

BUDDHISM

People Places Practices Philosophies



Symbol of the Buddhist tradition is an eight-spoked wheel as the eight-fold teaching of the Buddha's wheel of law.

People

Founder: Siddhartha Gautama known as the Buddha.

Local Leader: Monk, Nun, Abbott.

Population: 380 million (6% of the world population).

Greeting: Bow with hands together in a prayer posture placed at the level of the heart while saying the word "*Amitufo*." Literally, it is the name of a Buddha, the "Amitabha" Buddha, "*fo*" being the Chinese word for Buddha. It is pronounced 'ō-mē-tō-fō.

Places

Place of Origin: Northern India and present-day Nepal.

Date of Origin: ca. 522 BCE.

Significant Holy City or Place: Lumbini, Nepal (birthplace of the Buddha), Bodh Gaya, (place of the enlightenment), Sarnath, (location of the first sermon), Lhasa (place of Buddha's death).

Major Population Centres: Thailand, China, Korea, Japan.

Place of Worship: Temple.

Protocol:

- Shoes are removed in the main shrine room.
- No head covering required.
- Practitioners generally sit on cushions on the floor. Chairs may be provided if needed.
- Discard chewing gum and candy before entering the temple.

Practices

Practitioners may perform religious rites at home or in a temple. Devotion may include lighting incense, bowing or prostration, chanting mantras and meditation.

The Five Precepts for Lay Persons:

1. Abstain from harming any living thing (practice kindness).
2. Abstain from stealing (practice generosity).
3. Abstain from sexual exploitation (practice honouring/contentment).
4. Abstain from lying (practice truthfulness).
5. Abstain from any mind altering substances (practice awareness).

The Five Additional Precepts for Monks and Nuns:

1. Abstain from eating at forbidden times.
2. Abstain from dancing and music.
3. Abstain from adornment, perfumes, finery, etc.
4. Abstain from using a high seat or bed.
5. Abstain from accepting money

Philosophies

Divinity: None (non-theistic).

Scriptures: Tripitaka, Dhammapada, Jataka Tales, and others.

Quotations from Holy Books:

"We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we create the world. Speak or act with an impure mind, and trouble will follow you as the wheel follows the ox that draws the cart. We are what we think. All that we are arises with our thoughts. With our thoughts we create the world. Speak or act with a pure mind, and happiness will follow you as a shadow that never leaves. How can a troubled mind understand the way? Your worst enemy cannot harm you as much as your own thoughts, unguarded. But once mastered, no one can help you as much, not even your father or your mother." *Dhammapada*

Golden Rule: "Treat not others in ways that you would find hurtful." *Udana-Varga 5.18*

Beliefs: Enlightenment (an adjusted psychology) shapes our life & future.

The Three Jewels:

1. I take refuge in the Buddha (The Example).
2. I take refuge in the Dharma (The Teaching).
3. I take refuge in the Sangha (The Community).

The Four Noble Truths:

1. **DUKKHA: THE NOBLE TRUTH OF SUFFERING** – All life is suffering (out-of-joint), full of sickness, anxiety, frustration, negativity and unhappiness. Although there are passing pleasures, they vanish in time because of impermanence.
2. **SAMUDAYA: THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING** – Suffering is caused by *tanha*, desire, greed, craving, self-centeredness and clinging to things in ignorance of their impermanence. *Tanha* is never satisfied.
3. **NIRODHA: THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE END OF SUFFERING** – It is possible to end suffering if one is aware of his or her own desires and puts an end to them. This awareness will open the door to lasting peace.
4. **MAGGA: THE NOBLE TRUTH OF THE PATH** – By following the Eightfold Path, thinking and behaviour is changed and a new awaking reached.

The Eightfold Path:

1. **RIGHT UNDERSTANDING** – Strive to understand clearly the Four Noble Truths and their implications in the working.
2. **RIGHT THOUGHT** – Think kindly of others and avoid dwelling on the past or future.
3. **RIGHT SPEECH** – Speak kindly and thoughtfully. Be aware of the motives that prompt speech...*why* as well as *how*.
4. **RIGHT ACTION** – Act kindly toward all living beings. Do not be attached to the results of actions.
5. **RIGHT WORK** – Have a vocation that does not harm others or is questionable. "The hand of the dyer is subdued by the dye in which it works."
6. **RIGHT EFFORT** – Be determined and paced in cleansing the mind. (Ox stuck in the mud doesn't relax until freed. Novice mountain climbers may be impatient with pace of the guide, but come to appreciate it later in the day.)
7. **RIGHT MINDFULNESS** – Be fully aware, always with concern for others. "All we are is the result of what we have thought."
8. **RIGHT CONCENTRATION** – Intensely concentrate during meditation to focus on being one with any situation. The mind is subject to the will.

Major Branches:

- **Theravada** (Way of the Elders) — emphasis on self-effort; key virtue is wisdom; prominence of monastics; minimizes metaphysics and ritual.
- **Mahayana** (The Great Vehicle) — emphasis on divine help; key virtue is compassion; prominence of laypersons; elaborates metaphysics and ritual.
- **Pure Land** — features Amitabha Buddha and other bodhisattvas (saints).
- **Zen** — de-emphasizes scriptures, ritual, philosophy; emphasizes meditation.

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