Alagaddūpama (the simile of the raft, and not-self)
http://www.bps.lk/olib/wh/wh048-u.html
MN 38 Mahātaṇhāsaṅkhaya Sutta (dependent origination and the rebirth of consciousness)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.038.than.html

Meditation

In the deeper levels of insight, the calm of samadhi merges with the understanding gained from study and reflection. One of the most practical approaches to insight uses the contemplation of impermanence in the six senses. Here is a method, adapted from SN 35.43.

Contemplate the whole world of experience:

The eye is impermanent—sights are impermanent—eye-consciousness is impermanent—eye-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from seeing are impermanent.

The ear is impermanent—sounds are impermanent—ear-consciousness is impermanent—ear-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from hearing are impermanent.

The nose is impermanent—smells are impermanent—nose-consciousness is impermanent—nose-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from smelling are impermanent.

The tongue is impermanent—tastes are impermanent—tongue-consciousness is impermanent—tongue-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from tasting are impermanent.

The body is impermanent—touches are impermanent—body-consciousness is impermanent—body-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from touching are impermanent.

The mind is impermanent—mind-objects are impermanent—mind-consciousness is impermanent—mind-contact is impermanent—all feelings, whether pleasant, painful, or neutral, that arise from the mind are impermanent.

Workshop 6: **Here & Now**

Returning to the historical theme which opened this course, we look at some of the ways that Early Buddhism has influenced the forms that Buddhism takes around us, including the vipassana movement, the Thai forest tradition, secular Buddhism, the meditation retreat, mindfulness-based psychology, the role of ethics, technology, and the future of monasticism. Finally, we consider how our understanding of Early Buddhism affects us in our practice and understanding of the Dhamma.

Readings

MN 108 Gopaka Moggallāna (what the Sangha did after the Buddha passed away)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.108.than.html
SN 16.13 Saddhammapaṭirūpaka (five things leading to the long lasting of the Dhamma)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn16/sn16.013.wlsh.html
AN 2.130–133 (inspiring role models)
http://www.metta.lk/tipitaka/2Sutta-Pitaka/4Anguttara-Nikaya/Anguttara1/2-dukanipata/012-Ayacanavaggo-e.html
MN 104 Sāmagāma (paragraph 5: what is really important)
http://www.dhammaweb.net/Tipitaka/read.php?id=138
AN 7.23 Aparihānīya (factors of non-decline)
http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/an/an07/an07.021.than.html
MN 47 Vīmaṁsaka (teachers need to be investigated)
http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Vimamsaka_Sutta
(see Anālayo's study at http://www.buddhismuskunde.uni-hamburg.de/fileadmin/pdf/analayo/ScopeFreeInquiry.pdf)
MN 17 Vanapattha (the right criteria for making decisions)
http://tipitaka.wikia.com/wiki/Vanapattha_Sutta

Meditation

In addition to the more formal meditations aimed at calming the mind, the Buddha encouraged us to reflect and review our lives in a more general sense. As we approach the end of this course, take the time to reflect on how the teachings we have learnt can influence our lives. Here are five topics that the Buddha suggested we reflect on frequently, adapted from AN 5.57.

I am aging, I have not escaped aging.
I become sick, I have not escaped sickness.
I will die, I have not escaped death.
All those who I care for and love, I will be separated from.
I am the owner of my kamma, heir to my kamma, born of my kamma, and live supported by my kamma. Whatever deeds I do, for good or for ill, of them I shall be the heir.