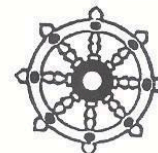


BUDDHISM

BASIC BELIEF Everything changes; nothing is permanent. Desire, clinging, and aversion cause suffering. Everything is interrelated; there is no separate and permanent self. Every thought and action has consequences, which have far reaching effects because everything is interrelated. Liberation comes from seeing the impermanence of self and everything else, from living in the flow of the moment, and from compassionately helping others.



BACKGROUND The Buddha was an Indian prince of the Shakya Clan who lived around the fifth century B.C.E. His first name was Siddhartha; his family name was Gautama. During his life he was known as Shakyamuni (sage of the Shakyas). Buddha is a title meaning "the awakened one." Buddha sought to find the cause of human suffering and attained enlightenment (seeing the truth of the interrelatedness of all things). The Buddha

taught for the next 40 years, until his death at age 80, the Four Noble Truths, which concern the root of suffering and the Eight Fold Path to liberation. Over the next 1200 years Buddhism spread throughout Southeast Asia and the Far East. By the late nineteenth century Buddhism had reached Europe and the Western Hemisphere

CUSTOMS AND PEOPLE There are 350 million Buddhists in the world. Most are in South East and East Asia. There are 2.5 million Buddhists in North America. Buddhism has historically assimilated well to what ever culture it finds itself in. It is often said about Buddhism that it never fails to assume the shape of the vessel that contains it, meaning that it is flexible because it lacks dogma. Ordained clergy usually shave their heads

and wear a Kesa, which is a large patchwork robe worn over the shoulders. Ordained or not, the Buddha stressed that enlightenment can be realized by everyone regardless of class, race, or gender.

STRUCTURE All Buddhist's schools can trace their teachings to the Buddha. However, cultural diversity between the broad areas into which Buddhism has spread has led to stronger emphasis on certain aspects of the teachings in specific areas. The three main branches of Buddhism are Theravada (Hinayana) found in Southern Asia, Mahayana found in East Asia; Chinese Chan, Japanese Zen and Pure Land are forms

of Mahayana Buddhism, and Vajrayana centered in Tibet. Theravadans practice to liberate themselves from suffering, while Mahayanans and Vajrayanans practice to end suffering for all beings. Local Sanghas (group of practioners) manage their own affairs, and are responsible for their own destiny.

MAJOR HOLY DAYS Many holy days are specific to a particular Buddhist tradition or ethnic group. Some of the more universal celebrations are: Theravdians celebrate Versak the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha on the same day, the first full moon day in May. Mahayanans and Vajrayanans celebrate the Buddha's birthday on April 8 in Japan and the 8th day of the fifth lunar month in other countries. The Buddha's

enlightenment is celebrated on December 8th in Japan and the eighth day of the 12th Lunar month elsewhere. The death of the Buddha is observed on February 15th in Japan and the eighth day of the second lunar month elsewhere.

WORSHIP The various Buddhist communities have differing names for their worship centers including temple, church, and zendo. The area set aside for services features an altar with a statue of the Buddha and often the Bodhisattvas of wisdom and compassion. The altar also features representations of the four elements: fire (candle), water (cup of water), air (stick of incense) and earth (flowers). Most services include

seated and walking meditation, chanting, and a Dharma talk about the teachings and their function in the individual's life offered by the Teacher or head monk. Shoes are removed before entering. Visitors are welcome after a brief introduction to protocol.

SAYINGS OF THE FAITH

We are what we think.

All that we are arises with our thoughts.

With our thoughts we make the world.

Speak or act with a pure mind and happiness will follow you as your shadow, unshakable. *The Buddha*