

sense bases, six: (Pāli: āyatana) The internal sense bases are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. The external sense bases are visible forms, sounds, smells, flavours, tangibles (things that can be touched) and thoughts.

sīla: Virtue. Includes but is not limited to the five precepts.

Sinhala: One of the languages used in Sri Lanka.

stream-entry: The first stage of enlightenment when someone removes the fetters of self-identity view, doubt, and a wrong understanding of the effectiveness of rights and rituals.

sutta: (Sanskrit: sūtra) The scriptures taught by the Buddha and his enlightened disciples who lived when he did.

Tathāgata: "Thus gone one." The term the Buddha often uses to refer to himself.

Theravāda: "Teaching of the Elders," the oldest tradition of Buddhism, common in Sri Lanka, Thailand, Burma, and Laos.

Three Refuges: (Pali: tisarana) The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha. We call them refuges because they are the place that Buddhists find true safety.

Triple Gem: The Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Sangha. This term is interchangeable with the Three Refuges.

uposatha: Full and new moon days, often when lay people come to the monastery to observe the eight precepts, meditate and listen to Dhamma talks.

Vinaya: The part of the Buddha's teachings that give the rules for monks and nuns.

wisdom: In the Buddhist context, wisdom refers specifically to understanding the Four Noble Truths.

yojana: A measurement of distance, approximately 7km.



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Words for Wisdom

When we are new to the Buddha's teachings, there are lots of useful words to learn. Here are some of the most common you will hear in the talks we give. Never hesitate to speak with the monks afterwards if you have any questions.

aggregates, five: (Pali: khandha) Form, feelings, perceptions, thoughts, and consciousness. The Buddha talks about these five things because we often confuse them as “ours” or “ourselves.”

Arahant: Someone who has attained full enlightenment and will not be reborn again. They have removed the final five fetters: lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, ignorance.

bhante: A respectful way of addressing a monk.

bhikkhu: “Monk.” Female version: bhikkhuni.

Blessed One: A respectful term for the Buddha.

bodhisatta: (Sanskrit: bodhisattva) Someone who has made the determination to become a Buddha. We use this term to refer to Sidhartha Gautama (the h is silent) before he attained enlightenment.

Buddha: A man named Sidhartha Gotama who lived over 2,500 years ago in India and discovered on his own the way to true happiness and attained enlightenment

dependent origination: the process by which ignorance conditions rebirth.

deva: can refer to all heavenly beings in general or specifically the lower class of heavenly beings, the other being brahmas. (Not to be confused with brahmins, the priestly caste in India.)

Dhamma: The teachings of the Buddha that lead the person who follows them to true happiness.

divine eye & divine ear: The divine eye allows the person who possesses it to see things far away, even into other realms. Likewise, the divine ear allows hearing things at a great distance.

eight precepts: Rules that lay people observe one or more days each month that include the five precepts as well as celibacy, not eating after noon, and giving up luxuries, etc.

fetters: Ten deeply seated problems in the mind that are systematically removed on the path to full enlightenment: self-identity view, doubt, wrong understanding of the effectiveness of rights and rituals, sensual desire, hatred, lust for form, lust for the formless, conceit, restlessness, ignorance.

five precepts: The basic moral rules that lay people follow, namely, not killing, not stealing, not lying, not committing sexual misconduct, and not using intoxicants.

Four Nobel Truths: 1) The reality of suffering in the world. 2) The cause of suffering. 3) The end of suffering. 4) The way that leads to the end of suffering.

full enlightenment: Someone who has attained full enlightenment has removed all ten fetters and will never take rebirth in any destination.

hell: This is the lowest form of rebirth. In hell, beings experience only painful feelings and don't have the opportunity to do good actions that lead to good results. As with all forms of rebirth, it is temporary.

jhāna: four stages of deep concentration

kalpa: An extremely long unit of time. Not eternal, but hard to measure.

kalyānamitta: good friend, spiritual friend

kamma: (Sanskrit: karma) Intentional actions that have good or bad results based on the type of action.

lay people: Followers of the Buddha who live ordinary lives while practicing the teachings. The other category of disciples are ordained monks and nuns who give up jobs and families to practice the teachings full time.

Mahamevnawa: (maha MAY oo NA wa) “Garden of the Great Cloud.” This is the name of the most ancient monastery in Sri Lanka and also the name of our organization. In tropical countries clouds are often the only relief from the burning sun.

merit: All kinds of good actions that lead to good results.

mettā: “loving-kindness.” A feeling of unconditional good-will towards oneself and others.

Namo Buddhaya: “Homage to the Buddha.” We often use this as a greeting.

nibbāna: The complete ending of suffering. Often translated as “enlightenment.”

Nobel Ones: Individuals who have attained at least the first stage of enlightenment.

Noble Eightfold Path: The Buddha's training to attain enlightenment: right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

non-returner: Someone who has removed the fetters of sensual desire and hatred and will not take rebirth again in the human world before attaining full enlightenment.

once-returner: Someone who has substantially reduced greed, hatred and delusion and will be reborn in the human world a maximum of one more time.

Pāli: The ancient Indian language used to record the Buddha's teachings. We use this language when we chant.

Pāṭimokkha: The basic set of rules for monks and nuns.

rebirth: The process where someone who still has greed, hatred, and delusion in their mind dies and appears again in another form.

saddha: (Sanskrit: shraddha) Faith, confidence. Specifically, confidence in the enlightenment of the Buddha.

sadhu: “Excellent,” “very good.” We say this all the time to start things and end things.

samsara: (pronounced sung-sara) The cycle of death and re-birth that only comes to an end with full enlightenment.

Saṅgha: There are two types of saṅgha: 1) the community of monks and nuns. 2) All beings who have attained a level of enlightenment.