

## REPORTING ON BUDDHISM:

Buddha comes from the Sanskrit language, meaning “awakened.” Simply put, the basic teachings of Buddhism are: first, to do no harm to any living being; second, to do good; and third, to purify the mind from impurity. Buddhist religious practice is the formal discipline of sitting meditation and mindfulness in everyday life. Today .7 percent of Americans claim to be Buddhist, though the faith seems to be ever-growing. That growth is bringing awareness, influence and some contentious issues.

## Background

Buddhism, now a worldwide religion with an estimated 480 million adherents, began about 2,500 years ago in Northern India, in an area now called Nepal, and has spread in a variety of forms and incarnations around the world. The type of Buddhism practiced varies from country to country, shaped by the culture of each place. While teachings and rituals differ by time and place, the concept of following the “dharma” — the Buddha’s fundamental teachings and doctrines — holds constant.

Journalists may encounter Buddhism in several ways — among natives, immigrants, converts or people who adopt Buddhist practices, such as meditation, without its beliefs.

One of the five largest religions of the world, Buddhism is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who lived in India in the fifth and sixth centuries B.C. He gave up a life of royalty to seek truth, eventually attained enlightenment (nirvana), and was proclaimed the Buddha, The Awakened One. Buddhists do not consider Gautama a god, but a great teacher, so some people call Buddhism a philosophy, not a religion. After reaching enlightenment, Gautama spent the remainder of his life traveling Northern India and sharing his message. Buddha taught personal enlightenment through the Four Noble Truths: Life includes suffering, which is caused by attachment and can be stopped by following the “middle way” or Eightfold Path (right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration). He believed in karma (actions have consequences) and cycles of death and rebirth.

For summaries of basic Buddhist teachings, read:

- **Basic Buddhism Guide:** Read the *Basic Buddhism Guide* posted by **BuddhaNet**, the website of the Buddha Dharma Education Association Inc., based in Australia. BuddhaNet is an effort to create a nonprofit, online “cyber sangha” of people committed to the Buddha’s teachings and lifestyle — an effort to combine an ancient tradition with the information superhighway.
- **Basics of Buddhism:** An introduction to Buddhism posted in connection with a PBS documentary on Thailand.
- **Buddhism Religion Library:** Read about the origins, history, rituals, worship, beliefs, ethics and community of Buddhism on the Patheos library. The library also includes more specific entries on **Mahayana Buddhism**, **Theravada Buddhism** and **Vajrayana Buddhism**. Patheos is a website intended for global dialogue about religion and spirituality through its library, online discussions, blog posts and more.
- **Resources for the Study of Buddhism:** A list of resources for the study of Buddhism compiled by Ron Epstein, who is now retired as a professor from San Francisco State University. It includes links to background information on Buddhist history, teachings in the Theravada and Mahayana traditions, Buddhist texts and such subjects as Buddhism and children and Buddhism and science.

## Branches & Groups

The Buddha’s message spread north to China, Tibet, Mongolia, Siberia, Korea and Japan and south to Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and other Southeast Asian countries. European scholars brought Buddhism to Western Europe in the 1800s, and the religion was formally introduced in the United States in the 1890s.

Schools and sub-schools of Buddhism, emphasizing various aspects of the Buddha’s teachings, have developed over the centuries with little conflict.

Buddhism has several main branches:

**Theravada Buddhism**—The oldest form of Buddhism, Theravada Buddhism emphasizes the difference between monks’ authority and practice and lay people’s. The “Old School” conserves the

traditions and emphasizes meditation and the goal of enlightenment. It is the predominate school of Buddhism in Southeast Asian countries such as Myanmar, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Laos and Thailand. Those who attain enlightenment are equal to the Buddha, who is not regarded as a god.

**Mahayana Buddhism**—The second-oldest form of Buddhism (called “The Great Vehicle”), it offers gradations of Buddhahood—in bodhisattvas—to more people instead of concentrating authority among monks. It emphasizes compassion and the belief that all beings have the potential to become a Buddha. It is the predominate school in China, Japan, Korea and Vietnam.

**Tibetan Buddhism**—The Dalai Lama is the leader of Tibetan Buddhists, who were forced into exile in India when the Chinese occupied Tibet in 1959. Tibetan Buddhism is based on Mahayana teachings, and its followers still campaign to return to Tibet.

**Zen Buddhism**—A combination of Mahayana Buddhism and Taoism, it has roots in China, moved into Korea and Japan and became popular in the West. Zen teaches that everyone is a Buddha, and each person can discover that through Zen practice.

Other subdivisions include: **Korean Zen Buddhism**, **Nichiren Buddhism**, and **Pure Land Buddhism**.

## Core beliefs

Buddhism proclaims the dignity and worth of each living being, respect and compassion for all life and the need for all people to find their own path to enlightenment and to an understanding of the nature of life. Buddhism incorporates many different traditions, but some fundamental beliefs are shared across groups.

Reincarnation, or the idea that the consciousness is reborn when one dies, is a central tenet encompassing the concept that life is cyclical, and most people will experience many cycles of life, death and rebirth. Reincarnation differs from rebirth in the eyes of many Buddhists, however, in that reincarnation represents the soul or spirit coming back to life in a newborn body. Rebirth, on the other hand, can take many different forms, and it is not assumed that the deceased will return to earth in the same entity.

After many cycles, a person who has released their attachment to desire and self can achieve nirvana, a state of ultimate peace that is the goal of all beings. Nirvana represents freedom from suffering, desire and the cycle of rebirth.

The Four Noble Truths refer to the fundamental realizations that the historical Buddha came to in meditation and then taught to his followers: Life is suffering; the cause of suffering is craving; suffering can be eliminated by the extinguishing of craving; there is a way to achieve this goal (by following the eight principles of conduct known as the Eightfold Path).

The Eightfold Path refers to the eight practical steps taught by the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, to end craving and thus eliminate suffering. The steps are right understanding, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Together with the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path constitutes the foundation of Buddhist thought.

The Buddha's Eightfold Path consists of:

Panna, wisdom:

- Right understanding of the Four Noble Truths
- Right intention; following the right path in life

Sila, virtue, morality, ethical conduct:

- Right speech; no criticism, lying or harsh language
- Right conduct by following the Five Precepts
- Right livelihood; supporting yourself without harming others

Samadhi, concentration, meditation:

- Right effort towards privileging good thoughts over evil thoughts
- Right mindfulness and being aware of your body and mind
- Right concentration and meditation.

The Five Precepts mentioned in the Eightfold Path are a series of training rules to be followed by Buddhists. If one breaks a rule, he or she must learn from it and move forward with a better understanding of how not to break the rules in the future. These precepts guide ethical and moral behavior.

The Five Precepts:

1. To undertake the training to avoid taking the life of beings.
2. To undertake the training to avoid taking things not given.
3. To undertake the training to avoid sensual misconduct
4. To undertake the training to refrain from false speech.
5. To undertake the training to abstain from substances which cause intoxication and heedlessness.

## Scripture

There are many Buddhist scriptures and texts, and no single text is preferred by all traditions of Buddhism. For the most part, scriptures are in Pali, Tibetan, Mongolian and Chinese, but some texts still exist in Sanskrit. Over time, efforts have been made to formulate a single text to encompass all the primary teachings in Buddhism, but this has not been universally successful.

The major texts include:

- **Tripitaka (Pali Canon):** The Tripitaka (Pali Canon), which means “Three Baskets,” is the earliest collection of Buddha’s teachings and the only text revered by Theravada Buddhists. It includes the Vinaya Pitaka (“Basket of Discipline”), the Sutta Pitaka (“Basket of Discourses”) and the Abhidhamma Pitaka (“Basket of Higher Teachings”). The Vinaya Pitaka deals with rules for Theravada monks and nuns and explains etiquette and conventions for the monastic community. The Sutta Pitaka includes more than 10,000 discourses mostly delivered by the Buddha, although some are attributed to his disciples. The Abhidhamma Pitaka includes theoretical frameworks of philosophy, psychology, metaphysics and others.

- **Buddhist Sutras:** The Sutras are held sacred by Mahayana Buddhists. They are a loose collection of texts designed to unify contradictions among the various teachings and thus very difficult to describe succinctly.
- **The Tibetan Book of the Dead:** The Tibetan Book of the Dead, or Bardo Thodol, records the stages of death and rebirth. It is intended to guide one through the bardo, or the conscious interval between death and rebirth.
- **“A Glossary of Pali and Buddhist Terms”:** AccessToInsight.org posts John Bullitt’s “A Glossary of Pali and Buddhist Terms.”
- **“Glossary of Buddhist Terms”:** See a glossary of terms relevant to the Buddhist faith.

## Celebrations

Most Buddhist holidays are based on the lunar calendar and are celebrated at different times depending on country, ethnic background and tradition.

The Buddha’s birthday (and in some traditions, his enlightenment and death) is the focus of a festival in May called Wesak. There are also many holy days of celebration for the birthdays of Bodhisattvas in the Mahayana tradition.

In countries with Theravadin traditions, such as Thailand, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos, the Buddhist New Year is celebrated for three days in April. Areas with predominant Mahayana populations, such as China, Korea and Vietnam, start the new year at the first full moon in January. Tibetan Buddhists tend to celebrate in March.

Additional celebrations include Magha Puja Day, Dhamma Day, Observance Day, Kathina Ceremony, Festival of Floating Bowls, Elephant Festival, Festival of the Floating Tooth, Ancestor Day and many others.

- **“Buddhist Festivals and Special Days”:** Read a listing of Buddhist festivals and special days on Buddhanet.com.
- **“Buddhist Personal Ceremonies”:** Read a description of Buddhist personal ceremonies, such as marriages and funeral rites.

# Notes on coverage

## About visiting a temple

- Casual dress is acceptable at most temples. Modest dress is preferred. Some temples expect more formal attire, so it is best to check in advance with the temple you are visiting.
- Oftentimes you may be asked to remove your shoes.
- It is customary to arrive early to service.
- Guests should not leave during meditation, but participation is optional. Talking during service is also inappropriate.
- Use of reporting equipment (i.e. camera, flash, video camera, tape recorder, etc.) should be approved by a priest or monk at the temple.
- When addressing clergy, they may be called *Reverend*, *Lama*, or *Roshi*.
- A priest, monk, or nun leads service.
- Statues and other representations of the Buddha are not idols for worship, but are instead symbols of enlightenment, representing the highest ideals of perfect wisdom and compassion.

## Important and contentious issues

Buddhist teachings are rooted in peace, with scriptures that promote non-violence. Buddhism calls for respect of the lives of all beings and freedom from suffering, but conflict within Buddhist countries and groups have occurred. Typically, Buddhist conflicts are conflated with intolerant ethnic and nationalist identities. In recent years and in combination with political, social and cultural factors, Buddhism has primarily clashed with Islam, as well as Hinduism and Christianity, in Asian countries, namely Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. In Southeast Asia, Muslims make up more than 42 percent of the population, or one-fourths of the world's Muslims, while Buddhist are about 40 percent, or two-fifths of the world's Buddhists.

## Current cultural conflicts

- In Myanmar, Buddhist nationalism has led to the complete separation of a previously coexistent population, with up to 150,000 internally displaced Muslim Rohingya people. The Rohingya are an ethnic minority who practice Islam, speak Rohingya and live in the Rakhine State in western Myanmar. Sparks of unrest in 2012 turned a tense relationship into violence. For more background information, read the BBC's "[Why is there communal violence in Myanmar?](#)" article, and for more on Myanmar's refugees, internally displaced and stateless people as a result of current tensions, view the [United Nations Refugee Agency country profile of Myanmar](#).
- In Sri Lanka, the emergence of the ethnic Sinhalese majority's Bodu Bala Sena (BBS) organization, or the "Buddhist Power Force," has led to anti-Muslim sentiments and attacks on the country's minority Muslim population. Christianity also has been targeted. In 2009, the Sinhalese Buddhist nationalists ended a nearly 26-year civil war with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, a predominantly Hindu group.
- In Thailand, the Buddhist-majority state's political and cultural stigmatization of ethnic Malay Muslims has created long-standing violence. Once harmonious, Buddhist and Muslim relations in the region have become distrustful.
- Muslim persecutions in other countries, such as Myanmar's ethnic clashes with Rohingya Muslims, have fueled anti-Buddhist behavior in India, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

Sample news coverage for discussion:

*“Buddhism v Islam in Asia: Fears of a new religious strife” – The Economist, July 27, 2014*

*Fuelled by a dangerous brew of faith, ethnicity and politics, a tit-for-tat conflict is escalating between two of Asia’s biggest religions*

BANGKOK, COLOMBO, JAKARTA and SITTWE – The total segregation of Buddhist Arakanese from Muslim Rohingyas is now a fact of life in the western Myanmar port-city of Sittwe. Until June last year both communities lived side by side in the capital of Rakhine state, but following several rounds of frenzied violence, the Buddhist majority emptied the city of its Muslim population. The Rohingya victims now scrape by in squalid refugee camps beyond the city boundaries. The best that most of them can hope for is to escape on an overloaded fishing boat to Malaysia. Many of them die trying.

The animosity between the Rohingya and the local Arakanese in this remote corner of Myanmar is a consequence of colonial and pre-colonial patterns of settlement. It is an old and very local affair, and there were hopes that it would stay that way. Not any more. The assault on the Rohingyas, which cost more than 100 lives and made over 100,000 homeless, sparked a wildfire of sectarian violence across the rest of Myanmar which now seems to be spreading to other parts of Asia, too. A tit-for-tat escalation is going on which, with reason, worries many in the region. – [Read more.](#)

*“Buddha’s Savage Peace” – The Atlantic, September 1, 2009*

*After 26 years and 70,000 casualties, Sri Lanka’s civil war has ended—for now. The key to easing the fears of the country’s historically beleaguered Buddhist majority while protecting its Hindu minority? Rediscovering the blend of faiths that laid the foundation for the ancient kingdom of Kandy.*

KANDY, Sri Lanka – Buddhism holds an exalted place in the half-informed Western mind. Whereas Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism are each associated, in addition to their thought, with a rich material culture and a defended territory, Buddhism, despite its great monuments and architectural tradition throughout the Far East, is somehow considered purer, more abstract, and almost dematerialized: the most peaceful, austere, and uncorrupted of faiths, even as it appeals to the deeply aesthetic among us. Hollywood stars seeking to find themselves—famously Richard Gere—become Buddhists, not, say, orthodox Jews.

Yet Buddhism, as Kandy demonstrates, is deeply materialistic and demands worship of solid objects, in a secure and sacred landscape that has required the protection of a military. There have been Buddhist military kingdoms—notably Kandy’s—just as there have been Christian and Islamic kingdoms of the sword. Buddhism can be, under the right circumstances, a blood-and-soil faith. – [Read more.](#)

*“Facebook in Myanmar: Amplifying hate speech?” – Al Jazeera, June 14, 2014*

*Since violence erupted in 2012, Facebook users in Myanmar have fanned anti-Muslim sentiment.*

YANGON, Myanmar – A nest of laptops in a shabby downtown apartment here acts as the modest, but passionate, command centre of Myanmar’s battle against hate speech.

White flowers stand in a glass bottle on a table surrounded by volunteers sitting cross-legged, lit up by their computer screens.

The group of young people work for Panzagar, a new civil society organisation dedicated to countering the tide of online vitriol with flower power or, more accurately, flower speech. – [Read more.](#)

*“Football bridges religious divide in Thai south” – Agence France Presse, May 18, 2012*

PATTANI, Thailand – Unmissable in their bright orange shirts, the players of local side Pattani FC exchange banter almost as fast as their passes around the training pitch.

It is a scene familiar to football clubs across the world.

But Pattani play in far from ordinary circumstances.

The Division Two team's hometown is in the heart of an area riven by a raging insurgency that has claimed more than 5,000 lives since 2004 in near-daily bomb or gun attacks against both Buddhists and Muslims. – [Read more.](#)

*“How an Extremist Buddhist Network Is Sowing Hatred Across Asia” – Time, August 8, 2014*

*Saffron-clad monks have been instrumental in anti-Muslim riots in Burma and Sri Lanka, and have their eyes on sowing discord farther afield*

DHARGA TOWN, Sri Lanka – During her long career as a teacher, Nafeesathiek Thahira Sahabdeen prided herself on treating children of all backgrounds the same. That didn't help her on June 15, though, when a radical Buddhist mob ransacked her home in Dharga Town, a thriving trading hub in southwest Sri Lanka. The 68-year-old Muslim was left “penniless, homeless and heartbroken,” she says. “I thought I would die. I was so afraid.”

The anti-Muslim violence that ravaged Dharga Town, along with the nearby tourist enclave of Aluthgama, peppered with five-star resorts, has been attributed to a burgeoning Buddhist supremacy movement that has embarked on an organized campaign of religious hate. – [Read more.](#)

*“Myanmar lawmakers to debate law curbing religious conversions” – Reuters, May 28, 2014*

YANGON, Myanmar – Myanmar began a parliamentary session on Wednesday that will see lawmakers debate the first of four proposed laws that aim to protect the country's majority Buddhist identity by regulating religious conversions and interfaith marriages.

The proposals come amidst rising sectarian tension in Myanmar, which has exploded in violent clashes between Buddhists and Muslims, killing at least 237 people and displacing more than 140,000 since June 2012.

The vast majority of victims were Muslims who make up only about 5 percent of Myanmar's population of 60 million. – [Read more.](#)

***“Number of Rohingya fleeing Myanmar tops 100,000” – Associated Press, October 25, 2014***

YANGON, Myanmar – A growing sense of desperation is fueling a mass exodus of Rohingya Muslims from western Myanmar, with the number who have fled by boat since communal violence broke out two years ago now topping 100,000, a leading expert said Saturday.

Chris Lewa, director of the nonprofit advocacy group Arakan Project, said there has been a huge surge since Oct. 15, with an average of 900 people per day piling into cargo ships parked off Rakhine state.

That's nearly 10,000 in less than two weeks, she noted, one of the biggest spikes yet. – [Read more.](#)

***“Special Report: Buddhist monks incite Muslim killings in Myanmar” – Reuters, April 8, 2013***

MEIKHTILA, Myanmar – The spark was simple enough.

Aye Aye Naing, a 45-year-old Buddhist woman, wanted to make an offering of food to local monks. But she needed money, she recalled, sitting in her home in Pyon Kout village. At about 9 a.m. on March 20, a day before the massacre, she brought a gold hair clip to town. She had it appraised at 140,000 kyat (\$160). With her husband and sister, she entered New Wait Sein, a Muslim-owned gold shop, which offered her 108,000 kyat. She wanted at least 110,000. Shop workers studied the gold, but the clip came back damaged, she said.

The shop owner, a young woman in her 20s, now offered just 50,000. The stout mother of five protested, calling the owner unreasonable. The owner slapped her, witnesses said. Aye Aye Naing's husband shouted and was pulled outside, held down and beaten by three of the store's staff, according to the couple and two witnesses. [–Read more.](#)

## International issues

- Tibetan Buddhism and relations with China are major issues that should be carefully covered. The status of Tibet is at the heart of this contentious relationship. China states that Tibet is a part of China, while Tibetans maintain that Tibet has historically been an independent country. For background information, read a [chronology of key events in Tibetan Buddhism](#) and a [Q&A on China-Tibet relations](#) on the BBC website.
- Communism and Buddhism are often portrayed as systems or ideologies at odds with one another. Journalists should be careful not to include their own opinion or favor a way of thinking.
- Buddhism can be understood as a religion that has problems with fitting in with the modern world. For example, Buddhism is sometimes considered to be in opposition to material culture, military service/actions and industrialization.
- Buddhist monuments have fallen victim to extremist attacks, such as the Taliban destruction of the Buddhas of Bamiyan statues in central Afghanistan in 2001.
- Be cautious of reporting about Buddhist and Muslim community conflicts in Asia, which can be used as propaganda for more sectarian violence.

Sample news coverage for discussion:

*After Winding Odyssey, Tibetan Texts Find Home in China – New York Times, February 14, 2014*

CHENGDU, China – Decades ago, the thousands of Tibetan-language books now ensconced in a lavishly decorated library in southwest China might have ended up in a raging bonfire. During the tumultuous decade of the Cultural Revolution, which ended in 1976, Red Guard zealots destroyed anything deemed “feudal.” But an American scholar, galvanized in part by those rampages, embarked on a mission to collect and preserve the remnants of Tibetan culture.

The resulting trove of 12,000 works, many gathered from Tibetan refugees, recently ended a decades-long odyssey that brought them to a new library on the campus of the Southwest University for Nationalities here in Chengdu. – [Read more.](#)

*Are there signs of a thaw between China and the exiled Dalai Lama on Tibet? – Washington Post, October 2, 2014*

DHARMSALA, India – The Dalai Lama said Thursday that informal talks with the Chinese are continuing over his possible return to his homeland of Tibet — if only for a visit — and cautiously praised Chinese President Xi Jinping as a realist.

The Dalai Lama, 79, sat down for an interview in his temple in the north Indian town of Dharmasala before a celebration of the 25th anniversary of his Nobel Peace Prize, after a month of media speculation of a thaw between the exiled leader and the Chinese government.

The two were communicating “not formally or seriously, but informally,” the religious leader said. “I express this is my desire, and some of my friends, they are also showing their genuine interest or concern.” – [Read more.](#)

*Buddhism continues to flower in Mongolia – Los Angeles Times, September 11, 2010*

*The practice, suppressed for decades by the Communist Party, is being reclaimed by Mongolians as an integral part of their national identity.*

SHAND KHIID, Mongolia – In the crimson-painted interior of a monastery in central Mongolia, boys as young as 6 face one another cross-legged on benches and chant Tibetan Buddhist prayers that they barely understand.

Some fidget and get up every now and then to ladle bowls of fermented horse milk from a large metal vat. Their teachers occasionally call out directions.

The boys are at a three-month religious camp at the monastery, Shand Khiid. The oldest monk in residence is 97. A visiting sage from Tibet relaxes in a back room, watching sports on television.

– [Read more.](#)

***Buddhists in Pink – New York Times, September 19, 2013***

YANGON, Myanmar – Enrollment is rising at the Aung Thawada Nunnery School on the northern border of Yangon. The nuns, whose ages range from 9 to 94, join for a variety of reasons, including to escape poverty or abuse. – Watch the [multimedia video](#) here.

***China tells Dalai Lama again to respect reincarnation – Reuters, September 10, 2014***

BEIJING – China repeated a call on the Dalai Lama on Wednesday to respect what it said was the historic practice of reincarnation, after the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader implied in a newspaper interview he may be the last to hold the position.

The Dalai Lama, in an interview with German newspaper Welt am Sonntag, said the tradition of the post could end with him, adding the Tibetan Buddhism was not dependent on a single person.

The Dalai Lama, 79, has stated previously that he will not be reborn in China if Tibet is not free and that no one, including China, has the right to choose his successor “for political ends”. China has previously warned the Dalai Lama he has no right to abandon the tradition of reincarnation. – [Read more.](#)

*How Buddhism could be a way out of the environmental mess we are in – The Guardian, September 2, 2010*

*The Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh explains in his new book how a Buddhist approach could benefit ecology*

LONDON – There is something extraordinarily child-like about the 84-year-old Zen Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh.

To portray him out of context could make him appear naive and unworldly. It is therefore understandable that he does not like to be interviewed by journalists who have not already spent some time in his presence and meditated with him. The Daily Mirror was interested in running a piece only if they could get a picture of him with a major celebrity, which is not particularly helpful since he believes fame is one of the key paths to suffering.

... In recent years, he has turned his full attention to the dangers of climate change and recently published the best-selling book *The World We Have – A Buddhist Approach to Peace and Ecology*. – [Read more.](#)

*Tibetan monks tackle science in the Indian hills – Associated Press, July 3, 2014*

SARAH, India – The shouts of more than a dozen Tibetan monks echo through the small classroom. Fingers are pointed. Voices collide. When an important point is made, the men smack their hands together and stomp the floor, their robes billowing around them.

It's the way Tibetan Buddhist scholars have traded ideas for centuries. Among them, the debate-as-shouting match is a discipline and a joy.

But this is something different.

Evolutionary theory is mentioned — loudly. One monk invokes Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Another shouts about the subatomic nature of neutrinos. – [Read more.](#)

***In Scarred Chinese Tibetan City, Devotion to Sanctity of Life – New York Times, July 25, 2014***

YUSHU, China – With a set of chopsticks in her hands and a Tibetan prayer spilling from her lips, Gelazomo, a 32-year-old yak herder, hunched over the rocky banks of the river that cuts through this city and hunted for the quarry that she hoped would bring salvation.

Every few minutes, she would tease out a tiny river shrimp that had become stranded in the mud, and then dropping it into a bucket of water. Beside her, dozens of other Tibetans toiled in the noonday sun, among them small children and old people who, from afar, appeared to be panning for gold.

“Buddha has taught us that treating others with love and compassion is the right thing to do, no matter how tiny that life is,” she explained, as the newly revived crustaceans darted through the water of her bucket. – [Read more.](#)

***Rebuild Afghanistan's Giant Buddhas? Foot-Shaped Pillars Give Legs to Debate – Wall Street Journal, September 24, 2014***

*Taliban Destroyed Sandstone Figures in 2001, but Momentum Is Growing to Reassemble Them*

BAMIYAN, Afghanistan – A pair of brick pillars, with an uncanny resemblance to feet, appeared late last year where a giant Buddha stood here.

The pillars were meant to hold a platform that would prevent rocks from falling on the heads of visitors to the Bamiyan site, where the Taliban destroyed two ancient Buddhas in 2001, horrifying the world.

The pillars' construction had an important consequence: it sparked a global debate on whether the two sandstone Buddha statues, cut out of a mountain face dominating this central Afghan city, should rise again. –[Read more.](#)

### *The limits of despair – The Economist, March 9, 2013*

*Five years after an explosion of unrest on the Tibetan plateau, the region is again in crisis. This time the world is looking away*

DHARAMSALA, India and QINGHAI PROVINCE, China – Inside a small monastery in China's Qinghai province, a red-robed monk looks around to see if he is being watched, then begins sobbing. "We just want the Dalai Lama to come home", he says. His words echo those of dozens of Tibetans seeking to explain why they have set themselves on fire in public places across the Tibetan plateau in the past two years. Desperation is growing among the Dalai Lama's followers in China. So, too, is the government's effort to silence them.

Since an outbreak of unrest swept the Tibetan plateau five years ago this month, including anti-Chinese riots in the Tibetan capital Lhasa and protests in numerous towns and monasteries, the party has tried to control Tibetan discontent by means of carrot and stick. The stick has involved tighter policing of monasteries, controls on visits to Lhasa, denunciations of the Dalai Lama and arrests of dissidents. The carrot is visible not far from the crying monk's monastery: new expressways across the vast grasslands, new roads to remote villages, better housing for monks and restorations to their prayer-halls. Yet the spectacle of more than 100 Tibetans setting themselves alight, mostly in the past two years, in one of the largest such protests in modern political history, suggests that neither approach is working. – [Read more.](#)

## **U.S. Buddhism and cross cultural issues**

- U.S. Buddhism practice and practice in other countries are often different. For example, U.S. Buddhists are known to focus on meditation and karma or merit-based efforts. They are also known to be more pluralistic and democratic, putting less importance on authority, as prevalent in Asia. It is a mistake for journalists to generalize information to all Buddhists.
- Asian Buddhists may feel like they are outside of the U.S. Buddhist dialogue or discourse. There is no central or primary leader in Buddhism, so unity or common understanding across cultures can be an issue.
- Separation between Buddhists also occurs in Asian countries (i.e. Japanese versus Korean Buddhists). Race can be a source of division and understanding as well.

## General issues

- Buddhists do not have a single stance on abortion; Western and Japanese Buddhists may not take issue with abortion, while others may consider it to be unacceptable.
- While Buddhism does not necessarily require family life as a religious requirement, Buddhists may view contraception use as against the teachings of Buddha.
- There is not a single view on capital punishment, but Buddhists do not support physical punishment to other humans.

## International sources

### Global

- **Buddhist Blogs:** A Buddhist blog webring has links to Buddhist bloggers.
- **DharmaNet International:** DharmaNet International is a nonprofit, multimedia resource center that is dedicated to education on meditation, wisdom and compassionate action. Contact: [info@dharmanet.org](mailto:info@dharmanet.org).
- **Dorje Shugden:** DorjeShugden is a website providing a comprehensive background, history and lineage of Dorje Shugden and benefits of the practice. Dorje Shugden, a

Tibetan Buddhist deity, has been publicly denounced by the Dalai Lama and is a source of controversy. Contact through the [website](#).

- **International Shugden Community:** International Shugden Community is a website defending Dorje Shugden practitioners worldwide, offering a [media packet](#), an [ebook](#) and more resources critiquing the work of the current Dalai Lama. Contact: [isc.media2014@gmail.com](mailto:isc.media2014@gmail.com), 323-898-1419.
- **Shambhala:** Shambhala is a global community with more than 170 [centers and groups](#) worldwide. The Shambhala vision is rooted in the contemplative teachings of Buddhism. It is the Shambhala view that every human being has a fundamental nature of goodness, warmth and intelligence which can be cultivated through meditation, following ancient principles and further developed in daily life. Contact: 902-425-4275.
- **Shinnyo-en:** Shinnyo-en is an international Buddhist community that teaches laypeople how to use each day as an opportunity to connect with others and seek enlightenment. Currently led by Shinso Ito, Shinnyo Buddhists promote the values of peaceful coexistence and cooperation. Its website includes a [list](#) of sanctuary locations worldwide.
- **SotoZen-Net:** SotoZen-Net is a website that offers in-depth information on the Soto Zen school, including a [directory](#) of organizations and temples within and outside Japan.
- **Zen Peacemakers:** Zen Peacemakers is a global community of individuals and Zen centers that want to pursue peace and wholeness through combining social action and Zen practice. The Zen Peacemakers operate the Maezumi Institute in Montague, Mass., and have a list of Zen Peacemaker Circles in the U.S. and overseas. Contact: [laurie@zenpeacemakers.com](mailto:laurie@zenpeacemakers.com), 413-367-5278.

## Asia

- **Asian Institute of Applied Buddhism (AIAB):** Asian Institute of Applied Buddhism (AIAB) is a center for Buddhism studies and practices, with a resident monastic community in the tradition of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh. AIAB was established to bring relevant aspects of Buddhism to the people of Asia by promoting the teachings

and the practices of Buddhism. Contact: [aiab@pvfhk.org](mailto:aiab@pvfhk.org), +852-2985-5281, +852-2985-5033.

- **Central Tibetan Administration (CTA):** Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) is an organization based in Dharamshala, India, established by the Dalai Lama shortly after his exile from Tibet. It is commonly referred to as the Tibetan government-in-exile, politically advocating for Tibetan refugees and for freedom in Tibet. Contact: [tsjc@tibet.net](mailto:tsjc@tibet.net), +91-1892-225099, +91-1892-224964.
- **En-su Cho:** En-su Cho is a professor of Buddhist philosophy at Seoul National University in Korea and currently is the director of the Institute of Philosophical Research. Her research interests include Indian Abhidharma Buddhism, Korean Buddhist thought and women in Buddhism. Contact: [escho@snu.ac.kr](mailto:escho@snu.ac.kr), +82-2-880-6209.
- **Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies:** Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Studies, located in New Taipei City, Taiwan, concentrates on being a global advocate for the academic study and research of Chinese Buddhism. It is part of the **Dharma Drum Mountain World Center for Buddhist Education**. Contact: [drumt@ddm.org.tw](mailto:drumt@ddm.org.tw), +886-2-2498-7171 ext. 2362.
- **Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM):** Dharma Drum Mountain (DDM) is an influential international Buddhist spiritual, cultural and educational foundation with its international headquarters in New Taipei City, Taiwan. DDM developed from the Nung Chan Monastery and the Chung-Hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture. Its website includes a list of **global affiliates**. Contact: [contacter@ddmf.org.tw](mailto:contacter@ddmf.org.tw).
- **International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (IASBS):** The International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies (IASBS) is a worldwide organization with headquarters in Japan that works to promote Jodo Shinshu and Pure Land Buddhism throughout the globe by providing academic classes and information on the religion. Contact: [contact@iasbs.net](mailto:contact@iasbs.net), 077-543-7873.
- **Japan Theravada Buddhist Association:** Japan Theravada Buddhist Association is an organization in Tokyo that provides resources on Theravada Buddhism such as meditation, prayer, history and traditions. Contact: [info@j-theravada.net](mailto:info@j-theravada.net).

- **Jinwol Y. H. Lee:** Jinwol Y. H. Lee, a Buddhist monk and Zen master, teaches Buddhist meditation and culture as chair professor of the department of Seon studies and director of the Institute of Seon at Dongguk University, Gyeongju in South Korea. He belongs to the Jogye order of Korean Buddhism, the major traditional Mahayana Buddhism in Korea. He is working as a vice president of the World Fellowship of Buddhists, the oldest and largest Buddhist global organization around the world. Contact: [jinwol@dongguk.edu](mailto:jinwol@dongguk.edu), +82-10-2642-8260.
- **Library of Tibetan Works and Archives:** Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, founded by the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India, is considered one of the most important libraries and institutions of Tibetan works in the world. It was first established to house manuscripts carried out of Tibet when refugees escaped to India. The library now includes major collections of artifacts, manuscripts and other records, while also serving as a center for language and cultural education. Contact: [Itwa1970@gmail.com](mailto:Itwa1970@gmail.com), +91-981-606-6677.
- **Moscow Buddhist Center of Lama Tsong Khapa:** The Moscow Buddhist Center of Lama Tsong Khapa is a Buddhist organization that works to unite the followers of Mahayana Buddhism in Moscow. The organization focuses on the study of Buddhist theory, practice, culture and spiritual heritage of Tibet. Contact through the [website](#).
- **Charles Muller:** Charles Muller is a professor in the humanities department at Toyo Gakuen University in Japan. He is the author of *The Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment: Korean Buddhism's Guide to Meditation* and can speak about Buddhism among Koreans. He also runs the website [Resources for East Asian Language and Thought](#) and has become interested in how the Internet can be used to share information about East Asian religions and philosophy. He has worked to electronically translate and interpret classical Buddhist works for Western audiences, including producing the *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*. Contact: [acmuller@jj.em-net.ne.jp](mailto:acmuller@jj.em-net.ne.jp).
- **National Office of Buddhism:** National Office of Buddhism is a Thailand-based organization that aims to protect and promote the prosperity of Buddhism in the country, operating under the prime minister's office. Contact: [iconab@onab.go.th](mailto:iconab@onab.go.th), 0-2441- 6400.

- **Nichiren Shu Order Headquarters:** Nichiren Shu Order Headquarters is the worldwide headquarters for the Nichiren Shu Buddhist order. Contact: [fwkz7685@mb.infoweb.ne.jp](mailto:fwkz7685@mb.infoweb.ne.jp), 81-3-3751-7181.
- **Nung Chang Monastery:** Nung Chang Monastery was constructed by master Dong Chu in Taipei City, Taiwan. It is the birthplace of the Dharma Drum Mountain tradition of Chan Buddhism. Contact: 886-2-2893-3161.
- **Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama:** Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, known in Tibetan as Gaden Phodrang, is the personal office of the current Dalai Lama and is located in Dharamsala, India. It handles the the Dalai Lama's schedule and correspondence. Contact: [ohhdl@dalailama.com](mailto:ohhdl@dalailama.com), 91-1892-221343, 91-1892-221879.
- **Matthieu Ricard:** Matthieu Ricard is a Buddhist monk, author, translator and photographer. He is originally from France, but now lives in at the Shechen Tennyi Dargyeling Monastery in Nepal. He is the author of several books, such as *Happiness: A Guide to Developing Life's Most Important Skill*, *Why Meditate?*, *The Quantum and the Lotus* and *The Monk and the Philosopher*. He is an active member of the Mind and Life Institute, and founder of Karuna-Shechen, a humanitarian association that develops education, medical and social projects for the most destitute populations of the Himalayan region. Contact: [karuna@karuna-shechen.org](mailto:karuna@karuna-shechen.org).
- **Rissho Kosei-kai:** Rissho Kosei-kai is a Buddhist organization with headquarters in Tokyo that promotes Buddhism in communities throughout Japan. The organization has "2.05 million member households in 245 churches throughout Japan as well as in other countries." Contact: [info@rk-world.org](mailto:info@rk-world.org), +81-3-5341-1124.
- **Sakya Centre:** Sakya Centre, situated in Dehradun, India, is the personal monastery of Sakya Trizin, the 41st head of the Sakya order of Tibetan Buddhism. He is considered second only to the Dalai Lama in the spiritual hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sakya Centre is the main center for the Sakya tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The center is a registered nonprofit society catering to the needs of society without any bias. It consists of a community of more than 200 monks, most from Tibet while some come from India, Nepal, Bhutan and other neighboring regions. Contact: [shrisakya@yahoo.co.in](mailto:shrisakya@yahoo.co.in), 0091-135-2735351.

- **Sakyadhita in Sri Lanka:** Sakyadhita in Sri Lanka is a Buddhist organization that promotes humanitarianism and dharma based on the spiritual teachings of Buddhism. The organization provides resources on Buddhism. Contact: [anjanides@gmail.com](mailto:anjanides@gmail.com), [ridij@optusnet.com.au](mailto:ridij@optusnet.com.au).
- **Sathira Dhamasathan Center:** Sathira Dhamasathan Center in Bangkok is a meditation and learning community for peace and harmony that has programs open to people regardless of age and gender. Mae Chee Sansanee Sthirasuta, a Buddhist nun who is renowned in Thailand for her teachings and humanitarian efforts, founded the center in 1987. The center believes that every human being has the potential to live a life that is free from suffering. Contact: [sdsweb.webmaster@gmail.com](mailto:sdsweb.webmaster@gmail.com), +66-0-2-510-6697.
- **Soka Gakkai International (SGI):** Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is an international organization with its roots in Ontario that is committed to spreading peace, culture and education based on the humanistic Buddhist philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin. The organization has more than 12 million members in 192 countries and territories worldwide. Contact: [postmaster@sgicanada.org](mailto:postmaster@sgicanada.org), 416-654-3211.
- **Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka:** Kenneth Kenshin Tanaka is a professor of Buddhist studies at Musashino University in Tokyo and is an ordained Shin Buddhist minister. He also serves as president of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies. Educated both in Japan and the U.S., he is a bicultural specialist and prolific writer on Pure Land Buddhism. Contact: [kktanaka@gamma.ocn.ne.jp](mailto:kktanaka@gamma.ocn.ne.jp).
- **Ha Vinh Tho:** Ha Vinh Tho is a Buddhist teacher in the tradition of Vietnamese Zen Buddhism. He is the program development coordinator of the **Gross National Happiness Centre** in Bhutan. He is in charge of setting the learning objectives, developing the curriculum and the learning process both for Bhutanese and international participants. He is also the founder and chairman of the **Eurasia Foundation**, a humanitarian NGO developing educational programs for children and youths living with disabilities, as well as ecological projects in Vietnam. Contact: [havinhtho@gmail.com](mailto:havinhtho@gmail.com), +975-1725-7315.

- **Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen:** Wat Paknam Bhasicharoen, an ancient Buddhist temple established by royalty, is both a temple and a school in Bangkok that houses a large population of monks and nuns. Contact: [0-2467-0811](tel:0-2467-0811), [0-2457-9042](tel:0-2457-9042).
- **World Fellowship of Buddhists:** World Fellowship of Buddhists, with headquarters currently in Bangkok, is an international Buddhist organization. The WFB mission includes the propagation of Buddhism, promotion of solidarity and unity of Buddhists all over the world. There are more than 140 regional centers in 37 countries worldwide. Contact: [webmaster@wfb-hq.org](mailto:webmaster@wfb-hq.org), [660-2661-1284-7](tel:660-2661-1284-7).

## Myanmar

- **Burma: End Repression of Buddhist Monks:** Human Rights Watch published a 99-page report in 2009 titled "[The Resistance of the Monks: Buddhism and Protest in Burma.](#)" The report, also available in [Burmese](#), describes the repression Myanmar's monks experienced after they led demonstrations against the government in September 2007. It tells the stories of individual monks who were arrested, beaten and detained.
- **Bruce Matthews:** Bruce Matthews is a professor of comparative religion at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, Canada. He teaches courses on the geopolitics of Asia, with an emphasis on the influence of Buddhism. His research interests include Buddhism and politics in South and Southeast Asia, particularly in Sri Lanka and Myanmar. Contact: [bruce.matthews@acadiu.ca](mailto:bruce.matthews@acadiu.ca), [902-585-1486](tel:902-585-1486), [902-542-1910](tel:902-542-1910), [902-680-1909](tel:902-680-1909).
- **Juliane Schober:** Juliane Schober is an associate professor of religious studies at Arizona State University. She has studied Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar, including Myanmar rituals and the veneration of icons. Schober is editor of *Sacred Biography in the Buddhist Traditions of South and Southeast Asia*. Contact: [j.schober@asu.edu](mailto:j.schober@asu.edu), [480-727-8027](tel:480-727-8027).
- **Diana Winston:** Diana Winston is the director of mindfulness education at the University of California, Los Angeles Mindful Awareness Research Center. She is a member of the Spirit Rock Teachers Council, founder of the Buddhist Alliance for Social Engagement Program and the former associate director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. She spent year as a Buddhist nun in Myanmar and is the author of *Wide*

## Style guide

ahimsa

:

**Pronounced** “ah-HIM-saa.” The Sanskrit word meaning non-injury in any form, including action, thought or speech. This is an important principle of Hinduism and a core principle of Jainism. For this reason, many Hindus and most Jains are vegetarians, as are significant numbers of Sikhs and Buddhists.

Amida

:

**Pronounced** “ah-MEE-dah.” Japanese name of the Buddha of Infinite Light, a celestial Buddha venerated in Chinese and Japanese Mahayana Pure Land schools, which teach that calling upon the Buddha’s name (Namu-Amida-Butsu, “Veneration to the Buddha Amida”) will bring them into his paradise, or state of Buddhahood. His name is also seen in its Sanskrit form, Amitabha (pronounced “A-mi-TAH-bhah”). See [Pure Land school](#).

arhat

:

**Pronounced** “AAR-het.” In early Buddhism, one who has attained full realization and transcended desires and defilements and who thus will not be reborn. It is the ideal goal in the Theravada tradition. In Pali, it is called *arahant*.

bhikkhu

:

Pronounced “BHIK-koo.” A fully ordained monk in the Theravada Buddhist tradition; a nun is a bhikkhuni. In the Mahayana tradition, the Sanskrit forms (bhikshu, bhikshuni) are used. Capitalize when used with a name.

**Bodh Gaya**

:

Pronounced “Bohd guh-YAA.” The site in northeast India of the tree under which the meditating Buddha attained realization.

**bodhisattva**

:

Pronounced “bohd-hi-SAHT-tvah.” In Mahayana Buddhism, one who strives to attain Buddhahood through the practice of prescribed virtues, while postponing his or her own entry into nirvana for the sake of helping others to enlightenment. The term also refers to various celestial beings who are venerated in some schools for their special ability to help those on the Buddhist path. See [enlightenment](#) and [nirvana](#).

**bodhisattva vow**

:

The resolve in Mahayana Buddhism to become a Buddha for the sake of aiding all beings.

**Buddha**

:

Pronounced “BUD-dah” (first syllable “u” as in “put,” not a long “oo” sound). The Buddha, meaning “the awakened one,” refers to Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism. A Buddha is anyone

who has attained enlightenment. There are human Buddhas of the past, present and future as well as celestial Buddhas who are venerated in some Buddhist schools for their ability to help those on the path to liberation.

## **Buddhism**

:

Buddhism, the fourth-largest organized religion in the world, was founded in India sometime between the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, known as the Buddha, or the “awakened one.” Buddhism teaches that meditation and the practice of moral behavior (and, according to some schools, rituals) can lead to the elimination of personal craving and hence the release of suffering and the attainment of absolute peace (nirvana). This is gradually achieved through successive cycles of rebirth (although some schools say such liberation may be obtained as quickly as within one lifetime). Although Buddhism is frequently described as a nontheistic tradition since the historical Buddha did not claim to be divine and there is no concept of a divine absolute God — the vast and complex tradition of Buddhism includes an intricate cosmology of beneficent and wrathful deities as well as transcendent Buddhas and bodhisattvas who can be propitiated to help Buddhist practitioners on the path to enlightenment.

There are three major forms or “vehicles” of Buddhism:

- Theravada, found in most of Southeast Asia, focuses on individual realization, with practices particularly directed to monastic life;
- Mahayana stresses the universality of Buddha-nature and the possibility of enlightenment for all beings. It developed into many variant schools in China, Japan and Korea;

- Vajrayana, or Tibetan Buddhism, is found in Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia. Vajrayana developed from the Mahayana tradition but is often considered separately as a third “vehicle.”

See [Buddha](#), [Four Noble Truths](#), [Eightfold Path](#) and [Siddhartha Gautama](#).

Titles for Buddhist teachers or masters are capitalized when used with a name but lowercase otherwise. The title of *lama* generally precedes a name; *rinpoche*, *sensei* and *roshi* generally follow the name, but practice varies, especially in the United States. (For example, a well-known Japanese Zen teacher is always referred to as Maezumi Roshi; a well-known American Zen teacher is Roshi Bernard Glassman.) To determine how to refer to a particular Buddhist teacher, ask or try looking up the name through a database or other Web tool.

#### Dalai Lama

:

The title of the leader of Tibetan Buddhism and the spiritual and (now exiled) political leader of the people of Tibet. *Dalai Lama* is a title rather than a name, but it is all that is used when referring to the man. Capitalize when referring to the person who currently holds the title; lowercase when referring to the title in general. Each dalai lama is considered to be the reincarnation of the last; the current, 14th Dalai Lama left Tibet in 1959 after China’s invasion and resides in Dharamsala, India. Tibetan Buddhists address him as *Your Holiness* and refer to him in writing as *His Holiness*.

#### Dhammapada

:

Pronounced “Dhahm-muh-PAA-dah.” One of the most widely known verse texts of the Buddha’s teaching, it means “the path of dharma” and is part of a collection within the Sutta Pitaka.

**dharma**

:

Pronounced “DAHR-muh.” The mode of conduct for an individual that is most conducive to spiritual advancement. It includes universal human values as well as values that are specific to persons in various stages of life. In Hinduism it also refers to individual obligations in terms of law and social law. In Buddhism it is the teachings of Buddha from which an adherent molds his conduct on the path toward enlightenment.

**Eightfold Path**

:

In Buddhism, eight practical steps taught by the Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama, to end craving and thus eliminate suffering. The steps are right understanding, right intent, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. Together with the Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold Path constitutes the foundation of Buddhist thought; also referred to as the *Noble Eightfold Path*.

**enlightenment**

:

The goal of life in both Buddhism and Hinduism. For Hindus, it is union with God and self-realization. For Buddhists, it is realization of the truth about reality, achieved by following a system of practices (which may especially include meditation), in accordance with the particular school to which an adherent belongs. See **Four Noble Truths**.

**Five Precepts**

:

In Buddhism, principles for conduct that are followed by lay adherents. They are: Do not kill; do not steal; do not lie; do not be unchaste; do not take intoxicants. These precepts have broader,

metaphorical as well as literal applications; for example, “Do not steal” means more broadly, “Do not take what is not given.”

#### Four Noble Truths

:

The fundamental truths that the historical Buddha realized in meditation and then taught to his followers: Life is suffering; the cause of suffering is craving; suffering can be eliminated by the extinguishing of craving; there is a way to achieve this goal (by following eight principles of conduct). See [Eightfold Path](#).

#### geshe

:

Advanced degree of a Tibetan Buddhist scholar, much like a Ph.D.

#### Hinayana

:

Pronounced “hi-nuh-YAA-nah.” A term meaning “little vehicle” that was originally used by Mahayana Buddhists to refer to early Buddhism. It is generally considered pejorative; use *Theravada* instead. See [Theravada](#).

#### karma

:

In Buddhism and Hinduism, the universal law of cause and effect; the effect (or fruits) of a person’s actions in one’s next lifetime. Lowercase in all references.

#### lama

:

A Tibetan Buddhist teacher or master. Capitalize when used as a title before a name, as in *Lama Surya Das*, or when referring to the man who holds the title *Dalai Lama*.

Madhyamika

:

Pronounced “muhd-YAA-mih-kah.” A Mahayana Buddhist sect based on the third-century teachings of Nagarjuna. It focuses on the emptiness (shunyata) of the cycle of worldly existence (samsara) and nirvana. It rests on the scripture known as the Prajnaparamita Sutra.

Mahayana

:

Pronounced “muh-hah-YAA-nah.” Literally “great vehicle,” it is one of the two main forms of Buddhism, along with Theravada. Its traditions emphasize the Buddha-nature of all beings; the ideal is the bodhisattva, one who works for enlightenment while delaying personal attainment of liberation in order to help others, and realization is as much a goal for lay adherents as for monastics. Its followers are called Mahayanists. Mahayana has many sects in China, Japan, Korea, Tibet and Mongolia including the Madhyamika, Yogachara, Nichiren, T’ien-t’ai, Zen, Pure Land and Vajrayana schools. Mahayanists see Buddha as more than a man who was a great spiritual teacher; they believe he is also a universal spiritual being to whom (in his various forms) prayers may be effectively directed. Mahayana schools use different scriptures, such as the Lotus Sutra (Nichiren and T’ien-t’ai schools) and the Heart Sutra (Zen schools).

mantra

:

Pronounced “MUN-tra.” A syllable, word or phrase with spiritual power, it is chanted or held in the mind in connection with meditation or ritual. Mantras are commonly used by Hindus, Buddhists and

Jains and are traditionally drawn from Sanskrit scriptures, such as the Vedas. The adherents of some vernacular texts, such as the Hindi Ramcharitmanas, believe their verses have the power of mantra as well. Some of the more powerful mantras consist of a single syllable, the most popular of which is “om.” See **om**.

**meditation**

:

A quiet, alert, sustained, powerfully concentrated state in which new knowledge and insights are awakened from within as awareness focuses on an object or specific line of thought. In the West, practices that are taught as meditation are primarily techniques of concentration (“dharana” in Sanskrit). The more appropriate Sanskrit term for meditation is “dhyana”; it is more of a state of reflection on the nature of the self or of reality, and is one of the eight limbs of yoga.

**merit**

:

By ritual and ethical practices, the Buddhist adherent accumulates merit, or adds positive karma and offsets negative karma (the spiritual fruits of former actions) on the path to liberation.

**Middle Path, Middle Way**

:

The moderate path taken by the historical Buddha to enlightenment, one that avoided both the hedonism he had seen as a prince and the total asceticism he practiced for a time.

**mindfulness**

:

A term in Buddhism for the central practice of an alert, objective awareness that is directed to all activities throughout the day.

neo-Buddhism

:

A movement founded by B.R. Ambedkar in India in the mid-1950s to encourage members of the Hindu caste of untouchables to convert to Buddhism, which would assure them of social acceptance as well as spiritual guidance. Mass conversions are still held today.

Nichiren

:

A school within Mahayana Buddhism that was founded in 13th-century Japan by Nichiren. It calls on adherents to rely on the Lotus Sutra as the sole scripture needed for salvation, which is attained through veneration of the sutra's sacred title, Namu-Myoho-enge-kyo.

nirvana

:

Pronounced "nir-VAA-nah." In Buddhism and Hinduism, a state of ultimate peace that is the goal of all beings, which includes freedom from suffering, desire and the cycle of rebirth. The Buddha's entrance into nirvana at his death is referred to as his parinirvana (pronounced "PAH-rih-nir-VAA-nah").

no-self

:

In Buddhism, the major tenet that no “self” exists as an individual, independent substance; rather, the ego is a transitory collection, an ever-changing process of mental formations and impressions. Also called not-self, it is referred to as *anatman* in Sanskrit and *anatta* in Pali.

om mani padme hum

:

Pronounced “OHM MAH-nee PAHD-may HUMM.” An important mantra in Tibetan Buddhism, roughly translated as “(Homage to) the jewel in the lotus.” It honors the Buddha-nature of all beings.

Prajnaparamita Sutra

:

Pronounced “PRUHJ-nyaa-PAA-ruh-mi-taa SOO-trah.” The “Perfection of Wisdom Sutra,” a major scripture in Mahayana Buddhism. It teaches that all phenomena are marked by impermanence and insubstantiality and presents the bodhisattva path.

priest

:

The term used for ordained clergy of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Episcopal faith. *Priest* also is used by Wiccans and for some clergy in Buddhism and Hinduism. It is not a formal title and is not capitalized. Avoid the term *minister* when referring to Catholic priests. Also, while every priest has pastoral duties toward the baptized, the term *pastor* refers to the priest (and in rare cases, laymen or laywomen) charged by the bishop with overseeing a parish. A pastor may have one or more *assistant pastors*.

Most Catholic priests in the United States are diocesan clergy, ordained by and for a particular diocese. They make promises of celibacy and obedience, but although they are expected to adhere to a modest lifestyle, they do not take vows of poverty and can own a home, for example, or a car.

The term *religious priests* refers to priests who belong to a religious order, such as the Jesuits, and hold possessions in common.

Pure Land school

:

Japanese schools of Mahayana Buddhism whose teachings are based on devotion to the celestial Buddha Amida (also known as Amitabha). Jodoshu (Pure Land School), established in the 12th century by Honan, teaches that devotees have only to call upon Amida by name to invoke his aid on the path toward liberation. Honan's disciple Shinran established Jodo Shinshu (True Pure Land School) with the same focus on the chanting of Amida's name but specified that Amida Buddha had already provided liberation for his devotees, who need only realize it.

reincarnation

:

The belief that a person's soul is reborn in another body after physical death. It is common in many Asian traditions — including Buddhism, Sikhism and Hinduism — as well as some Native American traditions. According to Hinduism and Buddhism, incarnation in the next life is determined by one's previous actions. See **karma**.

Reverend, the

:

An attributive form of address given to many but not all ordained Christian and Buddhist clergy. Do not use this honorific form unless you are sure that the particular denomination accepts its use. Follow AP style of using the article *the* to precede the abbreviation *Rev.* Never use *the Rev. Dr.* together before a name. See [religious titles](#) for guidance.

rinpoche

:

Pronounced “RAHN-poh-shay.” Literally “precious one,” rinpoche is a title of respect for a Buddhist teacher, often signaling one considered to be an incarnate lama. The title of *rinpoche* generally follows a name, but practice varies, especially in the United States. Capitalize when used before or after a name. See [lama](#) and [tulku](#).

roshi

:

Title for Zen Buddhist master, literally “old teacher.” It generally follows a name, but practice varies, especially in the United States. Capitalize when used before or after a name.

samsara

:

Pronounced “sahm-SAA-rah.” The cycle of birth, death and rebirth (and thus continual return to the suffering that constitutes human life). The fundamental goal of Buddhist practice is to be freed from samsara.

satori

:

Term in Zen Buddhism for the experience of awakening to the truth.

sensei

:

Title of teacher in a Zen Buddhist lineage, it refers to one who has received dharma transmission, or formal recognition of his or her awakening. Capitalize with a name. The title *sensei* generally follows a name, but practice varies, especially in the United States. Sensei is also a title in Japanese martial arts.

shunyata

:

Pronounced “SHOON-yuh-taa.” Emptiness, a key teaching in Mahayana Buddhism that all phenomena lack real and permanent substance.

Siddhartha Gautama

:

Pronounced “Sid-DHART-hah GAU-tuh-mah.” Name of the historical Buddha, also known as Shakyamuni (“sage of the Shakya clan”). Born to a wealthy ruling family between the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. in an area that is part of modern-day Nepal, he left the kingdom at age 29 after encountering the outside world of illness, old age and death beyond the palace walls, to find enlightenment and release from suffering. After years as a wandering ascetic, he awoke to the true nature of reality after meditating under a bodhi tree and spent the rest of his life passing on to others what he had realized. The title Buddha means *awakened* or *enlightened one*. Gautama did not teach that he was a god; as a historical figure, he is venerated in Buddhist tradition as a perfect teacher and ultimate authority. (“Lord Buddha” is a term of respect rather than a title of divinity.) See **Buddha** and **Buddhism**.

Soka Gakkai

:

“Value Creation Society,” a Japanese Buddhist group based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. It holds the Lotus Sutra to be the only scripture needed for salvation, which is achieved by venerating and chanting its title.

Soka Gakkai International-USA

:

An American Buddhist association based on the teachings of the Nichiren school of Mahayana Buddhism. See **Buddhism**.

stupa

:

Burial mounds containing relics of the historical Buddha across the Indian subcontinent. Many were later developed into shrines or temple compounds.

sutra, sutta

:

Pronounced “SOO-trah” and “SUHT-ta.” In Buddhism, a sutra is a text containing the Buddha’s discourses. Sutras have been preserved in Sanskrit and Pali and in Chinese and Tibetan translations. The scriptures of Theravada Buddhism — the Pali canon, which are in the Pali language — include a collection of such texts, which are called *suttas*. They are subdivided into sections called *Nikayas*. These texts are said to have been transmitted from Ananda, the Buddha’s closest disciple. The schools of Mahayana Buddhism base their teachings on the interpretation of any of a number of other sutras originally written in Sanskrit. These are known by the Sanskrit term *sutra*. Individual Mahayana schools base their teaching on specific sutras.

swastika

:

Pronounced “SVA-stik-a.” It is one of the most popular symbols for Hindus, Jains and Buddhists. The word *swastika* is derived from Sanskrit words that mean “auspicious,” “luck” and “well-being.” It is also a sign of the Sun-God Surya and his generosity. The swastika is one of the 108 symbols of Lord Vishnu and represents the sun’s rays, without which there would be no life. The swastika is used in religious and civil ceremonies in India, both public and private.

The swastika used by the Nazis was a perverted version of the ancient Hindu swastika.

T’ien-t’ai

:

An important Chinese Mahayana Buddhist school founded in the sixth century; the scripture on which it rests is a discourse of the Buddha known as the Lotus Sutra. The tradition was later brought to Japan, where it is known as Tendai.

taking refuge

:

In Buddhism, taking refuge is an important act of commitment in which a person proclaims his faith in the Three Jewels — Buddha, the dharma and the Sangha. See [Three Jewels](#).

temple

:

A building used for worship or religious purposes. Uppercase when part of a formal name or when referring to the ancient Temple in Jerusalem. The word temple is used differently in different religious traditions. It is the place of worship for Hindus, Buddhists and Jews, although Orthodox Jews and many Conservative Jews believe the only temple is the one destroyed in Jerusalem and so they call their congregational buildings synagogues. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day

Saints, temples are sacred buildings with restricted access; they differ in purpose from meetinghouses, where weekly worship takes place.

### Theravada

:

Pronounced “teh-ruh-VAA-dah.” One of the two main forms of Buddhism, it means “the way of the elders.” (The other is Mahayana.) Theravada is an early tradition directed to the monastic community. Its ideal is the arhat, the individual who attains enlightenment and thus escapes the cycle of rebirth through practices involving ethical conduct, meditation and insight. Its scriptures are those of the Pali canon, held to represent the earliest direct teachings of the Buddha. Theravada Buddhism is the form found in most of Southeast Asia (Sri Lanka, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Laos). An adherent of the Theravada school is a Theravadin.

### Three Jewels

:

In Buddhism, the three objects Buddhists take refuge in or give themselves to: the Buddha (both the historical Buddha and the Buddha-nature that is in every sentient being), the dharma (the Buddha’s teachings as well as universal law) and the Sangha (the monastic community as well as the wider community of Buddhists everywhere). See [taking refuge](#).

### Tipitaka

:

Pronounced “ti-PIH-tuh-kah.” The “Three Baskets,” or collections, of early Buddhist texts that make up the Pali canon, the scriptures of the Theravada school of Buddhism. The Vinaya Pitaka lists regulations for monks and nuns, the Sutta Pitaka consists of discourses from the historical Buddha or his disciples, and the Abhidhamma Pitaka presents a systematic organization of the teachings.

**tulku**

:

Pronounced “tül-koo.” In Tibetan Buddhism, an incarnate or reincarnated lama.

**Vajrayana**

:

Pronounced “vuh-jruh-YAA-nah.” Considered the third major tradition or “vehicle” of Buddhism, after Mahayana and Theravada. It is also called Tibetan Buddhism, Esoteric Buddhism or Tantric Buddhism (its scriptures are called tantras). Vajrayana literally means “diamond vehicle.” It developed from Mahayana Buddhism, particularly in Tibet, Nepal and Mongolia. Vajrayana Buddhists emphasize the use of ritual, meditative practices, mantras, mudras (symbolic gestures) and mandalas (symbolic diagrams in the form of a circle). Schools of Tibetan Buddhism include Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya and Gelugpa, the order to which the dalai lamas belong. See **Buddhism**.

**Venerable**

:

Ordained monks and nuns in Theravada Buddhism are given the honorific *Venerable* before their names. In Roman Catholicism, the term is applied posthumously when a pope has approved the first stage in a person’s official cause for canonization, as in *Venerable Fulton Sheen*. Also, in the Episcopal Church, archdeacons are addressed with the honorific *the Venerable*, as in *the Venerable Jill Smith*. See **religious titles**.

**Vipassana**

:

Pronounced “vih-PAHS-suh-nah.” In Theravada Buddhism, a profound, nonjudgmental self-awareness practiced in meditation. Often called insight meditation.

## Vishnu

:

Pronounced “VISH-noo.” In Hinduism, the name used when God’s role as preserver is emphasized. Shiva is the name used when the emphasis is on God’s role as lord of time and change. Brahma is the name used for God when God’s role as creator of the universe is described. The divine is always understood to be one. For most Hindus, Vishnu is either equated with or a manifestation of Brahman. Vishnu has many avatars or incarnations, the best-known of which are Ram, Krishna and the Buddha. His consort is Lakshmi.

## yoga

:

Most often associated with body poses, stretching exercises and breathing techniques developed in India. It is a Sanskrit term that means union; yoga is a discipline found in Hinduism. It is the philosophy, process, disciplines, and practices whose purpose is the unification of individual consciousness with transcendent or divine consciousness. One of its eight “limbs” is referred to as asana (also known as “hatha yoga”) and involves various body postures meant to keep the body physically relaxed and healthy as an important prerequisite for meditation.

## Yogachara

:

A Mahayana Buddhist school whose followers practice yoga and meditation and whose focus is the teaching of shunyata (emptiness).

## Zen Buddhism

:

A Mahayana Buddhist tradition that teaches enlightenment through meditation. It developed in China as Ch’an. Two major schools of Japanese Zen are the Rinzai school, which emphasizes koan

practice, in which the student is given a traditional paradoxical sutra or story to consider (and, by having ultimately to transcend the logical use of mind, thereby is propelled into a direct encounter with reality beyond words), and the Soto school, whose primary practice is *isshikantaza* (“just sitting” meditation, in which there is no object but simply a state of awareness).

zendo

:

In Zen Buddhist schools, a meditation hall.