

# The philosophy of the buddhists

[Religion](#), [Buddhism](#)



I will give you a glimpse into the world of the Buddha and the philosophy that he used to practise and preach. He was born as Siddhartha Gautama in the year 563 BC in Lumbini a place situated near the Indo - Nepal border. His father was the ruler of a petty kingdom of the Sakya tribes. Initially Siddhartha led the luxurious life of a prince in their palace at Kapilavastu, subsequently, he was married to Yasodhara. He had been living in marital bliss for thirteen years, when he saw an extremely sick person, a frail old man, the corpse of a deceased person, a corpse being cremated and a sadhu or holy man.

This had a major impact on Siddhartha, who realized that the normal phases in a person's life were old age, sickness and eventually death. In the year 528 BC, Siddhartha experienced the Great Enlightenment under the Bodhi tree in Gaya, consequently, he was known as Buddha or the enlightened one. His exhortations are known as dhamma. He attained Nirvana at the age of eighty, in the year 483 BC (Siddhartha Gautama). The Dhamma consists of four noble truths. The first of them states that life means suffering. It is essential to realize and accept that you have to undergo suffering in order to live in the world.

The world and human nature are imperfect. According to the Majjhima - Nikaya, Sutta 63, the cycle of birth and death are continuous and humans have to experience old age, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair. There are pleasures such as ease, comfort and happiness. Hence from birth to death, humans experience both suffering and happiness. This serves to render the life pattern imperfect and incomplete. The world is essentially

unpleasant and bereft of perfection. The second truth is that sufferings are caused by desires and to some extent due to ignorance.

Attachment towards impermanent things and ignorance of the fact that those things are temporary causes suffering. Moreover, suffering is caused by desire, passion, ardor, and craving for wealth and fame. A very important precept in this context is that desire causes ignorance and vice - versa (L. Ross, 2007). The third noble truth is regarding the truth of cessation. Sufferings can be avoided and the complete cessation of suffering can be attained through nirodha or the unmaking of sensual craving and conceptual attachment.

In order to end sufferings, one should identify their origin and remove them. This can be achieved through dispassion towards material things, which are transient in nature. In other words, suffering can be removed by realizing the cause of suffering and then removing the very cause. This is a continuous process, which eventually culminates in Nirvana or that supreme state of being that is free from all worries, complexes, fabrications and the individual ego (The Four Noble Truths).

The fourth Noble truth is the truth of the way, which represents the via media between the extremes of asceticism and indulgence. There is an eight - fold path by which a human can attain Nirvana and end sufferings permanently. This way comprises of right knowledge, right resolve, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right meditation. This path removes all sufferings from life and extends over many lifetimes of a human (L. Ross, 2007). Therefore, Peter, you have to follow this eight fold path.

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The Buddha institutionalized a monastic order with five basic precepts. These precepts require abstention from killing others, stealing, indulgence in unchaste activities and the consumption of alcoholic drinks. These fundamental precepts are mandatory for every Buddhist and Peter you have to make them an integral part of your life. The Buddha had preached that the practise of these precepts resulted in Nirvana. Buddha refused to expatiate on the term Nirvana. According to Buddhism, both existence and nonexistence are meaningless. This philosophy is termed as the Fourfold Negation.

It is the fundamental concept on which the Buddhist philosophy is based (L. Ross, 2007). Some very important and basic philosophical doctrines in Buddhism are first, momentariness; which states that nothing exists for a long time and that things do not have substance or duration. Moreover, every moment is a new existence and is succeeded by another new existence and their interconnection results in the next moment. The second doctrine is that of relative existence, which states that nothing has nature and character. In isolation, things are shunya, which means emptiness or a vacuum.

Existence is therefore completely relative and the only unconditioned state is that of Nirvana. The third major doctrine is that there is no atman or soul. According to Buddhism, human beings consist of a body, feelings, ideas, impressions and momentary consciousness. Fourth, Buddhism does not accept the existence of God, Brahman or any other ultimate substance in the universe. Fifth, everything has a cause, which is dependent on a previous

momentary existence. Sixth, karma, is only a causation and reincarnation is caused by the actions of people in the past.

Therefore, karma is the effect of past actions (L. Ross, 2007). Another important concept of Buddhism is emptiness. A major philosophical paradox of Buddhism is that form is emptiness and emptiness is form. It is the mantra of Buddhism, whose origin is the Prajna Paramita Hridaya Sutra or the Heart Sutra. There are misconceptions about this concept of emptiness; western scholars defined it as nihilism. Nihilism states that reality is unknown, that nothing exists, that nothing meaningful can be described about the world.

However, the Buddhist concept of emptiness is dissimilar to nihilism, because it states that the ultimate reality is knowable. It also states that there is a lucid ontological basis for phenomena. Further, human beings can communicate and obtain knowledge of the world. Sunyata or emptiness cannot be construed as nothingness. In other words, emptiness is not non-existence and it is also non-reality (Emptiness). Pay great attention to these thoughts, assimilate them and meditate upon them. Your preceptor,

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