

Lesson 1: The Trilakshana

THREE MARKS OF EXISTENCE

1. Sabe Sankhara Dukkha

2. Sabe Sankhara Aniccya

3. Sabe Dhamma Annatta

4. The Mahayana school includea: Nirvana is Peace as the Fourth Seal.

Trilakshana [Sanskrit: त्रिलक्षण] [Tibetan: རྩལ་གྲུ་གསུམ་, chak gya sum]

The Trilakshana are the three seals, three mudras. They are the three attributes, characteristics, qualities, features.

These three characteristics are common to all compounded phenomena and sentient beings. Therefore we may consider them as Truths.

What is Truth? Truth can either be relative or absolute. Different schools differ on what Truth comprises of, but all agree on the Three Seals as being Absolute Truths. i.e. they are unchanging and we can rely on them to be pervasive.

The Three Truths or Three Seals are foundational to Buddhist Philosophy.

Because we are ignorant or delusional about the Three Marks of Existence, we face suffering.

All compounded phenomena is suffering. All compounded phenomena is impermanent. All compounded phenomena is lacking in inherent essence.

When we lack understanding of dukkha, we grasp and cling to certainty which causes us to slide into suffering.

When we lack understanding of Impermanence, we cling and grasp, trying to hold on to what is essentially already in a state of disintegration.

When we identify with a permanent and lasting sense of self, we lack the dynamism to adapt to the fleeting world and persist in adapting the external to ourselves, in the delusion that who we are is whole, fixed and stable.