



Buddhism



What is a Buddhist?

A Buddhist is a person who follows the teachings of the Buddha (Enlightened one) and aims to achieve enlightenment or awakening by following a spiritual and moral path known as the 'three jewels': Buddha – the enlightened teacher and example: Dharma – the teaching and practice which lead to liberation: Sangha – the spiritual community.

Buddhism, like most of the religions of the world, is divided into a number of different traditions or schools but broadly they can be divided between Southern or Theravada schools, and the Northern or Mahayana schools.

What does a Buddhist believe?

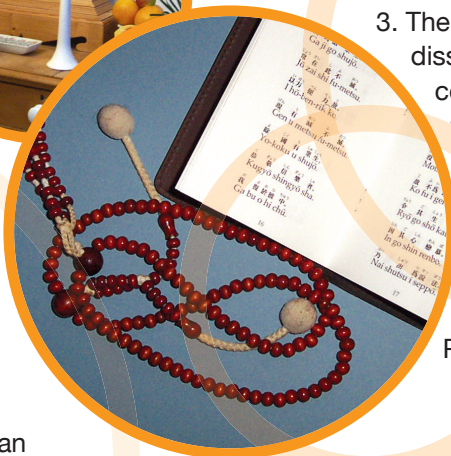
The Historical Buddha (Siddhartha Gautama or Shakyamuni) lived around 2,500 years ago. After many years of searching for a way to free himself and those he loved from the suffering of old age, sickness and death he became enlightened to the truth of life. He spent the last years of his life instructing those

who were willing to listen in the method of achieving enlightenment for themselves.

Shakyamuni taught The Four Noble Truths -

1. All life is unsatisfactory
2. This feeling of dissatisfaction arises from craving or grasping
3. The cessation of dissatisfaction comes about with the cessation of craving.
4. This is achieved by following the Noble Eightfold Path

- a. right understanding
- b. right thought
- c. right speech
- d. right action
- e. right livelihood
- f. right effort
- g. right mindfulness
- h. right concentration





Although the various schools have different characteristics and practices they all have a common founder and follow the teachings of Shakyamuni who showed that purification of the mind is the responsibility of each person by their own efforts. Buddhists know of no creator god that can do the work for them.



practitioners often provide for the physical needs of the monks or nuns. Many Buddhists are vegetarian though not all, and many monastics do not eat after midday. Most monastics do not ask for refreshment or support and so it is customary to offer help.

How does a Buddhist worship?

Although Eastern forms of reverence such as bowing and prostration are found in Buddhism, this does not constitute an act of worship. There is a division among schools of Buddhism concerning the distinction between prayer and aspiration. Different Buddhist traditions practice different sorts of meditation and in addition scriptures and doctrinal formulas are chanted both in temples and in private practice at home. Temples will contain a statue of the Buddha and Buddhists will often set aside a room or a part of a room as a shrine where might be found a statue of Buddha, candles, a bell, an incense burner and offerings of fresh fruit flowers and greenery.

How does a Buddhist live?

Buddhists live according to their cultural background. It is often customary to remove shoes when entering a Buddhist household. Lay

Who leads Buddhists?

There is no structured leadership. Each group of followers of the Buddha resolves the issues of community structure and leadership according to its needs and cultural background.

Buddhist Festivals:

Each form of Buddhism has its own celebrations but here are some of the better known ones -

Wesak is celebrated on the full moon in May.

Dharma Day marks the beginning of the Buddha's teaching.

Sangha Day celebrates the spiritual community.

Parinirvana Day (a Mahayana festival) marks the death of the Buddha.

Losar celebrates the Tibetan New Year.

Kathina is the largest almsgiving festival of the Buddhist year.