

The Core Beliefs of Buddhism

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Buddhism began in India with **SIDDHARTHA GAUTAMA**, between 563 and 483 BCE. During the following millennia it spread throughout Asia and the rest of the world. It has 376 million followers worldwide. Buddhists hold that enlightenment, or **NIRVANA**, can be attained by *meditation*, hard work (both spiritual and physical), and good conduct.

Buddhists don't believe in any sort of deity or god, but they do believe in supernatural beings who can aid or obstruct a person's journey towards enlightenment.

Buddhists believe in a cycle of **reincarnation** in which souls are reborn into various bodies based on how they behaved in past lives. This relates to "karma," which describes how a person's good or bad deeds in the past, or in previous lives, might affect them in the present.

They also hold that *human life is one of suffering*. Although rebirth and suffering are a constant part of human existence, this cycle can be broken permanently by attaining enlightenment (**NIRVANA**). The first person to achieve this degree of enlightenment was Siddhartha Gautama, who is referred to as **THE BUDDHA**.

Siddhartha Gautama – The Buddha

After witnessing the suffering of the destitute and the dying in the fifth century B.C.E, Indian prince Siddhartha Gautama recognized that human life is painful. He gave up his fortune, lived in poverty for a while, meditated, and traveled, but was ultimately dissatisfied. He decided to follow what became known as "the Middle Way." This implied that the path to enlightenment was not one of extreme asceticism, nor extreme prosperity, but rather, a style of living that fell somewhere in the middle of the two.

He eventually attained enlightenment while engaged in intense meditation beneath the Bodhi tree (the Tree of Awakening). His place of enlightenment, the Mahabodhi Temple in Bihar, India, is today a significant Buddhist pilgrimage site. The Buddha then lectured about *Four Noble Truths*. The MIDDLE WAY is found in the *fourth truth*, which is *Magga*. It provides an eightfold path to enlightenment. Once that is attained, the person's suffering ceases.

THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS might be briefly described as follows:

1. **Dukkha.** *Suffering exists:* real and almost universal suffering exists. Loss, illness, pain, failure, and the fleeting nature of pleasure, are just a few of the causes of suffering.
2. **Samudaya.** *There is a reason why people suffer:* it is the urge to possess and rule over things. It can manifest in a variety of ways, including the desire for physical pleasures, the pursuit of fame, and the wish to steer clear of negative emotions like fear, rage, or jealousy.
3. **Nirodha.** *The suffering has a conclusion:* with Nirvana's ultimate release, also known as *Nibbana*, suffering ends. The mind then encounters total liberty, non-attachment, and freedom. Any longing or desire is let go of.
4. **Magga:** You must adhere to the EIGHTFOLD PATH if you want to put a stop to suffering.

The Eightfold Path. These eight steps are grouped into **THREE ROADS**, or practices:

Prajna: Discernment, perception, and knowledge. This is the essence of Buddhism: if your mind is clear and peaceful, *wisdom* will come to you.

1. *Samma ditthi*. Right Understanding of the Four Noble Truths
2. *Samma sankappa*. Right thinking; following the right path in life

Sila: Virtue and Morality. This road has two guiding principles – **equality** (all living entities are equal) and **reciprocity** (treat others as you would have them treat you).

3. *Samma vaca*. Right speech: no lying, criticism, condemning, gossip, or harsh language
4. *Samma kammanta*. Right conduct by following the FIVE PRECEPTS (below)
5. *Samma ajiva*. Right livelihood; support yourself without harming others

Samadhi: Mental development through concentration and meditation. The road to *wisdom*, which leads to personal freedom, is the development of one's thinking.

6. *Samma vayama*. Right Effort: promote good thoughts; conquer evil thoughts.
7. *Samma sati*. Right Mindfulness: Become aware of your body, mind, and feelings.
8. *Samma samadhi*. Right Concentration: Meditate to achieve a higher state of consciousness.

The Five Precepts:

These are guidelines for living. In Judaism and Christianity, the second half of the Ten Commandments—the portion of the Decalogue that lists acts to avoid—is equivalent to these laws. In Buddhism, however, they are suggestions, not demands. In determining exactly how to implement these laws, believers are supposed to use their own common sense.

1. *Do not kill*. This can also be translated as “not injuring” or “not being violent.”
2. *Do not steal*. This is typically understood to include preventing fraud and financial exploitation.
3. *Do not lie*. This can occasionally be taken to include slander, rumor, etc.
4. *Do not misuse sex*. This refers to any deviation from perfect celibacy for monks and nuns. Adultery, as well as any form of sexual exploitation or harassment, including that which occurs during marriage, are prohibited for the laity. Modern Buddhist schools differ on this since the Buddha did not address consensual premarital sex in a committed partnership. Regardless of the nature of the relationship (lesbian, gay, or bisexual) most Buddhists condemn same-sex sexual activity.
5. *Do not use drugs or alcohol*. The fundamental issue here is that alcohol and other drugs distort judgment. Others have referred to substances that help us escape reality, such as movies, television, and the internet, as a form of drug.

Living a Solitary Life – Five activities are forbidden:

1. Eating at irregular times.
2. Listening to music, witnessing bizarre mime, and dancing.

3. Use of garlands, fragrances, and jewelry.
4. Using higher seating (to avoid looking down on others).
5. Accepting silver or gold.

Two Schools

Theravada Buddhism and *Mahayana* Buddhism are the two main schools of Buddhism.

- *Mahayana* Buddhism is widely practiced in Tibet, China, Taiwan, Japan, Korea, and Mongolia. It places a focus on the *bodhisattvas* as role models. These are beings who have attained enlightenment, but still come to instruct humans.
- *Theravada* Buddhism is widespread in Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Thailand, Laos, and Myanmar. It teaches meditation and a monastic way of life as the path to enlightenment.

General Beliefs

- Buddhists hold that nothing is set in stone or unchangeable and that anything can happen.
- The cultivation of morality, meditation, and wisdom is the route to enlightenment.
- Buddhists hold that while existence is unending, it is also characterized by suffering, suffering, and uncertainty.

Rebirth

Buddhism is divided into numerous distinct traditions, just like Christianity and the majority of other great faiths. But most of them adhere to a similar set of fundamental principles. The notion that after death individuals are **reborn**, is one of Buddhism's core doctrines. Buddhists actually hold the view that the majority of people experience *numerous rounds of rebirth, death, and aging*.

Buddhists distinguish between the ideas of **reincarnation** and **rebirth**:

- The individual may experience multiple reincarnations.
- A person who experiences rebirth does not always come back to Earth as the same being. Rebirth is similar to a leaf developing on a tree. A fresh leaf will eventually take its place after the dying leaf comes off. Although it is not an exact replica of the ancient leaf, it is similar to it.
- If a person lets go of their attachment to desire and the self after many of these cycles, they can reach **NIRVANA**. It is a state of emancipation and an absence of pain.

Is Eating Meat A Sin In Buddhism?

In many different global religions, including Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and others, cattle are revered. One sect of Buddhism practices a lacto-vegetarian diet. They eat dairy products, but avoid eating meat, poultry, fish, or eggs. For other Buddhists, as long as the animals aren't killed especially for them, they will eat meat and other animal products.

The first precept of Buddhism, "I undertake the precept to refrain from taking life," causes some Buddhists to abstain from eating meat. This conclusion is rejected by other Buddhists. Numerous Buddhist vegetarians also oppose eating meat because of biblical prohibitions against it, which are documented in Mahayana sutras.

What Does Buddhism Say About Death?

Buddhists think that rebirth follows death. Reincarnation is a soothing and a significant concept according to which a person's spirit stays nearby, searching for a new body and a new existence. Buddhists do not view death as the end of life, hence they do not fear it.

Can Buddhists Smoke Cigarettes?

A group of Buddhists were asked whether they believed the Buddha's teachings had anything to say about smoking — 91% responded they did not; but 71% said there should be legislation to forbid *monks* from smoking.

How Do You Officially Become A Buddhist?

Anyone can convert to Buddhism. You must seek shelter in the TRIPLE GEM and adhere to a ritual in which you swear to uphold the FIVE PRECEPTS — do not kill, do not steal, do not commit sexual misconduct, refrain from false speech, and do not take intoxicants that lessen your awareness.

Why Does A Buddhist Meditate?

The goal of meditation in Zen Buddhism is to halt the mind from racing through an aimless (or even deliberate) stream of thoughts. The goal of meditation, according to many, is “to still the mind.” Zen Buddhists have the option of solitary or communal meditation.

Does Buddha Say How to Meditate?

Buddhism uses a variety of methods in meditation. In the Hindu tradition, it was already practiced, and the Buddha himself utilized meditation to achieve enlightenment. Buddhism has developed a variety of practices over the years, including visualization, loving-kindness, and mindfulness.

Do Buddhists Believe In The Soul?

Buddhism does not hold to the notion of an immortal soul, or a creator God. Buddhists hold that neither a permanent person nor a soul exist. Buddhists sometimes refer to reincarnated energy rather than souls because there is no timeless, eternal essence or soul.

Can You Be A Buddhist Atheist?

Yes. A Buddhist who rejects all forms of religion is an atheist. Buddhism is less a body of doctrines, and more a collection of practices. Some Buddhists are theists who believe in divine creatures. But the majority of Buddhists are atheists who reject the existence of gods.

Can A Buddhist Drink Alcohol?

Buddhists do consume alcohol. But it isn't alcohol itself that Buddhism detests (especially the Mahayana school). Rather, it is *intoxication* – *drunkenness*. There are cases of well-known Buddhists who consumed alcohol sensibly, that is, without intending to become drunk. The majority of us don't have the self control to say “no” to one more drink when we go out with the aim of unwinding, celebrating with friends, or enjoying a low-key get-together. Therefore we abstain from drinking alcohol. **Zen Buddhists**, Vajrayana practitioners, will drink alcohol as part of their practice in numerous monasteries in Tibet and India.

Who do Buddhists Worship?

Most Buddhists reject the existence of God. They revere the Buddha, even though they do not consider him to be a divinity, and they do so only out of respect and adoration for the Buddha, and for the *bodhisattvas* (enlightened ones).

Can Buddhists Have Tattoos?

Buddhist monks can, in fact, get tattoos! The monks of Wat Bang Phra are probably the most well-known example of this. The mystical tattooing technique known as *Sak Yant* is practiced by the Buddhist monks at this temple in Thailand.

Do Buddhists Believe In Jesus?

The Dalai Lama said in 2001 that “Jesus Christ also lived previous lives” and added, “So, you see, he reached a high state, either as a Bodhisattva, or an enlightened person, through Buddhist practice or something like that.” Some high level Buddhists have drawn comparisons between Jesus and Buddhism.

What Does Buddha Say About Life?

We become what we think; our minds shape our lives. Evil thoughts cause suffering to follow them like a cart’s wheels follow its oxen. Our thoughts have an impact on how we live; we become what we think. A pure idea casts a shadow that never vanishes of joy in its wake.

What Is Not Allowed In Buddhism?

The FIVE PRECEPTS make up the fundamental moral code that lay Buddhist followers must abide by. The precepts are vows to refrain from doing things like committing murder, stealing, engaging in sexual misbehavior, lying, and getting drunk.