

Buddhism

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Introduction:

The Lord Buddha, when he became enlightened, encapsulated what he had realized in his four noble truths. These are the truth of sufferings the truth of the cause of sufferings, the truth and cessation of sufferings and the truth of the way leading to the cessation of suffering which he set down in his eight fold noble path.

The right –fold noble path is the path to enlightenment, and prescribes certain measures that lead to liberation from samsara based on the cultivation of wisdom, ethical conduct and a still mind. Right view, Right intention, Right speech, Right Action, Right livelihood, Right Effort, Right mindfulness and Right meditation there are different schools of Buddhism but they all share the eight fold noble path as their foundation.

There are two main branches: Hinayana and Mahayana.

The present Buddhism is a very important event, in that it allowed all of us to come closer together and build on what we have in common. Particularly in India, where there are all the community reside may the merits gained by these words spread among all beings and bring them peace and happiness and may the great blessings of Lord Buddha and Sangha be with whoever reads these lines now and always. Buddhism, as one of the four major religions in the world today, is an empiricistic and antimetaphysical religion. What the Buddha taught is not only for the 6th century B.C., but it is a timeless (akalika) teaching, surely it can be practised by the wise during 21st century as well and in many more centuries or millennia to come.

In the 21st century CE, it is estimated that 488 million (9-10% of the world population) people practice Buddhism. Approximately half are practitioners of Mahayana schools in China and it continues to flourish. The main countries that practice Buddhism currently are China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. Due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism has been adopted by international practitioners, notably westerners, in a variety of different countries.

Buddhism has a special role to play in the modern world because unlike many other religious traditions, Buddhism uniquely propounds the concept of independence which accords closely with the fundamental notions of modern science. Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama said, “The 20th century was a century of war and violence, now we all need to work to see that the 21st century is of peace and dialogue. We can think of Buddhism in terms of three main categories - philosophy, science and religion. The religious part involves principles and practices that are of concern to Buddhism alone, but the Buddhist philosophy of interdependence as well as the Buddha science of mind and human emotions are of great benefit to everyone,”. The spiritual leader said while “modern science has developed a highly sophisticated understanding of the physical world, including the subtle workings of the body and the brain, Buddhist science on the other hand has devoted itself to first-person understanding of many aspects of emotions - areas that are still new to modern science”.

Analogy of Understanding the Four Noble Truths:

The Four Truths are often best understood using a medical framework:

- Truth 1 is the diagnosis of an illness or condition
- Truth 2 is identifying the underlying causes of it
- Truth 3 is its prognosis or outcome
- Truth 4 is its treatment

Truth 1: The Truth of Suffering

All humans experience surprises, frustrations, betrayals, etc., which lead to unhappiness and suffering. Acknowledging or accepting that we will encounter difficulties in daily life as an inevitable and universal part of life as a human being is the first truth. Within this, there are **two types of suffering** :

- Natural suffering: Disasters, wars, infections, etc.
- Self-inflicted suffering: Habitual reacting and unnecessary anxiety and regret

Truth 2: The Causes of Suffering

All suffering lies not in external events or circumstances but in the way we react to and deal with them, our perceptions and interpretations. Suffering emerges from craving for life to be other than it is, which derives from the **3 poisons** :

- Ignorance (Delusion) of the fact that everything, including the self, is impermanent and interdependent.
- Desire (Greed) of objects and people who will help us to avoid suffering.
- Aversion (Anger) to the things we do not want, thinking we can avoid suffering. We can learn to look at each experience as it happens and be prepared for the next.

Truth 3: The End of Suffering

We hold limiting ideas about ourselves, others, and the world, of which we need to let go. We can unlearn everything from our social conditioning and so bring down all barriers or separations.

Truth 4: The Path that Frees us from Suffering

The mind leads us to live in a dualistic way, but if we are aware of and embrace our habits and illusions, we can abandon our expectations about the ways things should be and instead accept the way they are. We can use mindfulness and meditation to examine our views and gain an accurate perspective.

This Truth contains the **Eightfold Path** leading out of samsara to nirvana. It consists of:

1. Right View: Accepting the fundamental Buddhist teachings
2. Right Resolve: Adopting a positive outlook and a mind free from lust, ill-will, and cruelty
3. Right Speech: Using positive and productive speech as opposed to lying, frivolous or harsh speech
4. Right Action: Keeping the five precepts — refraining from killing, stealing, misconduct, false speech, and taking intoxicants
5. Right Livelihood: Avoiding professions which harm others such as slavery or prostitution
6. Right Effort: Directing the mind towards wholesome goals
7. Right Mindfulness: Being aware of what one is thinking, doing, and feeling at all times
8. Right Meditation: Focusing attention in order to enter meditational states

These eight aspects of the path are often divided into 3 groups: **Insight** (Right View, Right Resolve), **morality** (Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood), and **meditation** (Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, Right Meditation).

This eightfold path is not linear, passing from one stage to the next, but cumulative so that ideally all eight factors are practiced simultaneously. The Dharmachakra (Wheel of the law with eight spokes) represents the Eightfold Path.

Buddhist Science, Buddhist Philosophy and Buddhist Religion

His Holiness the Dalai Lama makes a distinction between Buddhist science, Buddhist philosophy, and Buddhist religion. He says that Buddhist science and Buddhist philosophy have a great deal to offer to everyone. We do not need to look at, or be interested in, Buddhist religion in order to benefit from the teachings and insights that are available in Buddhist science and philosophy.

Buddhist science deals with psychology; it is a very deep analysis of how the mind works, how the emotions work, and how perception works. It also has a great deal to offer in the area of logic, and insights into cosmology. Buddhist philosophy deals with reality – how we understand reality and how we deconstruct our fantasies and projections about reality. These are things that can be helpful to anyone, without having to accept the more religious aspects of Buddhism such as reincarnation, liberation, and enlightenment. Furthermore, meditation is an activity that can be useful to anyone, as a way of training the mind and helping to develop more beneficial attitudes toward life.

Is Buddhism relevant today?

One of the most points in Buddhism is that however we experience life is largely up to us. Life will go up and down, and that we can experience it in an exceedingly} very perturbing style of way, or we will experience it with peace of mind. it's all up to us, really. so what we'd like to try and do is examine at intervals ourselves: What issues do I have? what's inflicting my problems? what's causing my unhappiness? what's behind my standard sort of happiness, behind my compulsiveness? What are its causes?

What Buddhism says is that we need to travel deeper and deeper and deeper, so as to get the true cause of our drawbacks. We will say, for example, “My problem could be a bad temper;” on the other hand we'd like to ask: Why do I actually have a nasty temper? What we discover is that the true cause of our issues is confusion: confusion about how I exist, confusion about how others exist, how everything within the world exists, and confusion about everything that's happening to me. Instead of seeing the fact of these things, what we have a tendency to do is we project all styles of fantasies onto reality.

Today the world faces a crisis related to lack of respect for spiritual principles and ethical values. Such virtues cannot be forced on society by legislation or by science, nor can fear inspire ethical conduct. Rather, people must have conviction in the worth of ethical principles so that they want to live ethically.

Religion faces three principal challenges today: communism, modern science and the combination of consumerism and materialism. Although the Cold War ended decades ago, communist beliefs and governments still strongly affect life in Buddhist countries. In Tibet, the communist government controls the ordination of monks and nuns while also regulating life in the monasteries and nunneries. It controls the education system, teaching children that Buddhism is old-fashioned.

Modern science, up until now, has confined itself to studying phenomena that are material in nature. Scientists largely examine only what can be measured with scientific instruments, limiting the scope of their investigations and their understanding of the universe. Phenomena like rebirth and also the existence of the mind as become independent from the brain are on the far side the scope of scientific investigation. Some scientists, though they need no proof that these phenomena don't exist, take into account them undeserving of consideration. However there's reason for optimism. In recent years, I even have met with several broad-minded scientists, and that we have had mutualist discussions that have highlighted our common points also as our branching ideas—expanding the globe views of scientists and Buddhists within the process.

Then there is materialism and consumerism. Religion values ethical conduct, which may involve delayed gratification, whereas consumerism directs us toward immediate happiness. Faith traditions stress inner satisfaction and a peaceful mind, while materialism says that happiness comes from external objects. Religious values such as kindness, generosity and honesty get lost in the rush to make more money and have more and “better” possessions. Many people's minds are confused about what happiness is and how to create its causes.

If you study the Buddha's teachings, you may find that some of them are in harmony with your views on societal values, science and consumerism—and some of them are not. That is fine. Continue to investigate and reflect on what you discover. In this way, whatever conclusion you reach will be based on reason, not simply on tradition, peer pressure or blind faith.

That is the relevance of Buddhism not only in modern life, but in all life. We try to pay attention to our emotions, our attitudes, and the projections we are making, which are the bases for the attitudes. We analyze the compulsiveness of our thinking, speaking, and acting. That compulsiveness is brought on by the projections we are making, and we try to apply deconstruction methods to see more clearly the reality of what is going on.