

**THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS' & THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: DHARMA LESSON 3**

MA David Hopper

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS:

1. *Duhka is part of life.* Duhka is **difficulty** [sometimes translated as suffering or struggle] comes from not living in accord with the truth of **impermanence** and **interdependence**. The coronavirus pandemic cannot last forever. It will end. The pandemic is created by living as if we are independent rather than interdependent. The social isolation and impact of others on every aspect of our lives during this pandemic will certainly prove that interconnectedness is a wise truth. We are all connected to one another and the more we lose sight of that, the more we create duhka.

2. *Duhka is caused by cravings, desire, attachment.* **Delusions** of **self-importance** expressed through **greed** and **anger** is the cause of difficulty (duhka). **Ignorance** is the remaining poison. It leads to **fear** caused by the unknown. When we become self-centered and selfish, we actually become at greater risk of getting infected by the coronavirus. By focusing on me and I, we become greedy and oblivious to the world around us. Are we living as a bucket of crabs (every man for himself) or a community? When our expectations are not met, we become angry. Do you do something for someone out of kindness or do you expect payment or some kind of reward for your deed? If you expect to be rewarded and don't get it, you will be disappointed and angry. Who and what is important here?

3. Eliminating duhka comes through transformation of greed, anger, ignorance and delusion. **Attachment** to our delusions of self importance leads to difficulty through these poisons. When you put yourself above all others, you may believe yourself to be successful and happy but, the only way you can continue this life is through delusions. When you are driven by greed, you will not be well liked by others. It becomes easier to maintain this behavior with delusions such as *I am not doing anything wrong because I am not breaking any laws. Others are doing it so why can't I?* We often justify our anger with "they" are making me angry beliefs.

4. The **Eightfold Path** is medicine for putting an end to difficulty. The Eightfold Path is:

- 1) **Right View** - For every negative with the pandemic there is a positive that can be said. [E.g., Negative = people are getting sick and dying from the coronavirus. Positive = Isolation is saving lives by reducing exposure to the virus and reducing pollution, improving health and saving lives through less car pollution.] For every problem, there is a solution. Take the Middle Road. Nothing is 100% perfect and nothing is 100% bad. When you are able to see a balance of good and bad in something, this is the middle road.
- 2) **Right Thought** - Thoughts of sharing, helping others, improving relationships, enjoying the isolation, etc. is the right way to think NOT anger, hatred and violent thoughts.
- 3) **Right Speech** - Criticizing people or their mistakes or people that don't do what you want them to leave you stuck in the problems. Instead, empower yourself by being solution-oriented.
- 4) **Right Conduct** - Perform good deeds that promote peace and goodwill.
- 5) **Right Livelihood** - Earn your living in a way that does not cause difficulty for others. [e.g., Buying toilet paper for a dollar & selling it for \$10 to profit off of the pandemic is harmful to self and others.]
- 6) **Right Energy** - Use your energies to overcome ignorance and destructive desires. [E.g., Learn about the coronavirus so you can avoid getting sick or infecting others, figure out ways to help others during social isolation rather than spend all your energy worrying and being frustrated at the obstacles.]
- 7) **Right Mindfulness** - Be aware of all that others are doing to help each other. Be grateful for all those who are risking getting sick so that they may help others survive including medical, police, firefighters, EMTs, grocery & pharmacy employees, and many others. A grateful mind does not suffer and is able to help others. It is important to be mindful of everything you do.
- 8) **Right Meditation** - It is easy to get overloaded with all the news and disruptions in our lives from the pandemic but, in order to find answers easier, mindfulness meditation will help bring us peace of mind and answers to the problems that may be cluttering our mind. Answers come to us faster and easier when our mind is relaxed and open. Meditating on Buddha's teachings can bring us greater wisdom and understanding than when we try too hard to concentrate and find answers.

Buddha told the *Parable of the Arrow* to help us ease our suffering in a crisis. Picture yourself walking through a forest when you are suddenly hit by an arrow. It is very painful. Can you avoid the second arrow? Buddha said, "In life, we cannot always control the first arrow. However, the second arrow is our reaction to the first. And with this second arrow comes the possibility of choice." Instead of reactions, allow yourself to experience and explore your emotions without judgment or fear. Let go of your past expectations and see the situation as it truly is. Respond rather than react by following the Four Noble Truths as summarized in this dharma talk.

OUR NEXT SERVICE WILL BE IN JUNE!

Nevada is shut down for another month, so the Sangha Center will be closed until the end of May. Our next service is now scheduled for Sunday, June 14. Bishop Harada will preside, and he will officiate an MA ceremony where David Hopper and Michael Tanaka will receive their certificates and get their robes & okesas. Of course, it will all be followed by a very special potluck! We will cover details in our next newsletter.

WE'RE ON YOUTUBE!

Through the efforts of MA David Hopper, we now have a YouTube channel! Log in to YouTube, and you can type in Las Vegas Buddhist Sangha for videos that our MA's will be uploading. Click on [Subscribe](#) to get all of the Sangha videos.

LAST CHANCE TO COMPLETE AAPI SURVEY

Due date is April 30, so go to: <http://bit.ly/aapicc-survey> and let them know what you think!

SHINJIN

Entrusting Heart

Shinjin, a Japanese term closely meaning "entrusting," is of pivotal importance in the Jodo Shinshu tradition; without it, there would be no Jodo Shinshu. The term, which incorporates the translation of the Buddhist Sanskrit word *sradda*, is composed of two Chinese characters meaning "entrust, trust, confidence" and the second character meaning "heart, mind."

Shinjin is not something that one can fabricate through self-centered efforts and concepts. *Shinjin* is the entrusting that is awakened within each person through the working of the Primal Vow. *Shinjin* occurs when the Dharma-Body becomes apparent to sentient beings.

Speaking more conventionally, *shinjin* refers to Amida's compassion when it becomes apparent to the person thus liberated and awakened. Amida Buddha vowed to bring about the emancipation of all beings through his Primal Vow and intonation of his name, "Namo Amida Butsu"; he promised not to stop working until this was accomplished.

The formal way of expressing this is:

Shinjin is the true cause; therefore, we recite the Name of Amida Buddha in gratitude.

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| Character | 南 | 無 | 阿 | 彌 | 陀 | 佛 |
| Sanskrit | Na | Mo | A | Mi | Da | Butsu |
| meaning | (I) | entrust | non- | Measure | | Buddha |
| | | | un- | | | |

"I entrust myself to and rely solely upon the Awakened Being of Immeasurable Higher Wisdom and Immeasurable Compassion who has come to bring about my emancipation."

EXCERPTS FROM: JODO SHINSHU, A GUIDE
Concise, abridged edition
HONGWANJI INTERNATIONAL CENTER, KYOTO, JAPAN

COVID-19 MESSAGE FROM THE BISHOP



As I take office as Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America, we find ourselves living in an unprecedented time, facing a global pandemic that has hit our nation, state, and communities.

In order to do our part to help prevent the spread of the virus, we have cancelled all of our in-person services and gatherings at our churches and temples and are all abiding by the "stay at home" directives.

We deeply miss seeing one another and being able to gather for a Sunday service or to be able to pay our respects to a dear loved one at their funeral service. Our Sanghas are living "communities" and now we must be isolated and apart from each other. It is a painful and difficult time for all.

Many have lost their jobs or their jobs are threatened by recession. Perhaps some of you know or have a loved one suffering from the virus and you were not even able to be with them during their time of need.

It is exactly during times of great duress that over the centuries in our Buddhist tradition many have turned to the Buddha-Dharma, for solace, for peace, for meaning. This time is no different.

Shinran Shonin wrote in one of his poems, or *wasan*, the following:

When we say "Namu-amida-butsu,"

*The countless Buddhas throughout the ten quarters,
Surrounding us a hundredfold, a thousandfold,
Rejoice in and protect us.*

p. 355, Collected Works of Shinran

What this poem is saying to me, is not that saying *Namu amida butsu* will prevent me from getting the virus, but it is saying that for the person who recites and receives the Nembutsu, that they are embraced within the world of Buddha, the world of wisdom and compassion, no matter what.

If I get the virus, *Namu amida butsu*, I am embraced within the world of Buddha. If I don't get the virus, *Namu amida butsu*, I am embraced within the world of Buddha. Either way, get it or not get it, I am one with the timeless truth of immeasurable life and immeasurable light. That is the ultimate source of peace and solace.

Namu amida butsu,

Rev. Marvin Harada

Bishop

Buddhist Churches of America

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SEWING YOUR OWN FACE MASK

The federal and state governments have encouraged the use of face masks to help prevent the spread of germs/viruses. It may be difficult to find them in stores, so it may be a good idea to make some yourself, and at the same time, make some for your friends and relatives.

There are many different ways to make them, some of which do not require the use of a sewing machine. All you have to do is to go to YouTube.com and search for "sewing masks" and you will see a long list of DIY tutorials on how to make masks.

So, while you are stuck at home with nothing to do, you can do something really productive. You can even use colorful fabrics or draw things on the masks to make them distinctive.



DONATED YET?

Most of us drop a donation in the box as we enter the Center for a service, but we don't send anything in when we miss a service. Please remember that we have continuing expenses every month whether we use the building or not.

Utilities, insurance, and HOA fees all need to be paid. And don't forget memorials and occasions such as Hanamatsuri. One of our members made a \$100 Hanamatsuri donation!

Just drop a check in the mail or use the website to make an electronic donation. Thank You!

IMPORTANT NUMBERS

| | |
|---------------|---------------|
| Sangha | (702)228-3071 |
| Center Rental | (619)888-5301 |
| Dharma Ed. | (702)371-0947 |
| Illness/Death | (702)806-5520 |
| Sangha Crafts | (818)219-6982 |
| Editor | (702)228-3071 |

KEEPING IN TOUCH

Many of us are staying at home except for the occasional foray to stock up on groceries and staples. But there are some activities you can safely do during this time.

Go to a local park. There are many beautiful parks in Las Vegas and Henderson. Right now, they are mostly deserted, so you can take a nice walk with your spouse and/or dog. I know one person who takes her dog for 3 walks every day, so this will get you out into the fresh air, and burn up some of those extra calories you've been eating while watching TV all day. You can arrange to meet a friend, and you can walk together, keeping the required distance between you.

Meet for a "Drive Through" dinner. You can't have a dinner with friends at a restaurant, but you can each get takeout or drive through food and meet somewhere for some great conversation. Just don't share the food!

Do a group video conference. There are several different apps you can use to connect with friends and relatives. We had a call with about a dozen relatives from here and California last week. We normally only get together once a year for Thanksgiving, so this was an added bonus.

Go for a scenic drive. We go out about once a week to some scenic place, like to Mt. Charleston, Lee Canyon, or Valley of Fire. Roads are empty right now, so no traffic to contend with.

Enjoy!

GOOD SAMARITANS

Do you have a relative or friend who lives in an assisted living facility? Since they are very vulnerable to the virus, no visitors are allowed. One way to help is to deliver food or gifts.

Derek Uehara and Sandi Hiyane are delivering food to some of our senior members. Many restaurants and online services offer free delivery. Send something and make someone's day!

YOUR LEGACY

Most of us have a little more time on our hands than usual, so it's a good time to think about the things that we usually don't like to think about, such as what will happen if we pass away suddenly, be it from the virus or an accident.

June Maruyama's brother, Yukio Hamada, died 2 years ago. He had started to write a will, but died without completing it. Therefore, his estate had to be put before a probate court, and is still not completely settled. Whatever he had in mind for his estate will now be ignored, and an impartial court proceeding will decide what to do with his legacy.

Now is the time to talk to a financial planner and/or lawyer that specializes in wills and trusts. You will be able to designate who gets what part of your estate. You will even be able to make a charitable contribution that will save taxes and also leave a lasting legacy. Whether it's a scholarship, a donation to a building fund, or for operating expenses, your name will be remembered for many years to come.