

EXPLORING THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA  
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SYLLABUS FOR A SYSTEMATIC STUDY OF THE MAJJHIMA NIKĀYA

We suggest that all participants in the course acquire a copy of the *Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha* (Wisdom Publications, Boston). Texts from the other collections will be copied and handed out.

I. The Buddha's Enlightenment

In this first part of the course, we will examine several suttas that help clarify the impetus behind the Buddha's quest and the content of his enlightenment experience. The basic text is MN\* 26, but we will make excursions to other texts that bring into finer focus aspects of his quest and enlightenment treated only concisely in MN 26:

1. MN 26. *Ariyapariyesanā Sutta*: The Noble Search
2. MN 4. *Bhayabherava Sutta*: Fear and Dread
3. MN 36. *Mahāsaccaka Sutta*: The Greater Discourse to Saccaka, (paragraphs 12-44)
4. Optional: MN 12. *Mahāsihanāda Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar, (paragraphs 44-63)

II. Approaching the Dhamma

1. Making wise choices  
AN 3:65. *Kālāma Sutta*: To the Kālāmas (handout)  
MN 60. *Apaṇṇaka Sutta*: The Incontrovertible Teachings
2. Test the Buddha himself  
MN 47. *Vimaṃsaka Sutta*: The Inquirer
3. Faith, practice, and attainment  
MN 95. *Cankī Sutta*: With Cankī

III. The Ethical Life

1. Four ways of life  
MN 46. *Mahādharmasamādāna Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on Ways of Undertaking Things
2. Karma and its results  
MN 57. *Kukkuravatika Sutta*: The Dog-Duty Ascetic  
MN 135. *Cūḷakammavibhanga Sutta*: The Shorter Exposition of Action
3. The path to a higher rebirth  
MN 41. *Sāleyyaka Sutta*: The Brahmins of Sālā  
Optional: MN 120. *Sankhārupapatti Sutta*: Reappearance by Aspiration

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\*Abbreviations:

MN = Majjhima Nikāya (Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha)

SN = Saṃyutta Nikāya (Connected Discourses of the Buddha)

AN = Aṅguttara Nikāya (Numerical Discourses of the Buddha)

DN = Dīgha Nikāya (Long Discourses of the Buddha)

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4. Right speech and patience  
MN 61. *Ambalaṭṭhikārāhulovāda Sutta*: Advice to Rāhula at Ambalaṭṭhikā  
MN 21. *Kakacūpama Sutta*: The Simile of the Saw
- IV. Deepening One's Perspective on the World
  1. The faults of the worldly life  
MN 13. *Mahādukkhakkhandha Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Mass of Suffering
  2. The shortcomings in sensual pleasures  
MN 54. *Potaliya Sutta*: To Potaliya  
MN 75. *Māgandiya Sutta*: To Māgandiya
  3. The misery of saṃsāra  
SN 15. *Anamataggasaṃyutta*: Connected Discourses on Without Discoverable Beginning, selected suttas (handout)
  4. Raṭṭhapāla and the call to renunciation  
MN 82. *Raṭṭhapāla Sutta*: On Raṭṭhapāla
- V. The Path to Liberation (General)
  1. The purpose of the spiritual life  
MN 63. *Cuḷamālunkya Sutta*: The Shorter Discourse to Mālunkyaṃputta  
MN 29. *Mahāsāropama Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Heartwood
  2. The gradual training  
MN 27. *Cūlahatthipadopama Sutta*: The Shorter Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint  
MN 39. *Mahā-Assapura Sutta*: The Greater Discourse at Assapura
  3. What makes one a monk?  
MN 40. *Cūla-Assapura Sutta*: The Shorter Discourse at Assapura
  4. The benefits of virtue  
MN 6. *Ākankheyya Sutta*: If a Bhikkhu Should Wish
  5. Purifying the mind  
MN 19. *Dvedhāvitakka Sutta*: Two Kinds of Thought  
MN 20. *Vitakkasaṅṭhāna Sutta*: The Removal of Distracting Thoughts  
MN 7. *Vatthūpama Sutta*: The Simile of the Cloth  
MN 8. *Sallekha Sutta*: Effacement
  6. Eliminating the taints  
MN 2. *Sabbāsava Sutta*: All the Taints
- VI. The Practice in Detail
  1. The Noble Eightfold Path  
MN 117. *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta*: The Greater Forty
  2. The way of mindfulness  
MN 10. *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*: The Foundations of Mindfulness
  3. Mindfulness of breathing  
MN 118. *Ānāpānasati Sutta*: Mindfulness of Breathing
  4. The aids to enlightenment, etc.  
MN 77. *Mahāsakuludāyi Sutta*: The Greater Discourse to Sakuludāyīn

## SYLLABUS FOR EXPLORING THE WORD OF THE BUDDHA

### VII. The Cultivation of Wisdom

1. Right view
  - MN 9. *Sammādiṭṭhi Sutta*: Right View
  - MN 11. *Cūlasihanāda Sutta*: The Shorter Discourse on the Lion's Roar
  - MN 22. *Alaggūpama Sutta*: The Simile of the Snake
  - MN 38. *Mahātaṇhāsankhaya Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Destruction of Craving
2. Penetrative insight
  - MN 148. *Chachaka Sutta*: The Six Sets of Six
  - MN 146. *Nandakovāda Sutta*: Advice from Nandaka
  - MN 149. *Mahāsaḷāyatānika Sutta*: The Great Sixfold Base
  - MN 28. *Mahāhatthipadopama Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Simile of the Elephant's Footprint
  - MN 64. *Mahāmālunkya Sutta*: The Greater Discourse to Mālunkyāputta
3. Final realization
  - MN 52. *Aṭṭhakanāgara Sutta*: The Man from Aṭṭhakanāgara
  - MN 140. *Dhātuvibhaṅga Sutta*: The Exposition of the Elements
4. A typology of persons
  - MN 1. *Mūlapariyāya Suttas*: The Root of All Things
5. A typology of noble disciples
  - MN 70. *Kīṭāgiri Sutta*: At Kīṭāgiri (part)

### VIII. The Tathāgata

- MN 12. *Mahāsihanāda Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on the Lion's Roar

### IX. Life in the Sangha

1. Monks living in harmony
  - MN 31. *Cūlagosīṅga Sutta*: The Shorter Discourse on Gosīṅga
2. The ideal monk
  - MN 32. *Mahāgosīṅga Sutta*: The Greater Discourse on Gosīṅga
3. A recalcitrant monk
  - MN 65. *Bhaddāli Sutta*: To Bhaddāli
4. Guidelines for future harmony
  - MN 104. *Sāmagāma Sutta*: At Sāmagāma
5. After the Buddha's parinibbāna
  - MN 108. *Gopakamoggallāna Sutta*: With Gopaka Moggallāna