



Book of Buddha's Names. Or.8210/S.253
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As a religion Buddhism addresses the true nature of our existence and offers a means by which human suffering may be transcended. A number of basic tenets, or principles, offer guidance to help Buddhists make the right choices in their religious lives.

The reduction of Buddhist morals into a series of numbered lessons makes them easier both to remember and recite. This was a device which proved vital to the spread of Buddhism as a religion throughout ancient India and China during a time when an oral culture existed. The basic tenets of Buddhism are summarised below:

The Four Noble Truths

Buddha's teachings are summarised in The Four Noble Truths which were taught in his first sermon. Their origins lie in inherited Indian religious beliefs in rebirth, karma and liberation.

1. All life is suffering — pleasure is impermanent.
2. The origin of suffering is desire — we should not attach ourselves to impermanent things.
3. There exists Nirvana, an end to suffering — to achieve this we must end desire.
4. An 'eightfold' path, defined by the Buddha, leads to Nirvana — this is a middle path, avoiding extremes.

The Eightfold Path

The Eightfold Path describes choices for living a religious life:

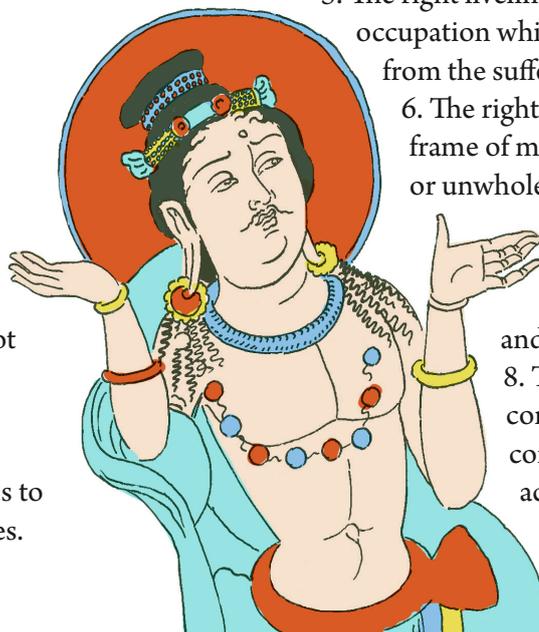
1. The right knowledge — this relates to the right way of viewing the world, as outlined in the Four Noble Truths.
2. The right thought — or the right intention; to lead a good life.
3. The right speech — to be truthful, avoid harsh language, gossip or boasting.
4. The right action or conduct — to avoid unethical behaviour and to encourage wholesome conduct by following the five precepts.

5. The right livelihood — choosing an occupation which does not profit from the suffering of others.

6. The right effort — or the right frame of mind to overcome evil or unwholesome things.

7. The right mindfulness — being aware of oneself and one's emotions.

8. The right concentration — concentration of mind achieved through meditation.



The Three Treasures or Jewels

The Three Treasures or highest entities in Buddhism took root throughout Asia as Buddhism spread across the continent. Salutation to these three entities forms a basis of meditation for many Buddhists.

- The Buddha
- The Dharma (Buddhism Path)
- The Sangha (the community of Monks)

The Five Precepts

The Five Precepts outline a code of moral conduct for laypersons for everyday life. They focus on the most important moral issues and must be observed. There are also a number of higher precepts, not listed here, which may be observed once a month by those who wish to withdraw from normal life without making the full-time commitments of a monk. These include abstinence from more frivolous or luxurious activities. The five basic precepts however are:

1. Do not kill any living thing.
2. Do not steal or defraud.
3. Do not engage in sexual misconduct.
4. Avoid wrong speech. Do not lie, gossip or speak poorly of others.
5. Do not use intoxicating substances, alcohol or recreational drugs.



Discussion:

Think about some of the choices you make in your everyday life.

Do you follow similar values to those outlined above?

What actions or decisions in your own life would you have to change in order to follow the Eightfold Path or the Five Precepts?

Do you disagree with any of these principles? If so, why?



Buddha preaching the Dharma. Detail from the *Paradise of Śākyamuni*. 1919,0101,0.6
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