

# *Meditation of Loving Kindness*



May I be at peace  
May my heart remain open  
May I awaken to the light of my own true nature  
May I be healed  
May I be a source of healing for all beings.

May you be at peace  
May your heart remain open  
May you awaken to the light of your own true nature  
May you be healed  
May you be a source of healing for all beings.

May there be peace of earth  
May the hearts of all people be open to themselves and to  
each other  
May all people awaken to the light of their own true nature  
May all creation be blessed and be a blessing for All That Is.

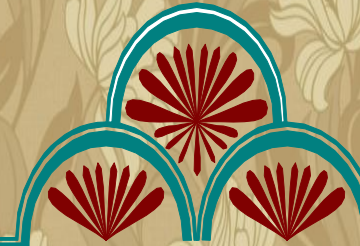
## *Namaste*



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# The Basics of Buddhism



A Small Booklet  by

*Sheila Hollowell*, M.A.

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### **The Popularity of Buddhism**

Buddhism is becoming popular in Western Countries for a number of reasons. Buddhism has holistic answers to many of the problems occurring in modern materialistic societies. It also incorporates a deep understanding of the human mind as well as natural therapies which prominent psychologists and therapists have found to be very advanced and effective. Many branches of psychology stem from Buddhist philosophy.

### **Becoming a Buddhist**

Buddhism does not require a belief in a Supreme Being but recognizes that many great masters and teachers have lived upon the Earth. Some of these are also recognized in other religions.

### *Examination*



The Buddha himself asked his followers to test the teachings rather than simply accept his experiences, words, and ideas. Buddhism depends very little on blind faith. More depends on the practice of wisdom and compassion.



## *Additional Information*



### **Worshipping Statues**

Buddhists sometimes pay respect to images of the Buddha, not in worship, not to ask for favors. A statue of the Buddha with hands rested gently in his lap and a compassionate smile, reminds us to strive to develop peace and live within ourselves. When Buddhists bow they are actually venerating or showing their respect and appreciation for the triple gem known as the Three Jewels: The Buddha Himself; The Dharma, His teachings; and the Sangha, the brotherhood of those who seek. Bowing is an expression of reverence, humility, and gratitude.

### **Attitudes Toward Other Religions**

Buddhism is a belief system tolerant of all other beliefs and religions. It requires an open, objective, and unbigoted mind. Buddhism agrees with the moral teachings of many other religions. Buddhism is very tolerant and not concerned with dissecting labels of other value systems such as the Christian, Moslem or Hindu faith. Hence, no wars have been fought in the name of Buddhism. Buddhists do not preach or attempt to convert, but instead, explain their insights if an explanation is sought.



## *A Basic History*



**Buddhism** is a study grounded in introspection and self-examination. To many, Buddhism goes beyond the tenants that define religion and is considered more of a philosophy. Philosophy literally means “love of wisdom” and the Buddhist Path may be summed up as the study of wisdom, understanding and compassion.

Buddhism is a major global religion followed by approximately one-tenth of the world’s population. It had its origins in India, where its founder, Siddhartha Gautama, a prince born into a royal family in Northern India in 563BCE, came to realize through a series of incidents now termed the Four Passing Sights, that wealth, position, and luxury did not necessarily guarantee happiness. Moved by this new awareness, he left his home, abandoned his wife and child, and renounced his personal wealth to explore various teachings, religions, and sacred practices in an effort to find the key to human happiness.

After six years of searching, Gautama gained enlightenment, best described as a complete understanding of the nature of life, and spent the remainder of his 80 years sharing his insights. The word Buddha is a title that means an enlightened one. The body of his teachings became known as Buddhism.



## The Purpose of Buddhism



Buddhism provides a clear sense of purpose and direction in life, it explains apparent injustice and inequality around the world, and provides a code of practice or way of life, which leads, not to happiness, but to peace and satisfaction.

## Types of Buddhism



The main schools within Buddhism are *Theravada*, *Mahayana* and *Vajrayana*. While all maintain the basic teachings, the emphasis and interpretation may vary to accommodate the needs of individual aspirants with differing traditional and cultural backgrounds and may also vary due to diverse levels of development and understanding.

*Theravada*, “The Path of the Elders” is the oldest and most conservative form. Originating in Southeast Asia, it focuses on the historical Buddha.

*Mayahaya*, the “Great Vehicle” of East Asia and Japan has less emphasis on Buddha himself and more on the ideals of the Bodhisattva, which is the quest to become a Buddha but



## How to Practice Buddhism



Buddhism encourages personal responsibility. A good start is to pay attention to all things around you and become sensitive to the predicament of others. Understand that solutions to our problems reside within us, not outside of ourselves. Meditate daily as a method to purify the mind. Study, learn, examine, test and endeavor to attain wisdom and compassion through all your experiences and actions. Generally speaking, there are two kinds of meditation : *samatha* meditation and *vipassana* meditation.

*Samatha* meditation is one of concentrating the mind on an object, rather than letting the mind wander. A common meditation object is the process of watching the inhaling and exhaling of the breath.

*Vipassana* meditation, or insight meditation, is a means to cultivate a deeper understanding of one’s own mental and physical actions. This helps us to understand that everything changes. Life is not a stagnant event and our view is presently incomplete and impermanent. In other words, one is watching in order to understand the way things are.



## *The Law of Karma*



Contrary to how the term is often used today, Karma does not refer to a predetermined fate. Karma refers to intentional actions expressed in thought, speech or deed. Karma underlines the importance of individuals being responsible for their past and present actions, which then are carried forward to create their present and future circumstances. This simple law explains a number of circumstances: inequality in the world, why some are born handicapped and some gifted, and why others live only a short while.

## *The Wheel of Incarnation*



The cycle of birth, death and rebirth is referred to as the wheel of incarnation. Through this existence, humans spiritually evolve. Life and death are merely alternate aspects of the same individual existence marked by the transition points of birth and death. The release from the recurrent wheel of birth and death is achieved by attaining the final stage of Nirvana or Freedom through paying all Karma and attaining enlightenment.



postpones completion of the cycle of reincarnation into freedom and bliss until all other sentient beings achieve this goal also. “How can you go forward into eternal bliss when all others are still suffering?”

*Vajrayana* is known as the “Diamond” or “Thunderbolt Vehicle” of Tibet. It combines influences of classical Hinduism, tribal folk religions, and Mahayana Buddhism. It is the most difficult and complex form of Buddhism. It involves a complex meditative practice, which utilizes extensive visualization, sound, physical motion, and extensive use of Mahayana philosophical traditions and consciousness tools to become enlightened. Significant to this form is the importance of the reincarnated Holy Being, The Dalai Lama, who is the leader of Tibetan Buddhism.

## *The Teachings*



The Four Noble Truths, The Eightfold Path, The Three Jewels, and The Five Precepts are a summary of the teachings known as The Dharma.



## *The Four Noble Truths*



*The First Noble Truth* is that unhappiness is inherent in the fabric of life. There is physical suffering such as pain, old age, disease, and ultimately death. There is also psychological suffering like loneliness, grief, fear, and disappointment.

*The Second Noble Truth* is that suffering is caused by desire. For instance, when other people do not conform to our expectations, or we don't get the things we want such as health and wealth. However, if we do get what we want, it doesn't guarantee happiness. Now we are afraid we may lose what we have. Desire increases our appetites for more. With wisdom, heavier desires shift to preferences. Attachment and craving deprive us of contentment and happiness and lead to physical and mental suffering.

*The Third Noble Truth* is that all forms of unhappiness can be overcome with the cessation of desire and cravings. In other words, if there is no craving, there is no attachment, therefore there is no investment in the outcome. The Buddha said the cause of all suffering is wanting happiness for ourselves. The cause of all joy is wanting happiness for others.

*The Fourth Noble Truth* is the roadmap of how to achieve the cessation of suffering. This is called the Noble Eightfold Path.



## *The Eightfold Path*



The eight mandates of The Path are: right view or understanding, right directed thoughts, right speech, right actions, right livelihood, right efforts, right mindfulness, and right concentration.

## *The Three Jewels*



The most basic Buddhist prayer is: I take refuge in the Buddha (the Being). I take refuge in the Dharma (the teachings). I take refuge in the Sangha (the brotherhood of those who seek).

## *The Five Precepts*



The moral code within Buddhism is the Five Precepts which state: Do not take the life of anything living. Do not take anything not freely given. Abstain from sexual misconduct and sensual overindulgence. Refrain from false and harsh speech. Avoid intoxication which would cause losing mindfulness.

