



"Words of guidance leading to direct experience of the reality beyond them."
"Ways to see the world, and not to conceive the world."
"To be everything and to be nothing."

Buddhism in a Nutshell

The Buddha

The Buddha (also known as Shakyamuni Buddha or Gautama Buddha), born as Siddhartha Gautama, lived more than 2500 years ago in an area between Nepal and India. Legend says he was a prince who gave up his extravagant life of leisure to pursue life as a holy man, or monk. Siddhartha was plagued by the question on why beings suffer and how he could stop suffering. After torturous trial and error, the Buddha, became enlightened to the idea of what is now known as Buddhism.

Core Concepts

The only thing that exists is this very moment. Yesterday or tomorrow, the past or future: these things do not exist. In this very moment, your future, your past, does not exist; it is but a mental formation. This is rationality. The reality of everything, the universe, is that all things only exist in this very moment. Though, the entire universe - whether it be eternal, finite, infinite, potentially infinite, or whatever - is conditioned.

Every single thing is dependent upon something else and its previous conditions. This paper you are reading (if this is paper), for instance, came from a tree (along with other ingredients) that came from a seed, which came from another tree, and so forth all the way back. And those trees were made of material that has been changing constantly due to previous conditions – and not even to mention the ink.

Due to the nature of the universe being conditioned, it is always constantly changing and in flux. The reason this occurs is because of the very nature of things: being conditioned. Since nothing is truly independent from something else, everything is always in a chain reaction. Every little thing that occurs affects the future because of the interconnectedness of everything. Everything constantly changes because everything is in a chain reaction.

Since everything is changing constantly due to its dependent, conditioned nature, everything is 'empty.' Due to this empty nature, nothing is ultimately good or bad, positive or negative. These ideas are just mental formations created by our false view of reality (thinking things exist independently, thus creating duality). For example, you think something tastes bad because that's what you were raised to believe, yet other people find the very same food as delicious. This food is not good or bad ultimately, it's just our personal opinion of the food. All suffering that occurs in life is neither good nor bad either. We just perceive it as bad, or negative, and this saddens us; but suffering is not good or bad ultimately, it is what you make it.

Also, we came from our parents, who came from theirs, and so forth. We are made of recycled material which is always changing. Because everything is dependent upon everything else, there is no personal, unchanging self. We are just merely a flame or a fire, created by another flame that will create yet another flame and continue the chain reaction. We are not separate from everything else, but rather just part of the same "fire." There was never anyone born to die. This is what we fail to see. There was never a permanent, unchanging self to begin with.

This is our Buddha-nature. This is Buddhism.

The Four Noble Truths

So called, because as of yet, there has been nothing said or written since that can undermine or contradict them with any definitive counter-discussion:

1st Noble Truth: Life involves suffering (also known as dukkha, meaning: suffering, unsatisfactory, unpredictable, irritating or painful.) This is something all creatures have in common: the ability to suffer and feel pain.

2nd Noble Truth: Life involves suffering because of our attachment to ideas (good or bad, etc) and things. We suffer from pain because we attached to the idea of pain being bad and being attached to not feeling pain. We suffer from a possession being broken because we were attached to this item. This attachment to good/bad, happy/sad, up/down, yes/no, satisfactory/unsatisfactory, etc, is known as Samsara the vicious cycle.

In other words, not getting what you want guarantees unhappiness, but getting what you want does not, in turn, guarantee happiness. Because whatever we want - and get - is by very nature of its existence, temporary and transitory... so we know, even when we have it, that this too, shall pass. Craving, grasping and aversion (to the temporary transitory nature of everything) leads to suffering, because being unable to shed ourselves of this vicious cycle, we are reborn into Samsara every moment, of every day.

3rd Noble Truth: There is a simple and effective means of escaping this vicious circle of Samsara and relieving suffering. True happiness and contentment are possible.

4th Noble Truth: That means of escape is the Eightfold Path.

The Eightfold Path

Unlike the Ten Commandments, it is not a list of rules. They are more of a guideline on how to live your life "skillfully," so you won't bring negative suffering into your life. They are open to every situation imaginable and don't confine anybody to one action. When one uses the word 'right' in this context, it does not imply the opposite of 'wrong', precisely. Rather, it indicates that the factor in question should be engaged in skilfully, in a considered and appropriate manner, with wisdom and discernment.



Each spoke of the wheel stands for each part of the path.

The Eightfold Path consists of:

Right view: With a correct outlook on reality, thus understanding emptiness and so forth.

Right intention: With a neutral mentality and to abandon all fears, expectations, and hopes.

Right speech: Without words that cause suffering.

Right action: Without actions that cause suffering.

Right livelihood: With a job that doesn't cause suffering or pain to yourself or others.

Right effort: To just "be" without struggle.

Right awareness: With mindfulness, or being aware of everything. And...

Right meditation: With concentration, awareness, and a calm mind.

The purpose of the path is to create happiness for yourself and others. It's to "avoid harm, cultivate goodness, and purify the mind."

Meditation in Buddhism

It is well known that Buddhists typically meditate regularly. The reason they Buddhists do this is so they can become mindful, aware of everything that's going on, being aware of the true nature of reality: emptiness. This mindfulness experienced in meditation is then carried over to day-to-day life. It also calms one mind and clears it of negativity. It points to one's true nature.

Meditation is not just sitting cross legged and counting your breaths, though. Meditation is just simply being completely mindful. This can be done many ways, whether it be chanting, humming, or focusing on your breathing. It can be standing up or sitting down, laying or walking. Life is meditation if one is always mindful.



"No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path. Peace comes from within. Do not seek it without."

- The Buddha