

# Dharma Drum Mountain Toronto: Selected Readings from the *Samyukta Āgama*

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## Who Is the “I” You Think You Are?

### On the Five Aggregates, Non-Self, and Contemporary Identity Anxiety

In this era of information explosion and rapid AI evolution, we curate countless versions of the "self" online every day. But when the filters are stripped away, who is the "real" me? The words the Buddha spoke to the five ascetics 2,500 years ago are a key which can help us to unlock the deepest doors of our inner being.

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## I. The Opening Inquiry: Three Questions, Three Shackles of Suffering

We begin by quietly reflecting on three questions:

1. When you strip away all masks and filters, how do you perceive your own anxiety? What does it feel like to face your rawest self?
2. Since all things are constantly changing, what does "happiness" actually mean?
3. How do we settle that lingering sense of "lack"—the feeling that something is always missing?

In Buddhism, these correspond to the three types of suffering (*dukkha*): the suffering of suffering (*dukkha-dukkhatā*), the suffering of change (*viparināma-dukkhatā*), and the deepest level, the suffering of conditioned states (*sankhāra-dukkhatā*). Examining these aren't meant to be depressing. In fact, the "Great Doubt" is the starting point of a lifetime of exploration.

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## II. The Buddha's Awakening: A Profoundly "Scientific" Observation

Much like our world today, Prince Siddhartha's world was filled with social inequality and political oppression. The difference, though, is that today we have added a layer of digital anxiety. Yet, the root of pain remains the same. Under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha didn't pray to a god. Rather, he made "scientific" observations regarding the truth of human existence.

## The Core Observation: The Twelve Links of Dependent Origination (*paṭiccasamuppāda*)

1. Ignorance (*avijjā*)
2. Volitional formations (*saṅkhāra*)
3. Consciousness (*viññāṇa*)
4. Name and form (*nāma-rūpa*)
5. The six sense fields (*saḷāyatana*)
6. Contact (*phassa*)
7. Feeling tone (*vedanā*)
8. Craving (*taṇhā*)
9. Clinging (*upādāna*)
10. Becoming (*bhava*)
11. Birth (*jāti*)
12. Old age and death (*jarā-maraṇa*)

He discovered the Twelve Links of Dependent Origination, which operate in two directions:

the blueprint of how life unfolds across past, present, and future. He realized they operate in two directions:

- The Forward Process (arising of suffering):  
From ignorance → volitional formations → consciousness → name-and-form ...  
→ birth → aging and death, culminating in the full mass of suffering.
- The Reverse Process (cessation of suffering):  
Tracing backward: aging and death arise because there is birth; birth because of becoming; becoming because of clinging... ultimately back to ignorance: not seeing reality as it truly is.  
When ignorance ceases, the entire chain dissolves.

To describe this realization, the Buddha used a beautiful metaphor: the “ancient path of the sages.” This is the dependent origination, which was not invented, but rediscovered. Like a traveler finding an ancient road in the wilderness that leads to a serene city—that city is Nirvāṇa, and the path is the Noble Eightfold Path.

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### III. The *Anattalakkhana Sutta* (The *Non-Self Characteristic Sutra*), the Teaching at Deer Park — The Five Aggregates Are Not Self

In *the Saṃyukta Āgama*, after his awakening, the Buddha did not remain in solitude. With gratitude and compassion, he went to Deer Park to teach the five companions who had practiced with him.

- His first teaching: the *Dhammacakkappavattana Sutta* (Turning of the Wheel of Dharma), establishing the Four Noble Truths.
- His second: the *Anattā-lakkhaṇa Sutta*—the teaching on non-self.

the Buddha asked a question that cuts to the core:

"Form is not-self. If form were self, form would not lead to affliction, and one could say to the form: 'Let my form be thus; let my form not be thus.'" (SA, 34).

If your body were truly "you"—if you were the master—you could command it never to get sick or age. But you cannot. Therefore, the body is not "you." It is like a machine functioning on its own, while we mistakenly believe we are the driver.

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### IV. Analyzing the Five Aggregates (*Pañca-kkhandha*)

The "Self" is actually a collection of five changing components:

1. **Form (Materiality):** The physical body and the material world.
2. **Feeling (Sensation):** Pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral sensations.
3. **Perception:** Recognition, labels, and concepts.
4. **Mental Formations:** Volition, impulses, and the "will" that creates karma.
5. **Consciousness:** The faculty of awareness that arises through the senses.

The "Self" is merely the "coming together" of these five aggregates in each moment. You are not a static entity. Rather, you are a dynamic, ever-changing process.

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### V. The Three-Step Argument: From Impermanence to Liberation

The Buddha uses three logical steps to dismantle our attachment:

1. **Impermanence (*Anicca*):** Is this constant? No, the five aggregates arise and perish in every moment.
2. **Suffering (*Dukkha*):** Can constant change bring stability? No, this flux creates an inherent "un-peacefulness."
3. **Non-Self (*Anatta*):** Since it is stressful and uncontrollable, can it really be called "Mine"? If we cannot master it, why cling to it?

These insights were revolutionary. At the time, Indian philosophy (*Upanishads*) believed in an eternal **Atman** (True Self) characterized by **Saccidānanda**: Being (*Sat*), Bliss (*Ānanda*), and Sovereignty/Control (*Ātman*). The Buddha used our clear lack of Control as an entry point to shatter the illusion of an eternal self.

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## VI. Living the Practice: Letting Go in Daily Life

**The Lesson of "Walking":** A story tells us of a student who was too tired to walk. His companions said, "We can do many things for you, but we cannot eat, sleep, or walk for you." There are many things you cannot control. For instance, your body gets sick, emotions fluctuate, and thoughts wander. They don't follow your orders. So how can they be "you"?

### Three Points for Daily Reflection:

- **Concept:** Impermanence is suffering.
- **Practice:** When you are in pain, tell yourself: "This is a sensation in the body, it is not 'me' suffering." Observing the *resistance* to pain is more powerful than observing the pain itself.
- **Mindfulness:** Instead of saying "I am angry," try observing that "a feeling of anger has arisen." This shift in language is the first step toward freedom.

### Conclusion:

Your body, emotions, and thoughts happen *to* you, but they are not *you*. In the midst of the flux, there is only the quiet observation of the process. Realizing this is letting go; and letting go is true freedom.

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## 你以為的「我」，究竟是誰？

五蘊、無我與當代的身分焦慮——課後分享

在這個資訊爆炸、AI 飛速運轉的時代，我們每天在網路上塑造著無數個「自我」的形象。那麼，當所有的濾鏡褪去，那個最真實的「我」，究竟是誰？佛陀在兩千五百年前對五位比丘說的那番話，至今仍像一把鑰匙，等待著我們去開啟內心深處那扇門。

一 · 開場提問

### 三個問題，三層苦的枷鎖

我們靜靜思考三個問題：

- 1.當卸下所有面具與濾鏡，你如何察覺自己正在焦慮？面對那個最真實的自己，是什麼感覺？
- 2.既然萬物不斷改變，「快樂」究竟意味著什麼？
- 3.而那種隱隱約約、總覺得「缺少了什麼」的匱乏感，我們又該如何安頓？

這三個問題，分別對應佛法中「苦」的三種形態——苦苦、壞苦，以及最深層的行苦。它們不是讓人沮喪的問題，而是修行人最珍貴的「疑情」，是我們一生探索的起點。

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二 · 佛陀的證悟

### 菩提樹下，一場極其「科學」的觀察

悉達多太子當年面對的，是弱肉強食的政治壓迫與社會階級的不平等——與我們今日所處的世界何其相似，只是我們還多了數位世界帶來的虛實交錯的焦慮感。然而，儘管時空不同，「痛苦的根源與解脫的架構」始終如一。

佛陀在菩提樹下，沒有向神祈禱，也沒有向宇宙求取力量。他做的，是一件極其「科學」的事情——他非常仔細、非常安靜地，觀察生命的真相。

核心觀察·十二因緣

這就是十二因緣，是他在菩提樹下所見到的生命運作圖。從這一生到未來生；從過去生到現在生三世的時間有緣起，他發現十二支的運行方向是「兩個方向」：

流轉門，（正向方向→苦的生起）：從無明→行→識→名色……→生→老病死，純大苦聚集；  
還滅門（逆向方向→苦的息滅）他從「老死之苦」一路往回追問：老死，因為有生；生，因為有有；有，因為有取……最終追溯到「無明」——對生命真相的無知。苦的鏈條，由此而生；斷除無明，鏈條亦由此而滅。如第287 經說，「我作是思惟時，齊識而還，不能過彼」。

然而，佛陀為了描述這個發現，用了一個非常優美的意象——「古仙人道」，這就是他在菩提樹下所證悟的核心——緣起法（dependent origination）。如《雜阿含經》第 296 經記載：「此法常住，法住法界，彼如來自所覺知，成等正覺。」這條緣起法，不是佛陀發明的，而是他重新發現的——如同一位旅人在荒野中，循著古道走到了那座清涼寧靜的城邦，那就是涅槃。這條古道，便是八正道。

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三·《無我相經》

## 鹿野苑的那場說法——五蘊皆非我

證悟之後，佛陀沒有安住在那份寧靜之中。他帶著清淨的感恩與慈悲，走向了鹿野苑，走向了曾在苦行林中與他患難與共的五位同伴。開啟了佛教史上著名的「第二場講經」。

第一場，是《轉法輪經》——確立了「四聖諦」：苦、集、滅、道。

第二場，就是今天我們要深入的《雜阿含》第 34 經，又稱《無我相經》。

正如聖嚴法師所說：「修行不是要變成無情無義的木頭，而是要將感情昇華，從有情變成覺有情。」佛陀的度化，始終有親疏遠近之分，而他首先走向的，正是那五個與他有緣的人。

在《雜阿含經》第 34 經中，佛陀向五比丘提出了一個看似簡單、卻直指人心的問題：

「色非有我。若色有我者，於色不應病苦生，亦不得於色欲令如是、不令如是。」

——《雜阿含經》第 34 經

意思是：如果你的身體真的是「你」——你是主人——那你應該能命令它「不准生病」、「不准衰老」。但你做得到嗎？做不到。所以，這個身體，不是你。它只是一台自動運作的機器，而我們誤以為自己是駕駛員。

四·五蘊解析

## 構成「我」的五個無常層次

佛陀將我們習以為常的「自我」，拆解為五個不斷變化、相互作用的集合，稱為「五蘊」：

色form一切物質形態，由地、水、火、風四大元素構成，包含內在與外在的身體。

受feeling所有的感受與覺知，苦、樂、不苦不樂，源於接觸而生。

想perception所有的認知與辨別，我們對事物的概念與印象。

行mental formations意志性的思維活動與衝動，是造業的核心所在。

識consciousness所有的意識活動，由名(受、想、行)與色共同構成。

所謂的「自我」，不過是這五種無常元素在每個當下的「和合體」。你並非有一個靜止不變的實體的我，而這個我不過是一個暫時的自我，不斷地隨著在不同時空背景，持續運轉、持續運作、瞬息萬變的歷程。

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五·三層論證

## 從無常到無我——禪修思維的三個步驟

佛陀在第 34 經中，以三個遞進的問題，引導我們破除對自我的執著：

step 01

### 無常

它是永遠不變的嗎？觀察色、受、想、行、識，皆在剎那生滅。

step 02

### 苦

變動能帶來穩定嗎？苦不只是悲傷，更是萬物不斷遷流時內心的「不安穩性」。

step 03

### 無我

充滿壓力又變幻莫測的，能稱為「我」嗎？既然無法主宰，執著它何益？

這三步並非悲觀，而是一種解放。一旦我們真正看清「這一切不是我」，就不會再死命抓取。不抓取，就不執著；不執著，就自由了。

但是，從我們當下每一刻的身心五蘊的體驗，當我們在追逐五欲樂時，內心有一股強烈的自我慾望，希望要求每一個物質現象都不要變，希望它能「常一、永恆。」離不開這個「我」的束縛。

「想要真正理解佛陀在《雜阿含經》提出『無我(non-self)』概念，在當時印度時代有多麼具顛覆性與革命性，那我們必須先回到他所處的時代，去了解當時印度社會的絕對主流哲學——也就是《奧義書》裡所深信的，那個永恆且至高無上的靈魂(梵我或真我)。」這個「真我」具備三個本質屬性，梵文合稱 **saccidānanda**：因此具備以下特質：

1. 常(eternal)：永恆不滅、不死的(sat / nitya)真我不生不滅，超越時間。
2. 本質是純粹的樂(ānanda)/自在(bliss/sovereignty)真我的本質不是苦也不是一般的樂，而是**\*\*超越感官的、純粹圓滿的喜樂(bliss)**。

3. 具備絕對主宰性(ātman as controller / antaryāmin), 能隨心所欲(如國王對領土有絕對權力), 不受逼迫。

所以, 佛陀將『無我觀(無法主宰)』作為最關鍵的破口, 一舉瓦解了婆羅門教世界觀的(真我)堅固幻象。」因為這真我的三個屬性中, 『主宰性』是最容易被日常經驗直接驗證的。佛陀以「緣起法」(dependent origination) 與「無我」(non-self/anātman) 的概念來回應這種思想。他將生命拆解為「五蘊」(色、受、想、行、識), 引導弟子觀察這些元素都是因緣和合、不斷生滅變化的, 藉此證明生命中並沒有一個能自我主宰的「真我」存在。

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六·生活應用

## 在日常中練習「放下」

分享了一個小故事: 曾有一位年輕的學生, 和同伴到遠方旅行, 長途路遙不堪疲困而停止向前。同伴催促他:「我們可以幫你做一切事, 但只有吃飯、睡覺無法幫忙。」年輕學生

說:「吃飯、睡覺我會, 不用你們協助。」同伴說:「走路也是一樣, 我們無法幫助!」

有些事, 你做不了主。身體會生病, 情緒會波動, 念頭會亂跑——它們不聽你的指揮。那麼, 它們怎麼可能是「你」?

日常觀照的三個切入點

觀念:「無常即苦, 苦即非我。」

練習: 當身體不舒服時, 試著告訴自己:「這只是身體的現象, 不是我在受苦。」觀察那份抗拒, 比觀察疼痛本身更有力量。當情緒湧現時, 不要說「我很憤怒」, 試著改口說「有憤怒的感受升起了」。主詞的轉換, 是解脫的第一步。

每天給自己五分鐘靜坐, 只是觀察呼吸的生滅無常變化。不控制, 不評判, 只是看著——這就是「正念」的日常修行。

你的身體、你的情緒、你的思想、你的感受——它們發生在你身上, 但它們並不是「你」, 因為『無常』。而當下的你, 僅僅是靜靜觀察著這一切的那份覺知。體悟到這一點, 便是放下; 而放下, 即是真正的自由。

——課堂總結語