

HANDOUT: BUDDHISM FACT SHEET

Founded/Created: 531 BCE (more than 2,500 years ago).

Adherents: 360 million, primarily in the East but growing worldwide.

Ranking: Sixth.

Prophets: Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha ("the Awakened One"), for whom the faith is named. The Buddha, while revered, is not considered divine.

Texts:

- [The Dhammapada](http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/), (at www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/kn/dhp/) direct teachings of the Buddha.
- Tripitaka, or Pali Canon, teachings of the Buddha that were handed down orally and not recorded until 1st century BCE.
- [The Sutras](http://online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/sutras.html) (at online.sfsu.edu/~rone/Buddhism/sutras.html), collections of brief explanatory scriptures intended to be used for teaching or for committing to memory. There are dozens of sutras.
- Tibetan Book of the Dead, an ancient text with instructions for the dying and their caretakers.

Holidays: Many local celebrations exist in different countries. Some of the more common are:

- Buddha Day, the celebration of Buddha's birthday, commonly celebrated during the first full moon in May
- Bodhi Day, an acknowledgement of the day the Buddha sat down under the bodhi tree to achieve enlightenment, celebrated on December 8
- Nirvana Day, celebrating the day the Buddha reached nirvana, usually celebrated on February 15

Many Buddhists celebrate all three holidays together as Wesak, in May.

Symbols:

- Wheel of Dharma – eight-spoked for the Eightfold Path. Also called the Wheel of Enlightenment, the Wheel of Truth, and the Wheel of Law.
- Bodhi Tree (also called Bo Tree) – the tree under which the Buddha achieved enlightenment. "Bodhi" translates as "enlightenment."
- Lion – the symbol for the Buddha, associated with royalty, strength, and power. Sometimes the Buddha's teachings are called the "Lion's Roar."
- Stupa – an architectural form representing all the elements and often used to store important relics or documents.
- Lotus – the open flower represents enlightenment or fulfillment, and the bud or partially open flower represents the Dharma, being on the path to enlightenment. The fact that the lotus grows out of mud symbolizes the possibility of purity, beauty, and clearness of purpose arising from the most humble of origins.

Terms and Fundamental Precepts:

- The Three Jewels – refers to the Buddha, the Dharma (the teachings), and the Sangha (the community)
- The Buddha – the "Awakened One" or "Enlightened One"
- Delusion – the state of not seeing things with utter clarity, as they are, and of being confused or driven by desires, aversions, or responses to the senses
- Dharma – literally "truth" or "law," the path to enlightenment
- Impermanence – that everything in the universe is in a constant state of change; the only constant is change itself; "This too shall pass"
- Mahayan – one of the two most popular schools of Buddhist thought; it focuses on compassion and giving service to others
- Nirvana – the state of freedom from limitations of the physical body and sense desire
- Sangha – the community of nuns and monks who are transmitters of the Dharma to lay Buddhists, in the tradition of the Buddha
- Theravada – one of the two most popular schools of Buddhist thought; it focuses on solitary reflection for spiritual enlightenment

Shared with Unitarian Universalism:

- No requirement for belief in God or a divine being
- The idea that personal effort is necessary for spiritual advancement
- A belief in personal responsibility for spiritual journey
- (With many UUs) Valuing empirical evidence over intuitive understanding
- Many songs and readings—for example, in *Singing the Living Tradition* (Boston: UUA Publications, 1993), Readings 505, 596–598, and 679, and Hymns 181, 183, and 184, are from Buddhist sources

Other connections between Unitarian Universalism and Buddhism:

- Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, a UU activist for abolition, suffrage, education, Native American rights, and world peace, and founder of the kindergarten movement in America, published the first English translation of a Buddhist text in the transcendental journal *The Dial*.
- Many Buddhists are also UUs, and vice versa. The [Unitarian Universalist Buddhist Fellowship](http://www25.uua.org/uubf/) (at www25.uua.org/uubf/) is an organization of Buddhist UUs.

HANDOUT: THE EIGHTFOLD PATH

Before Beginning the Eightfold Path: Right Association

Since we are influenced by our companions, it is very important to have people around us who are supportive of our spiritual goals and on spiritual paths themselves. They do not need to be doing exactly what we are doing, but they have to support our spiritual work, and not deflect us by encouraging us to do things against our conscience. They should also be trying to live with some degree of awareness themselves.

1. Right Knowledge

The first step is to become aware of the path. In Buddhist terms, this means recognizing the Four Noble Truths:

- Life is suffering.
- The cause of suffering is selfish desire.
- Selfish desire can be overcome.
- Selfish desire can be overcome, and suffering eased, by following the Eightfold Path.

2. Right Aspiration

This consists of wanting things that will help us be healthy and strong and achieve mental and spiritual growth. First, we recognize what we need to do, then we decide that is what we want.

3. Right Speech

This element and the next two are about learning new habits. Right Speech begins with noticing our speech: how honest we are, the tone of our communications, and our intent. Once we are aware, the next step is to make positive changes: to speak more truthfully, more gently, and more generously.

4. Right Behavior

The details that the Buddha provided about Right Behavior almost exactly reproduce the last five dictates of the Ten Commandments. The Five Precepts, as they are called, are:

- Do not kill.
- Do not steal.
- Do not lie.
- Do not engage in sexual misconduct.
- Do not take drugs or drink alcohol.

(Note: In Judaism and Christianity, Commandments six through ten are:

- Thou shalt not kill.
- Thou shalt not commit adultery.
- Thou shalt not steal.
- Thou shalt not bear false witness [lie].
- Thou shalt not covet [want] . . . anything that is thy neighbor's.

5. Right Livelihood

This element pertains to how a person makes their living. The Buddha believed that what a person did to support themselves had echoes throughout their lives, and that personal growth could be supported by some occupations but rendered impossible by others. For example, some livelihoods regarded by the Buddha as very harmful were butcher, prostitute, and weapons vendor.

6. Right Effort

Sustained effort is seen as exceedingly important in Buddhism. The Buddha likened the work it takes to make spiritual progress to an ox straining to pull a cart through the mud. Although weary, the ox never looks aside or stops trudging until it is past the muddy section of the road. This steady exertion demonstrates the consistent effort required to tame the mind and attain enlightenment.

7. Right Mindfulness

The Dhammapada, a collection of the Buddha's teachings, begins with the words, "All we are is the result of what we have thought" (as translated by Viggo Fausboll). Because of this, Buddhism urges constant examination of our own thoughts. We must have perfect awareness of our own thoughts to see all things as they really are. Urges

or aversions must also be examined until they no longer control us and what remains is loving kindness toward all things.

In one ancient story, a Buddhist student reports to his teacher that his studies are done: He has attained enlightenment. His teacher asks, "What foot did you use to step over the threshold?" The student thinks for a moment, then turns and leaves without a word, aware that since he does not know which foot stepped over the threshold, his awareness is not yet complete.

Thich Nhat Hanh, a renowned Zen Buddhist master, considers mindfulness the single most important element of greater peace and understanding. He has written many books on the subject of mindfulness, including *Peace Is Every Step: The Path of Mindfulness in Everyday Life* (New York: Random House, 1995). Henry David Thoreau, of our own faith lineage, placed a high value on mindfulness as well.

8. Right Absorption

Ralph Waldo Emerson, a giant of 19th-century Unitarianism, wrote:

A person will worship something, have no doubt about that. We may think our tribute is paid in secret in the dark recesses of our hearts, but it will out. That which dominates our imaginations and our thoughts will determine our lives, and our character. Therefore, it behooves us to be careful what we worship, for what we are worshipping, we are becoming.

The Buddha shared this conviction with Emerson: that the things we fill our thoughts with determine who we become. The Buddha also believed in self-determination: With proper preparation and perseverance, immersing our thoughts in what will further our spiritual journey, we can all move toward enlightenment, lessen the bonds of selfish yearnings, and become happier and more fulfilled as the Wheel of Dharma turns.

"What of the other four-footed animals, our friends?"

"I will not hunt them."

"What about the birds in the sky?"

"I will not hunt them."

"What of the fish in the sea?"

"I will not hunt them."

All of the people in the kingdom followed suit. The animals were happy to be hunted no more. Now that the kingdom depended on the harvest from the fields, the farmers' land was respected. The park was now a special place where the king could stroll and seek guidance from Banyan, which he did for many years to come.

HANDOUT: EIGHT VERSES FOR TRAINING THE MIND

A highly revered text from the Mahayana Lojong (mind training) tradition, composed by the Buddhist Master Langri Tangpa (1054–1123).

(1)

With the determination to accomplish
The highest welfare of all sentient* beings,
Who excel even a wish-granting jewel,
May I at all times hold them dear.

(2)

Whenever I am with others,
May I think of myself as lowest of all,
And from the depth of my heart
Hold the others supreme.

(3)

In all actions, may I search into my mind,
And as soon as delusions arise
That endanger myself or others,
May I confront them and avert them without delay.

(4)

When I see beings of wicked natures,
Oppressed by violent misdeeds and afflictions,
May I hold them dear
As if I had found a rare and precious treasure.

(5)

When others out of envy treat me badly
With slander, abuse, and the like,

May I suffer the loss and
Offer the victory to them.

(6)

When one whom I have helped
And benefited with great hope
Hurts me badly, may I consider him
With gratitude, my supreme guru.

(7)

In short, may I directly and indirectly offer
Benefit and happiness to all creatures, my mothers.
May I secretly take upon myself the harmful actions
And suffering of my mothers.

(8)

May all this remain undefiled by the stains of
Keeping in view the eight worldly principles.**
May I, by perceiving all as illusory,
Unattached, be delivered from the bondage of samsara.***

Notes:

**Sentient* means having the power of perception by the senses or consciousness.

**The eight worldly principles, or Eight Worldly Winds, are these four pairs: pleasure and pain, loss and gain, obscurity and fame, praise and blame. They are called "winds" because they move us about and can determine our actions if we do not cultivate consciousness and control of them.

****Samsara* is the Buddhist concept of the process by which we continually build our world of suffering. When we learn to stop this process, we reach enlightenment.

HANDOUT: UPCOMING VISIT

Place: Dharmapala Kadampa Buddhist Center

Date: November 15, 2015

Time: 11:00

Address: 315 Albemarle Avenue SE, Roanoke

Website: www.meditationinvirginia.org/

Meet at:

What to know before we visit:

- No special instructions. The Sunday General Program Class is from 11 am to 12:30 pm. It begins with a guided meditation that is about 15 minutes long, followed by a teaching on dharma that is practical for us to take away and use in our daily life right away. Class concludes with another guided meditation to close.
- We will be engaging in a spiritual practice and should treat it with the same respect we would accord any other spiritual practice.
- Depending on which form of meditation your practitioner leads you in, there may be talking, intoning, or walking throughout the mediation. Participate or actively observe, and take note of your own experiences to guide the post-engagement discussion.