

Buddhism

A Religion Profile from International Students, Inc.

Buddhism: An Overview

Number of Adherents

It is estimated that there are over 360 million Buddhists in the world, accounting for six percent of the world's population (Barrett).

Buddhism Among the Nations

Theravada Buddhism (the distinctions between the major forms of Buddhism will be covered later) exists primarily in Burma, Cambodia, Laos, Sri Lanka, and Thailand.

Mahayana Buddhism exists primarily in mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Vajrayana Buddhism exists primarily in Bhutan, Mongolia, and Tibet.

The Founding of Buddhism

Buddhism was founded by Siddhartha Gautama during the sixth century B.C. His life (563-483 B.C.) coincides with the time when the people of Judah were exiled in Babylon.

Buddha's life can be divided into three periods: enjoyment, enquiry, and enlightenment.

The Period of Enjoyment (563-534 B.C.)

Siddhartha Gautama was born into the warrior caste of the Shakya tribe in the town of Kapilavastu, which was at that time northeastern India but is now part of Nepal.

Tradition says that Siddhartha's father sought to shelter his son from seeing such suffering as old age, sickness, death, and the poverty of an ascetic. One day, however, Siddhartha ventured away from his palace and encountered all four kinds of suffering. This experience profoundly affected him. It caused him to become disillusioned with his wealth, and he became deeply concerned about the issue of suffering.

The Period of Enquiry (534-528 B.C.)

As a result of his encounter with suffering, Siddhartha left his family—including a wife and child—and his life of luxury. He committed himself to discovering the source of suffering and how to eliminate it.

Convicted by the ascetic he had seen, Siddhartha began to practice extreme asceticism. After six years, his body became so weak that he almost drowned while bathing in a river. He realized that extreme asceticism did not produce the enlightenment that he was seeking concerning the source of suffering and how to eliminate it.

The Period of Enlightenment (528-483 B.C.)

Siddhartha then walked to a city named Bodh Gaya where he sat under a fig tree by the edge of a river. He vowed not to rise again until he had attained enlightenment, and thereupon went into a deep state of meditation.

During his meditation, Siddhartha was severely tempted by Mara, the evil one. Siddhartha resisted the temptations, though, and after a period of time (some say one night, others as many as 49 days) he attained enlightenment and became the Buddha, which means "the enlightened one." (From now on this profile will refer to Siddhartha as Buddha.) Bodh Gaya is now the site of the holiest shrine in the Buddhist world, the Mahabodhi Temple.

Buddha called his path to enlightenment the Middle Way, because it avoided the extremes of affluence and asceticism, both of which had caused suffering. Shortly after his enlightenment, Buddha traveled to Benares, and in the Deer Park he preached his first sermon—the contents of which have come to be known as the Four Noble Truths. Eventually, he won thousands of followers, who formed communities called *sanghas*.

After 45 years of spreading his message, Buddha died, probably as a result of food poisoning. His last words were, “Decay is inherent in all component things! Work out your salvation with diligence” (Humphreys, p. 41).

The Spread of and the Splits within Buddhism

For two centuries Buddhism did not spread beyond the borders of India. Then came King Ashoka, who ruled India from 274-232 B.C. Ashoka was a warrior-king who, during one battle, became so revolted by the bloodshed that he resolved to renounce all such fighting. He subsequently converted to Buddhism and devoted himself and his resources to its propagation. Ashoka commissioned Buddhist missionaries to go to the other parts of India as well as to Syria, Egypt, Cyrene, Greece, Sri Lanka, Burma, and Thailand.

Around this same time a major division began to develop within Buddhism. The primary issue was whether enlightenment is accessible to everyone or to only a few. Those Buddhists who said enlightenment is accessible to everyone were called “Mahayana,” or “the greater vehicle”; and those who said it is accessible to only the committed few (for instance, monks) were called “Hinayana,” or “the lesser vehicle.” Being offended by the negative connotation of the term Hinayana, the latter began to refer to themselves a Theravada Buddhists, which means “the teaching of the elders.”

The difference in emphasis between the two branches of Buddhism is illustrated in the difference between whether one strives to become a *bodhisattva* or an *arahat*. The *bodhisattva* (a Mahayana concept) is one who has attained enlightenment but, out of compassion for the unenlightened masses, refuses to enter *nirvana* in order to come back and guide others along the path.

The *arahat* (a Theravada concept), on the other hand, is one who is more concerned with his own enlightenment than with that of others. His primary concern is to attain enlightenment for himself by forsaking all illusion.

There are other differences between the two branches. First, Theravada Buddhists see Buddha as being only a man and not a god. Conversely, Mahayana Buddhists view Buddha as a historical manifestation of a universal Absolute, or Buddha essence. Second, Theravada Buddhists insist there can be only one Buddha. Mahayana Buddhists say there have been many manifestations of the Buddha essence and that there will be at least one more, called the “Maitreya Buddha.” Third, whereas Theravada Buddhists teach that one must attain enlightenment solely through one’s own efforts, Mahayana Buddhists teach that the *bodhisattvas* can help people along the path and can even transfer their own extra karmic merit to such seekers.

From India, Theravada Buddhism spread generally into the southeastern regions of Asia, and Mahayana Buddhism spread toward the northeastern parts of Asia.

In the sixth century, the Indian scholar Bodhidharma introduced Ch’an Buddhism, which is a technique of meditating on the “Vast Emptiness” within oneself, to China (Powell, p. 88). This form of meditation migrated to Japan in the twelfth century and was the predecessor to Zen Buddhism. Japanese scholar D. T. Suzuki was largely responsible for bringing Zen Buddhism to America during the early part of the twentieth century.

Another form of Japanese Buddhism is “Pure Land,” or Jodo Buddhism. The Pure Land is a transitional realm from which it is easier to attain *Nirvana* than from the earth realm. One enters the Pure Land through faith in Amitabha—or Amida—Buddha and by repeating the *nembutsu* (“Namu-Amida-Butsu”).

Besides the two branches of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism, there is a third branch known as Vajrayana. Vajrayana Buddhism is derived from a form of Hinduism called *tantra*, which emphasizes occultic techniques for the development of spiritual power. “Vajrayana” means “the diamond vehicle,” and the metaphor refers to the purity of the spiritual power being tapped into and the ability of the techniques to cut through illusions so as to gain enlightenment quickly (Yamamoto, p. 40).

The people of Tibet, where Vajrayana Buddhism is the predominant religion, have given the world what is probably today’s most recognizable living symbol of Buddhism: the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama is Tibet’s exiled spiritual and political leader. Tibetan Buddhists consider the Dalai Lama to be the fourteenth reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the *bodhisattva* of compassion (Hinnells, p. 336).

Besides the three branches of Buddhism mentioned above, there is also the distinction between the “official” version of Buddhism and the “folk” version. The two versions are very different from one another, and often those involved in the folk version know very little of the official version. Folk Buddhists are spiritistic in that they believe that spirits influence and control people’s lives. They believe that people must appease the spirits in order to have success, and that they should seek the guidance of the spirits through various forms of divination.

Be aware, then, that when someone claims to be Buddhist, he or she could be referring to a folk version of Buddhism, which is spiritistic. For more information in this area, you may wish to consult *Communicating Christ in Animistic Contexts*, by Gailyn Ban Rheenen (Baker Book House, 1991).

The Beliefs of Buddhism

There are obviously extreme variations within the religion known as Buddhism. Nevertheless, there are some beliefs that most Buddhists share. These common beliefs are contained in the most basic of Buddhist teachings: the Four Noble Truths.

The First Noble Truth: Life consists of suffering (*dukkha*). This concept of suffering includes the experiences of pain, misery, sorrow, and unfulfillment.

The Second Noble Truth: Everything is impermanent and everchanging (the doctrine of *anicca*). We suffer because we desire those things that are impermanent.

The Third Noble Truth: The way to liberate oneself from suffering is by eliminating all desire. We must stop craving that which is temporary.

The Fourth Noble Truth: Desire can be eliminated by following the Eightfold Path, which consists of eight points that can be categorized according to three major sections:

Wisdom (*Panna*)

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Thought

Ethical Conduct (*Sila*)

3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood

Mental Discipline (*Smadhi*)

6. Right Effort
7. Right Awareness
8. Right Meditation

These eight points are not steps to be taken in sequential order, but are attitudes and actions to be developed simultaneously (Rahula, p. 46). The first two points, moreover, serve as the foundation from which the other points flow.

With Right Understanding one sees that the universe is impermanent and illusory and that the “I” does not, in reality, exist. This is known as the doctrine of *anatta* (“no self”). Right Thought follows Right Understanding in that it means to renounce all attachment to the desires and thoughts of this illusory self.

As one attains such a literally selfless perspective, he or she finds the power to speak well of others (Right Speech), to obey Buddhism’s moral commands or abstentions (Right Action), and to avoid making one’s living through an occupation that breaks the moral precepts of Buddhism (Right Livelihood).

At the basis of the concept of ethical conduct are the *sila*, or moral precepts. These precepts include the commands to

refrain from (1) the taking of life (all forms, not just human), (2) stealing, (3) immoral sexual behavior (monks must be celibate), (4) lying, and (5) intoxicants.

While the *sila* address one’s actions, the *samadhi* (mental discipline) address one’s attitudes and state of awareness. *Samadhi* is defined as a deep state of consciousness “in which all sense of personal identity ceases” (Rice, p. 310). Through Right Effort one prevents evil thoughts from entering the mind; through Right Awareness one is especially conscious of the events in one’s life; and through Right Meditation one can attain the bliss of enlightenment.

Buddha’s *immediate* goal was to eliminate the cause of suffering. His *ultimate* goal was to become liberated from the cycle of death and rebirth (*samsara*) by teaching how we can cease craving and thus eliminate our attachment to and beliefs in the existence of the illusory self. As we eliminate such attachment, then the effects of karma will have nothing to attach themselves to, which in turn means that they cannot cause the individual to return to the realm of illusion. At that moment of enlightenment, we will have achieved the state of *nirvana*—the ultimate goal for the Buddhist, and Buddhism’s equivalent of salvation.

Buddha described *nirvana* (Pali, *nibbana*) with the following words:

There is a sphere which is neither earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, which is not the sphere of the infinity of space, nor the sphere of the infinity of consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, the sphere of perception, or non-perception, which is neither this world, neither sun nor moon, I deny that it is coming or going, enduring, death, or birth. It is only the end of suffering (Powell, p. 28).

Nirvana does not mean that the person is annihilated when entering such a state, because, as Buddha reasoned, there never existed any person to be annihilated in the first place.

With respect to the *samsara* cycle (reincarnation), while Hinduism would posit an individual essence that is continuous from lifetime to lifetime, Buddhism does not teach that such a continuous essence exists. According to Buddha, no self exists that is continuous throughout the *samsara* cycle. Instead, each individual consists of a combination of five aggregates, called *skandhas*, which include the physical body, emotions, perception, volition, and consciousness (Ch’en, p. 44). Death causes these aggregates, or parts, to be dismantled, and, much like a car, it ceases to be a cohesive unit when it is taken apart piece by piece.

The Buddhist Scriptures

The issue of what was to be considered scripture marked another cause for the split between Theravada and Mahayana

Buddhism. The Theravada Buddhists considered the canon to be closed with the *Pali Tripitaka*. “Pali” refers to the language in which it was written, and “Tripitaka” (also spelled Tipitaka) means the “three baskets” of teachings, which include Buddha’s sermons, rules for monks, and philosophical teachings. The length of the Tripitaka is around 70 times that of the Bible (Rice, p. 388).

The Mahayana Buddhists, on the other hand, saw the canon

as remaining open. Thus, they include in their scriptures writings from Indian, Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan sources. Some of the more popular Mahayana scriptures include the *Lotus Sutra (Saddharama-pundarika)* and the *Perfection of Wisdom (Prajna-paramita)*, which in turn includes the *Diamond Sutra* and the *Heart Sutra*.

The sacred scriptures of Vajrayana Buddhism are the *Kanjur* (108 volumes) and the *Tanjur* (225 volumes; Powell, p. 124).

Buddhism and Christianity Contrasted

Theravada Buddhism	Mahayana Buddhism	Christianity
God		
<i>Nirvana</i> , an abstract Void.	<i>Nirvana</i> , an abstract Void, but also an undifferentiated Buddha essence.	A personal God who is self-existent and changeless.
Humanity		
An impermanent collection of aggregates.	An impermanent collection of aggregates. For some, personal existence continues for awhile in the Pure Land.	Made in God’s image. Personal existence has value. We continue to exist as persons after death.
The Problem		
We suffer because we desire that which is temporary, and we continue in the illusion of the existence of the self.	Same as Theravada.	We suffer because of the consequences of our sin. But we also suffer because, being made in God’s image, we are fulfilled only when we are in a relationship with our Creator God. But we have rebelled against God, and are thus alienated from Him.
The Solution		
To cease all desire and to realize the nonexistence of the self, thus finding permanence.	To become aware of the Buddha-nature within.	To be forgiven by and reconciled with God. We find permanence in the immutability of God.
The Means		
Self-reliance. We must follow the Middle Path, and accrue karmic merit.	Self-reliance. The means vary from following the Eightfold Path, to emptying the mind, to accruing merit by performing rituals, to realizing the Buddha-nature within, to depending on the merits of a <i>bodhisattva</i> .	Reliance on God. We must repent of our sins and trust in the saving work of Jesus Christ.
The Outcome		
To enter <i>nirvana</i> where the ego is extinguished.	The outcome varies from that of returning as a <i>bodhisattva</i> in order to guide others, to living in a Pure Land from which one can enter <i>nirvana</i> , to entering <i>nirvana</i> .	Our existence as individuals survives death, and we are fulfilled as we are in eternal fellowship with a loving and personal God.

Approaching Buddhists

Hindrances to Evangelism and Common Objections

1. Different Perspectives

The person influenced by Buddhism might have difficulties understanding some of the concepts of Christianity. Christians, for example, speak of a God who has emotions such as anger and love, but Buddhists see such emotions as indicating too much attachment to the ego (Tsering, P. 157). The Christian speaks of eternal life, but the Buddhist interprets the hope of life after death as having its source in the ego's continual thirst after personal existence.

If the person who comes from a Buddhist background rejects your message, ask why. It might be more an issue of misunderstanding than of a conscious rejection. As one author wrote, "Most Buddhists have never heard the Gospel because they have misheard it" (Weerasingha, p. 62). It often takes several attempts to learn how to communicate the Gospel clearly to a Buddhist.

2. "Many Paths to God"

Most Buddhists believe that there are many paths to God. How should one address such a belief?

First, point out where the emphasis is placed in the statement, "Just as there are many paths to the top of the mountain, so there are many paths to God." The emphasis is placed on *the path* that *we* must walk. In other words, salvation is based on human effort in that *we* are the ones who must *strive* to make it up the mountain. That's not good news.

Second, explain the biblical reasoning behind the exclusivity of the biblical way of salvation through the concept of reconciliation. Reconciliation refers to the restoring of a relationship that has been broken. You might pose the following

question to your friend: "Assume that you are responsible for having broken a relationship with a friend because of something you did. How many ways are there to restore that relationship?" There is really only one way for such a relationship to be restored: through confessing our guilt and requesting forgiveness.

In the same way, we have rebelled against the moral authority of God, and have thus broken our relationship with Him. Salvation, then, is a matter of being reconciled to God (see Col. 1:21-23). God has provided the means for reconciliation through Jesus Christ, as we confess our sins and trust in Him.

3. "Jesus Is Not Unique"

Your Buddhist friend may see Jesus as being a spiritual Master on a par with Buddha (Theravada Buddhism) or as a *bodhisattva* (Mahayana Buddhism). Consider the differences, though, as outlined in the charts on this page and page 6.

There are also several other approaches to use when addressing the issue of the uniqueness of Jesus. First, encourage your Buddhist friend to read the Gospel of John in order to learn for himself or herself who Jesus claimed to be. Second, Campus Crusade for Christ publishes a Bible study about Jesus' uniqueness: *The Uniqueness of Jesus* (part of the *Ten Basic Steps* Bible study series, www.campuscrusade.com). Consider going through this study with your friend.

Third, you could also encourage your friend to read *More Than a Carpenter*, by Josh McDowell.

Suggestions for Evangelism

1. Recognize Your Common Ground

It is best to start with the common ground that you and your Buddhist friend have. Even though Christianity and Bud-

Buddha and Jesus

Theravada Buddhism	Christianity
1. Buddha did not claim to have a special relationship with God. In fact, Buddha did not consider the issue of God's existence to be important, because it did not pertain to the way to escape suffering.	1. Jesus did claim to have a special relationship with God (John 3:16; 6:44; 10:30; 14:6,9).
2. Buddha claimed to <i>point to the way</i> by which we could escape suffering and <i>attain</i> enlightenment.	2. Jesus claimed to <i>be the way</i> by which we could <i>receive</i> salvation and eternal life (John 14:6; 5:35).
3. Buddha taught that the way to eliminate suffering was by eliminating desire.	3. Jesus taught that the solution to suffering is found not in eliminating desire but in having right desire (Matt. 5:6).

The Bodhisattvas and Jesus

Mahayana Buddhism	Christianity
1. There are many <i>bodhisattvas</i> .	1. There has been only one incarnation of the Son of God.
2. The <i>bodhisattvas</i> were motivated out of a sense of <i>their own compassion</i> for the world. Their compassion is not a reflection of the Void's feelings toward the world.	2. Jesus is the unique demonstration of <i>God's love</i> for the world (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:10).
3. The <i>bodhisattvas</i> view the physical world as an illusion to be escaped.	3. The Bible says that Jesus created the universe (John 1:3).
4. The <i>bodhisattvas</i> had to overcome their sin (i.e., attachment, ignorance) over a process of numerous lifetimes.	4. Jesus was sinless from the very beginning (Matt. 27:4; Luke 23:41; 2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15).

dhism are irreconcilable in their fundamental beliefs, there are some significant similarities on which you can build. Those similarities are the beliefs that:

- Desire can cause suffering.
- Personal peace will be found when we abide in that which is permanent.
- It is best to live a moral life.
- Self-discipline has spiritual value.
- Meditation and prayer are important.
- Compassion is a virtue that should be nurtured.

2. Pick up on the Issue of Desire

Buddha taught that desire is the source of suffering. Therefore, in order to eliminate suffering we must eliminate desire. Such a goal is obviously difficult to attain, since it requires desiring to eliminate desire. Gently point out that Jesus said, "Blessed are those who *hunger and thirst* for righteousness, for they will be filled" (Matt. 5:6; emphasis added). According to Jesus, then, the issue is having right desire, not eliminating desire.

3. Be Open about Your Faith in a Personal God

One of the fundamental tenets that sets Christianity apart from Buddhism is that God is personal. Buddhists believe that ultimate reality is an impersonal Void or Emptiness (*sunyata*).

What are the implications or benefits of God being personal? He is able to love us. He can also hear and answer our prayers. And He can empathize with our suffering (Exod. 3:7; Heb. 4:15). A Void would not be able to do such things. Share how you have found peace and joy in knowing that God loves you and in taking your cares and concerns to Him.

4. Point to God's Permanence

Another benefit of God being personal has to do with the issue of permanence. Buddha taught that permanence can be found only in the Void.

As Christians, we can agree that we need a sense of permanence, or stability, in our lives. The problem with the Buddhist concept of permanence, though, is that, when we find permanence in the Void, we as individuals cease to exist. If God is personal, though, then we can find permanence in Him without denying our value as persons. The God of the Bible is permanent in two ways. First, He is permanent in that He is *changeless* in His character (Mal. 3:6; James 1:17). Second, He is permanent in that He is *faithful* in all that He promises (Lam. 3:23; Heb. 13:5).

How can we make God's permanence a part of our lives? The answer is found in John 6:27-29. In these verses, Jesus talks about working either "for food that spoils" (impermanence) or "for food that endures to eternal life" (permanence). We receive the "food that endures" through faith in Jesus Christ.

5. Be Clear about the Matter of Sin and the Opportunity for Forgiveness

One thing that both Buddhism and Christianity have in common are moral precepts. The moral precepts of Buddhism, called *sila*, are similar to parts of the Ten Commandments. The minimum number of *sila* is five, and they include abstaining from killing any form of life, stealing, sexually immoral behavior, lying, and intoxicants.

The difference, though, between Buddhism and Christianity is that, in Buddhism, when one sins—or breaks those moral precepts—the consequences have no vertical dimension. In Buddhism, sin is a matter both of *ignorance* (a mental issue) and of *karma* (an issue of an impersonal moral principle, similar to a natural law). As such, sin carries no consequences with respect to breaking our unconditional connection to the Void.

What are the implications of these two approaches to sin? First, because sin is a matter of ignorance, then sin is some-

thing that we alone must deal with. It's our problem, not God's. The Void is unable to be concerned about whether or not we suffer. Moreover, the journey toward overcoming such ignorance takes innumerable lifetimes.

Second, because the law of karma is an impersonal principle similar to a law of nature, then the consequences of our moral actions are inevitable. Sin, in other words, cannot be forgiven, because there is no Forgiver. Just as you don't ask forgiveness of the law of gravity—a natural law—neither is it possible for the law of karma to forgive.

According to Christianity, though, there is a vertical dimension to sin, because God is transcendent, personal, and holy. Every relationship is governed by moral laws such as honesty, respect, and, often, fidelity. When those moral laws are broken, the relationship suffers. The same is true of our relationship with God. Our sin is a reflection of our attitude of moral rebellion against the authority of a holy God (Isa. 53:6). As such, the consequence of our sin is to cause our relationship with God to be broken.

What are the implications concerning this approach to sin? First, because God is personal, He can be—and is—concerned about our suffering, and He longs for us to be in fellowship with Him. Second, because God is personal, He is able to forgive us of our sins, which He has done through the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. Moreover, because the Bible says that “God is faithful [a form of permanence] and just and will forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9), we can depend on His forgiveness.

6. Use Bridges to the Good News

There are concepts within Buddhism that can be used as bridges to help Buddhists understand the gospel.

One bridge has to do with the doctrine of the *bodhisattva*. A *bodhisattva* is one who, out of compassion, has refused to enter *nirvana* in order to assist others along the way to enlightenment. The part that is significant as a bridge to the gospel is that the *bodhisattva* is able to transfer his extra karmic merit to the one who believes in him (Weerasingha, p. 75).

Another bridge is a story that comes from Buddhist literature that could also be used to illustrate the meaning of Christ's crucifixion:

“Prince Mahanama, of the Shakya clan and a cousin of Buddha, had great faith in the teachings of Buddha and was one of the most faithful followers.

“At the time a violent king named Virudaka of Kosala conquered the Shakya clan. Prince Mahanama went to the King and sought the lives of his people, but the King would not listen to him. He then proposed that the King would let as

many prisoners escape as could run away while he himself remained underwater in a nearby pond.

“To this the King assented, thinking that the time would be very short for him to be able to stay underwater.

“The gate of the castle was opened as Mahanama dove into the water and the people rushed for safety. But Mahanama did not come up, sacrificing his life for the lives of his people by tying his hair to the underwater root of a willow tree” (*The Teaching of Buddha*, pp. 254-255).

Note the images in the above story that illustrate the significance of Christ's sacrificial death:

- **Enslavement**
The issue is that of enslavement: The Shakya clan was enslaved to a wicked king; humanity is enslaved to sin (John 8:34; Rom. 6:6,16).
- **One Died for All**
The death of one resulted in freedom for all: Mahanama's death resulted in the freedom of the Shakya clan from bondage to the king; Christ's death resulted in our freedom from bondage to sin (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 5:18-19).
- **Motivated by Love**
The act was freely chosen, and the motivation was that of love: As Mahanama voluntarily chose to die out of love for his people, so Christ also freely gave up His life out of love for all humanity (John 10:11-18; 13:1,34).
- **Salvation Is Free**
The salvation offered is free for the taking: Those in the Shakya clan could receive their freedom from bondage simply by running from the kingdom; people can receive the gift of salvation simply by placing their faith in the atoning work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:20-24; Eph. 2:8-9).

7. Study the Basics from the Bible

An excellent Bible study series that introduces the basic beliefs of Christianity, such as what God is like, what sin is, and who Jesus is, may be found in *How Will They Hear?*, by Dick Daeschner. Some have found this series to be very effective.

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Glossary of Common Buddhist Terms

Anatta: "No self." The doctrine that no continuous self exists.

Anicca: The doctrine that says everything is impermanent, changing, and in a constant state of flux.

Lama (Tibetan): Teacher.

Mantra: "Thought form" (Rice, p. 247). A mental aid for meditation.

Nirvana (Pali, *nibbana*): Literally, "to extinguish," as in blowing out a flame; the goal of enlightenment.

Rinpoche (Tibetan): "Precious one." A word of honor that is often found at the end of the name of a Tibetan *lama*.

Samadhi: A state of concentration in which one loses the sense of the individual self.

Samsara: The cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

Satori: The state where, through Zen meditation, all thought ceases.

Skandhas: The combination of five elements, or aggregates, that come together to form a person.

Sunyata: The Buddhist concept of Void, or Emptiness, in which there is no substance, no concept of the self, and no duality (Teaching, p. 118).

Tanha: The desire and craving that causes rebirth.

Tulku (Tibetan): Literally, "incarnation." A *tulku* "is a person who is a mystical emanation from a famous teacher or deity" (Tsering, p. 153).

Yana: A "vehicle" or a "way" of spiritual progress (as in *Mahayana*).



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