

### IS BUDDHISM A RELIGION?

The Buddha developed a method for the alleviation of suffering, based on scientific principles. It is called the Dharma. As the Dharma spread to regions outside of India, cultural aspects were often included as part of the interpretation of the Dharma. This often took on a religious flavor.

### DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IN GOD? OR A BUNCH OF GODS?

The Buddha did not address the concept of god, leaving that reality to each individual to define for him- or herself. His concern was the elimination of suffering in this lifetime. However, other cultures saw aspects of the Dharma through the characteristics of various local deities.

### WAS THE BUDDHA A REAL PERSON? IS HE A GOD?

The historical Buddha was named Siddhartha Gotama. He was not a god. The enlightenment he achieved can be achieved by any person who diligently follows the Dharmic path.

### I AM A (CHRISTIAN, MUSLIM, ETC). I THINK IT MAY BE WRONG FOR ME TO COME HERE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Buddhism offers a path for the alleviation of suffering. It does not speak of tenets of faith or dictate what someone should or should not believe. Many people who study Buddhist Dharma are of various religious traditions.

### WHAT DO BUDDHISTS THINK OF JESUS? MOHAMMED?

Buddhists have reverence for all beings who follow a path of wisdom and compassion. The core teachings of Jesus and Mohammed emphasize these qualities.

### DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IN HEAVEN? HELL?

Heaven and hell in Buddhist philosophy are not the same places as envisioned in Christianity. Buddhists believe both are a state of mind. Either of these can be experienced and/or alleviated in this lifetime.

### DO BUDDHISTS PRAY?

Buddhists do not pray to a theoretical god. Buddhists meditate in hopes of acquiring wisdom and compassion for themselves and all other beings.

### DO BUDDHISTS BELIEVE IF YOU ARE BAD OR HAVE BAD KARMA, YOU WILL BE REBORN AS A WORM OR A FLY?

Karma is simply the law of cause and effect. Rebirth as a theory is a result of past karma. For a person to be born as a human in this lifetime is a result of good karma in the past. What a person does with this opportunity results in further karma.

### ARE BUDDHISTS VEGETARIANS?

The Buddha's first precept states, "Do no harm." Many Buddhists interpret that as following a vegetarian lifestyle. Others do not. In some cultures, such as in Tibet, following a vegetarian lifestyle is impossible.

DO BUDDHISTS HAVE/DEVELOP PSYCHIC POWERS? IF I MEDITATE ENOUGH WILL I DEVELOP PSYCHIC POWERS?

To become obsessed with psychic powers creates an attitude that keeps a person in a state of suffering. When a person is truly liberated, anything is possible and nothing is desired.

IF I DECIDE TO BECOME A BUDDHIST, WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?

A sincere Buddhist practices meditation, consults with a teacher on a regular basis, learns about the Dharma and follows a moral lifestyle. The formal acceptance of Buddhist practice is called Taking Refuge. Taking Refuge is a ceremony that is performed by a Buddhist teacher.

ARE THERE DIFFERENT KINDS OF BUDDHISTS? WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES?

Today, Buddhism is divided primarily into three traditions: Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana. All schools believe in the core Buddhist teachings, although each has its own emphasis. Theravada relies on the original Buddhist teachings as set forth in the Pali Canon and individual critical self-investigation. Mahayana believes in the Bodhicitta ideal, in which the individual achieves liberation on behalf of himself and all sentient beings. Vajrayana encompasses Mahayana doctrine plus liberation through various tantric techniques. Vajrayana reached its highest form in Tibetan Buddhism.

HOW MUCH TIME SHOULD I SPEND MEDITATING?

Each person needs to calculate that for themselves. However, all teachers say "more effort, more results."

IT'S ALWAYS NOISY HERE... HOW CAN I PRACTICE MEDITATING?

There are skillful ways to deal with noise. You may need to consult with a teacher for practical advice.

I WANT TO BE PEACEFUL. IF I MEDITATE WILL I BECOME PEACEFUL?

A sincere meditator will find peace.

IF I MEDITATE LONG ENOUGH, WILL MY DREAMS COME TRUE?

The dreams you have now will not necessarily be the dreams that you desire when meditation becomes an integral part of your life.

WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO REACH ENLIGHTENMENT?

Attaining liberation is possible every moment we are alive. Be sincere in your practice. Be thoughtful in your conduct and live each moment mindfully.

DO BUDDHISTS HAVE SOULS?

Buddhists believe that there is no individual, unchanging soul. Liberation or Nirvana is actually knowing as truth that our true nature is inseparable from all creation. Buddhist teachers will say that we are drops of water that eventually return to the ocean, which is our true nature.